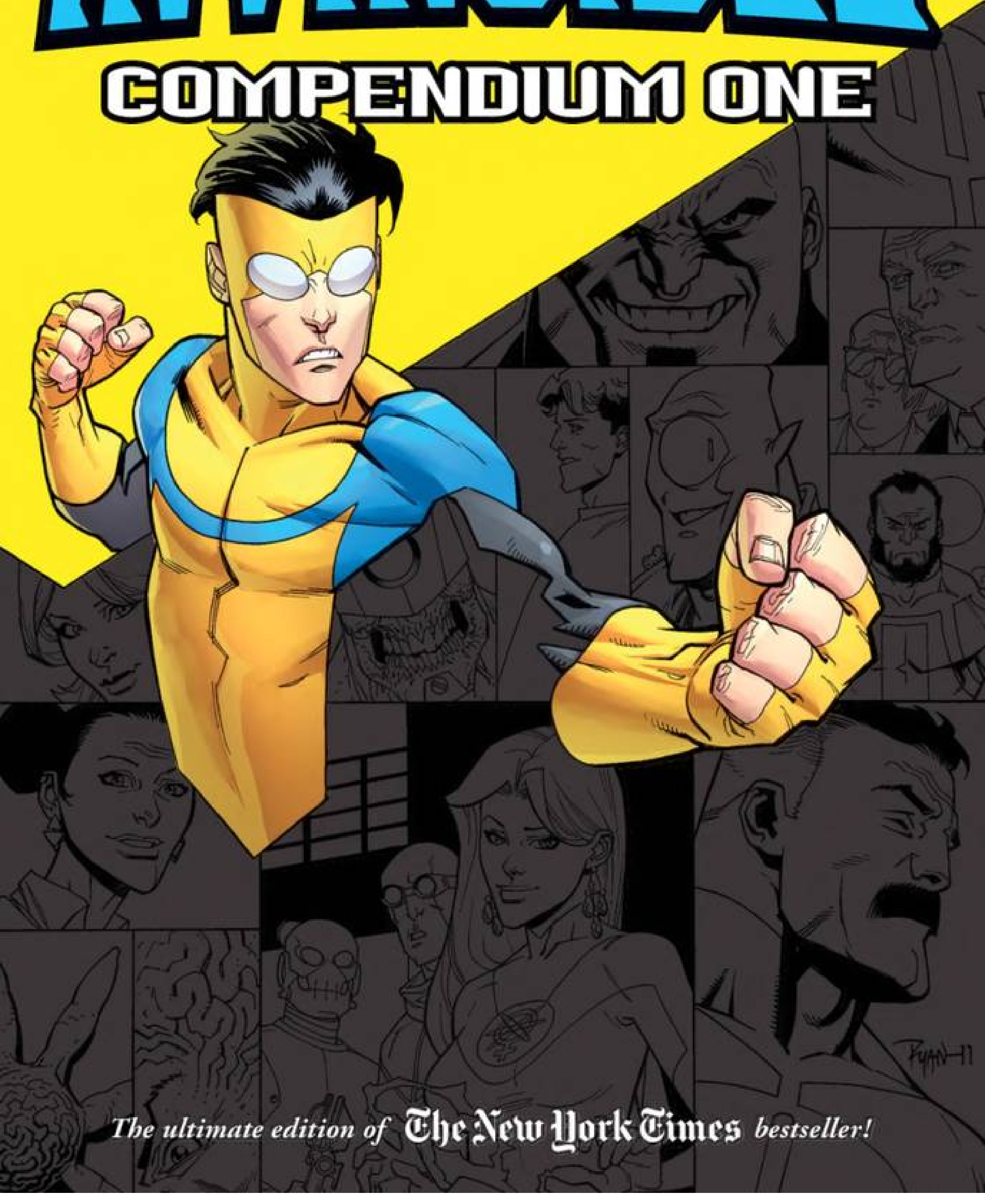
ROBERT KIRKMAN • CORY WALKER • RYAN OTTLEY

INVINCIBLE™

COMPENDIUM ONE



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INVINCIBLE

COMPENDIUM ONE

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letterer [issues 1-13]

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penciler [issues 1-7]
inker [issues 1-7]
covers [issues 1-12, 15, 17]

RYAN OTTLEY
penciler [issues 8-47]
inker [issues 8-27, 32-47]
covers [13, 18-47]

CLIFF RATHBURN
inker [issues 28-31]

RUS WOOTON
letterer [issues 14-47]

BILL CRABTREE
colorist

RYAN OTTLEY & FCO PLASCENCIA
cover

INVINCIBLE CREATED BY **ROBERT KIRKMAN & CORY WALKER**

ISSUE 7

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penciler, inker

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penciler
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inker

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penciler
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inker

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penciler & inker

GREEN GHOST & MARTIAN MAN SEQUENCE
CLIFF RATHBURN
penciler & inker

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MONSTER GIRL
TODD NAUCK
penciler, inker

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KHARY RANDOLPH
penciler, inker
KANILA TRIPP
colorist

IMMORTAL
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DUPLI-KATE
JOSHUA LUNA
artist

THE PACT #4

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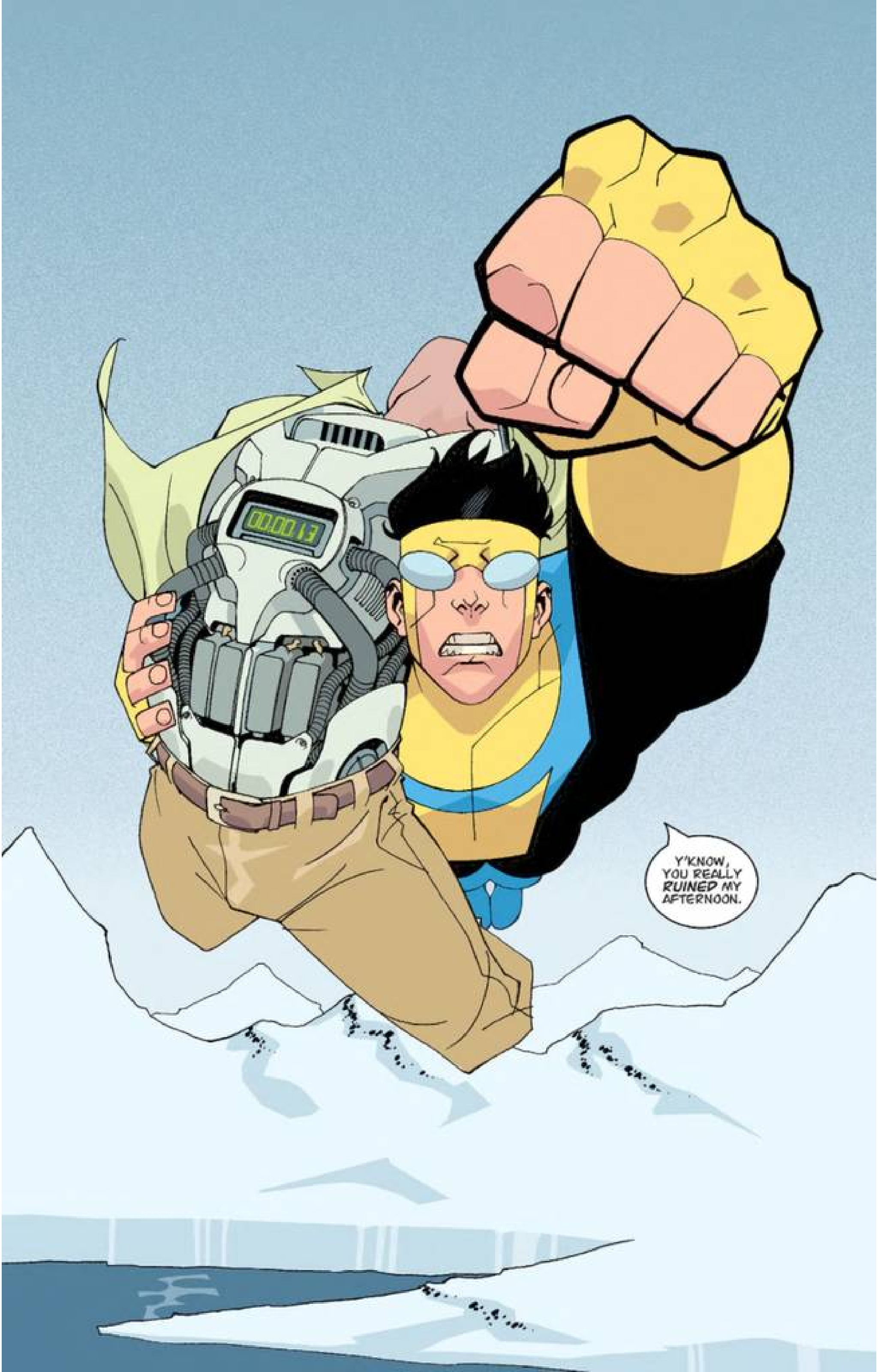
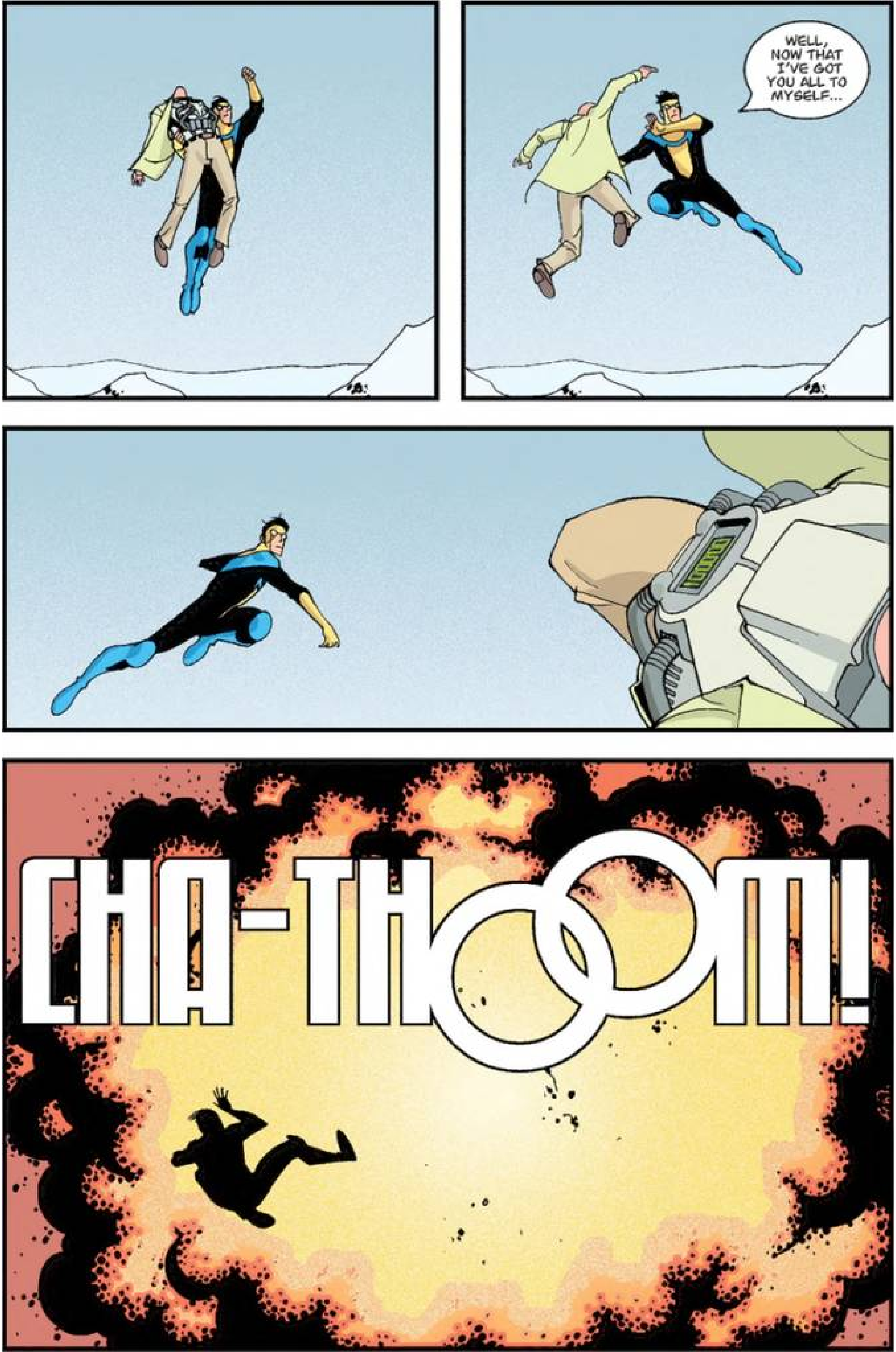
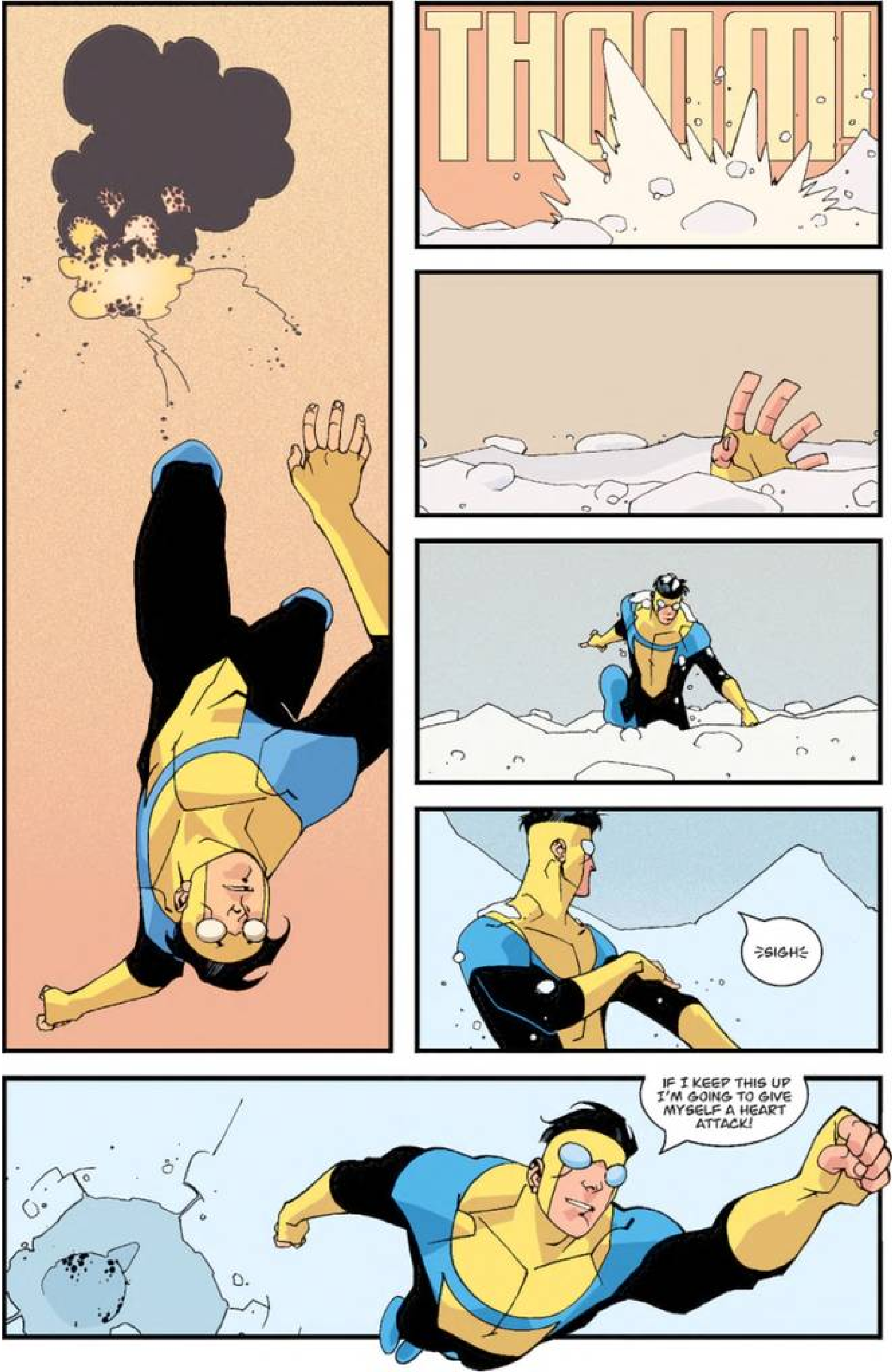
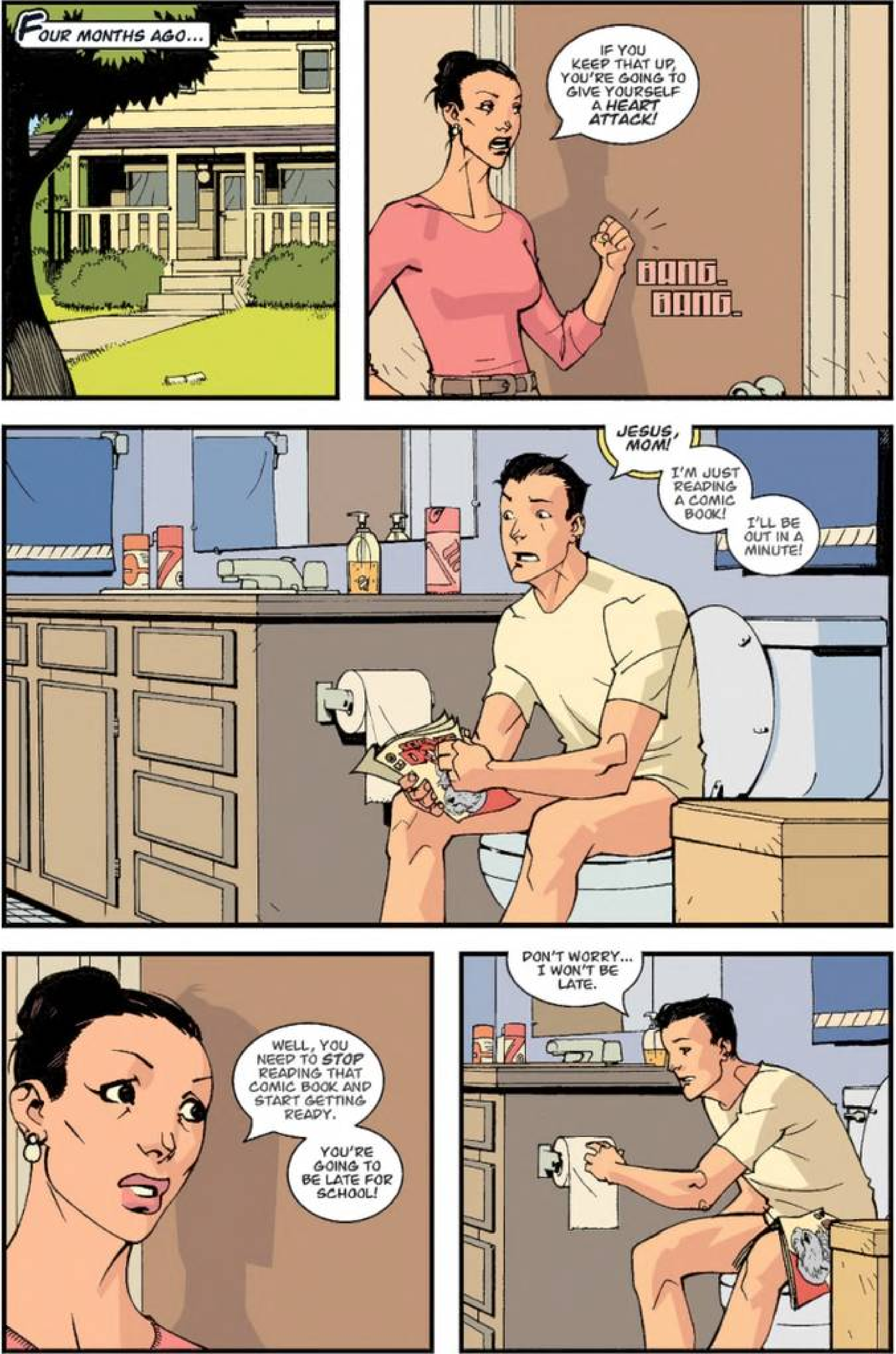
DIGITAL EDITION

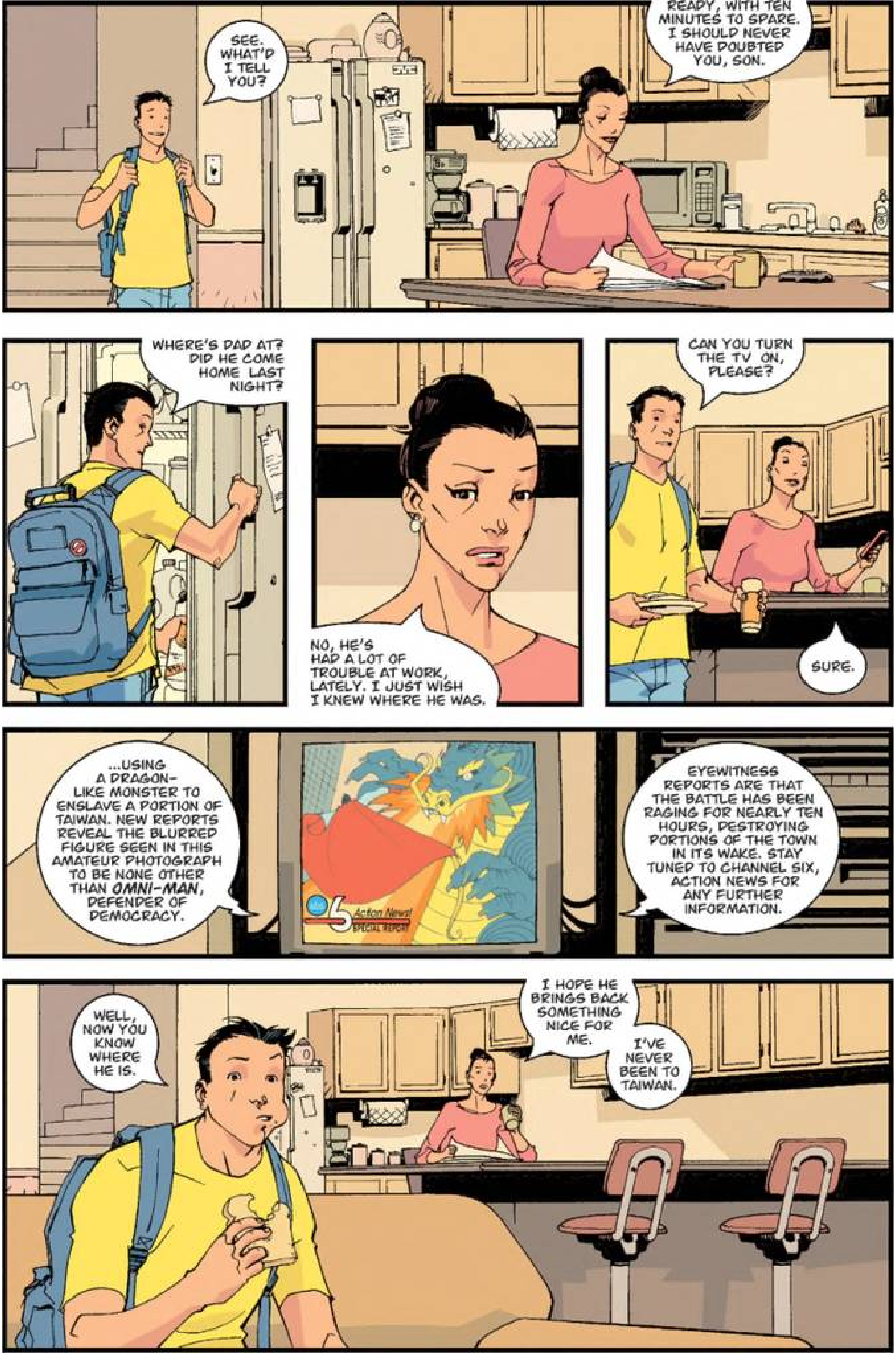
ISSUE ONE

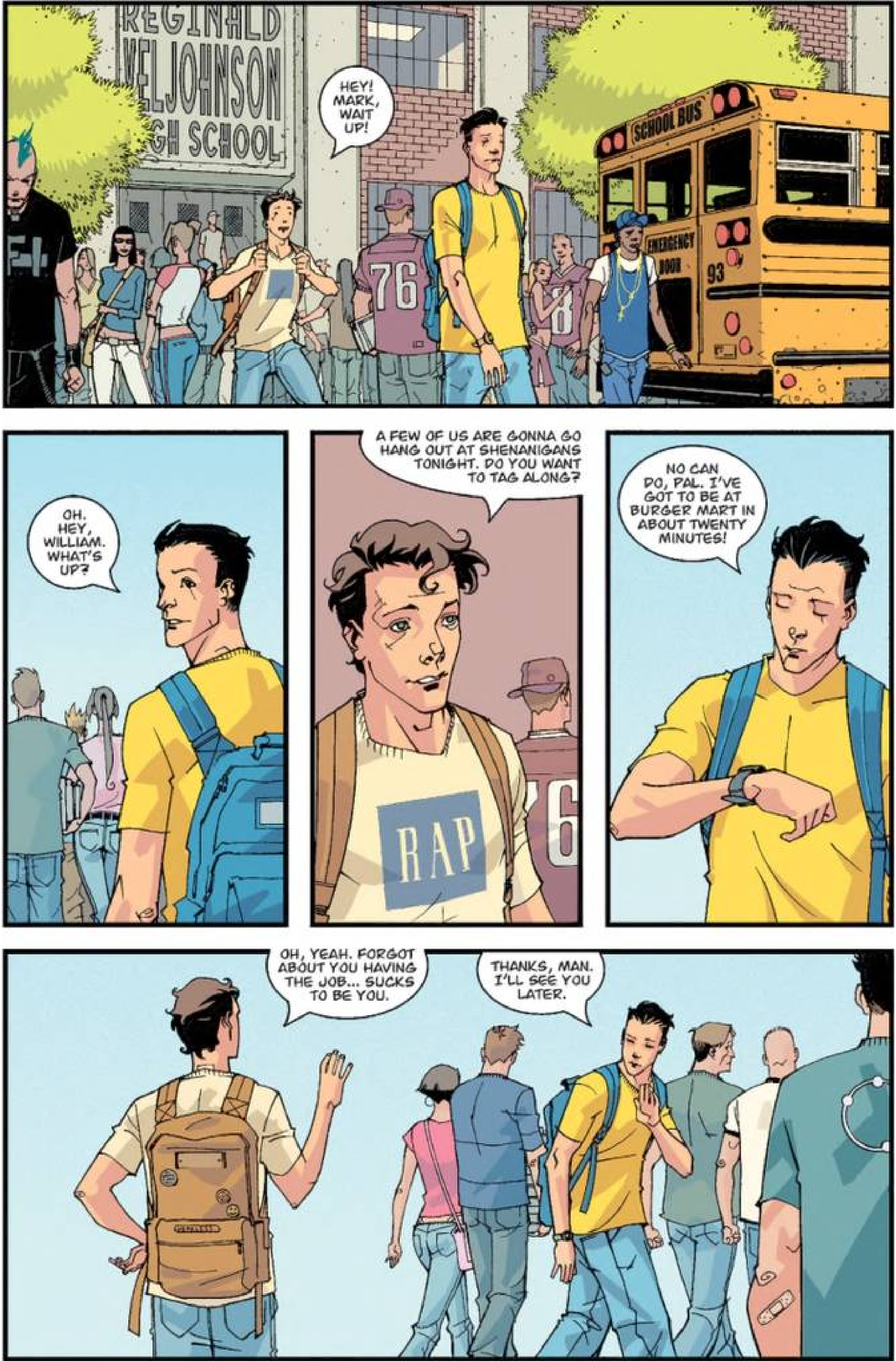

00.00.13
Y'KNOW, YOU REALLY RUINED MY AFTERNOON.

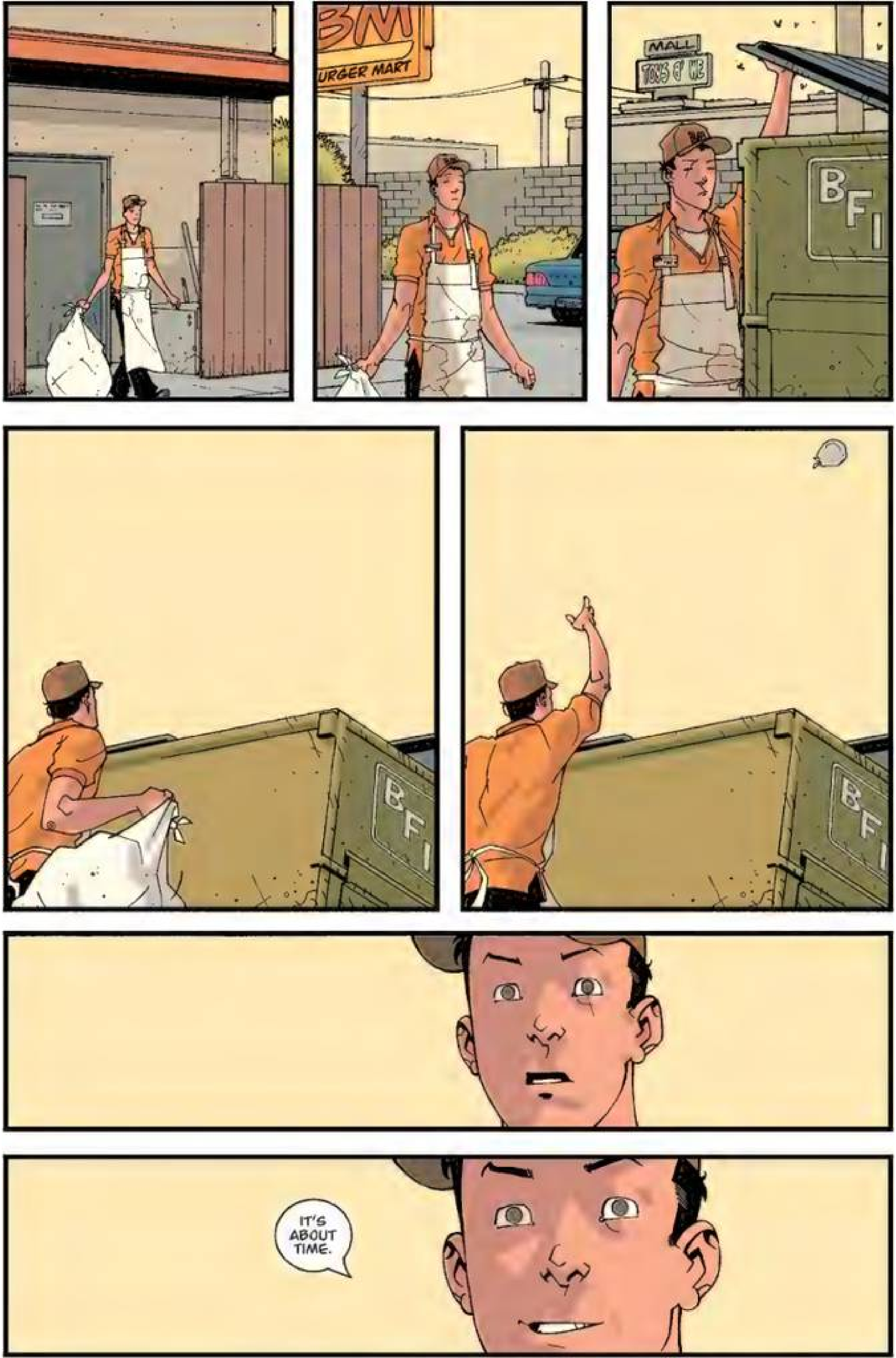

WELL, NOW THAT I'VE GOT YOU ALL TO MYSELF...
CHA-THOOM!

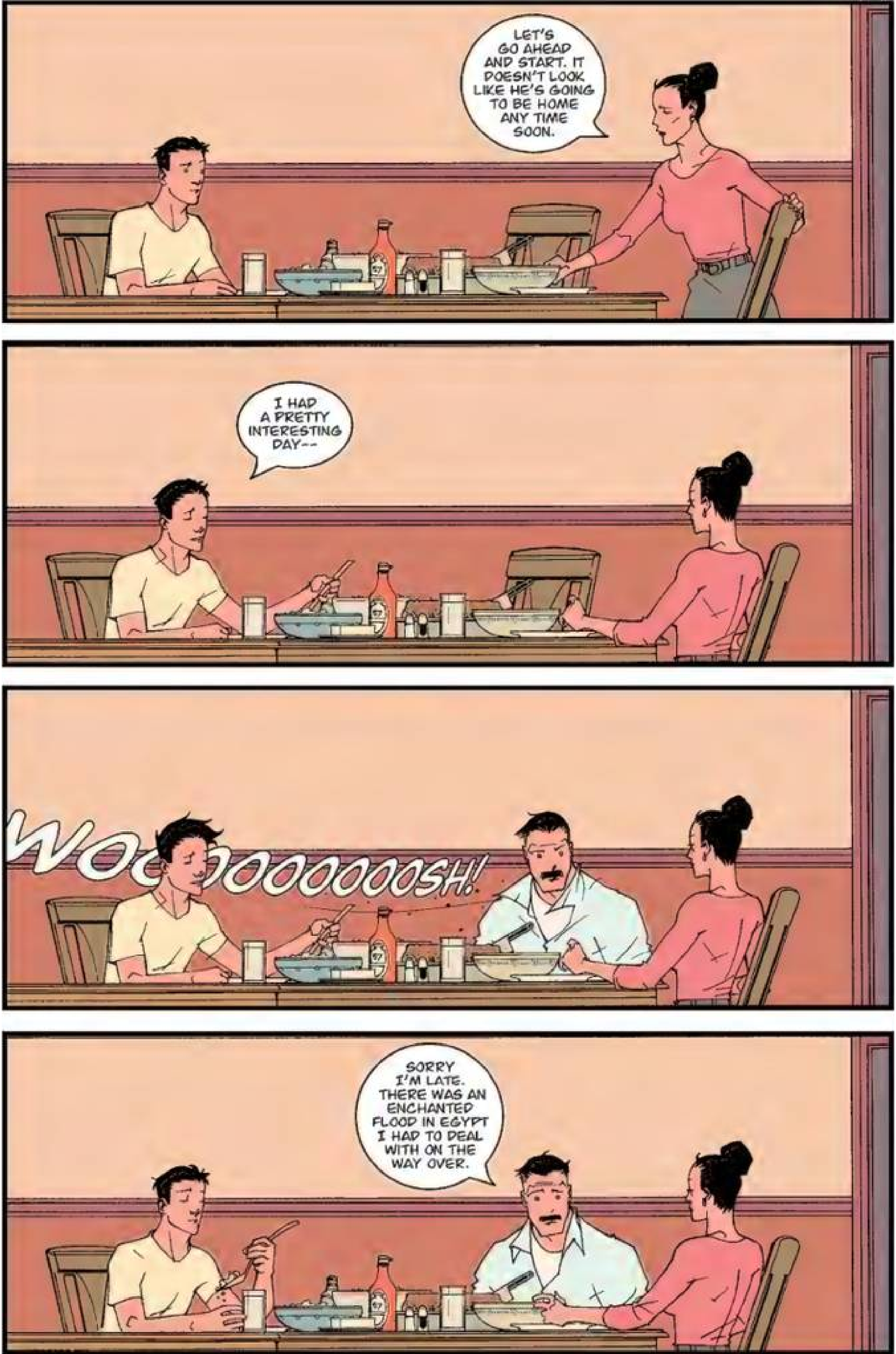

THOOOM!
⋟SIGH⋞
IF I KEEP THIS UP I'M GOING TO GIVE MYSELF A HEART ATTACK!

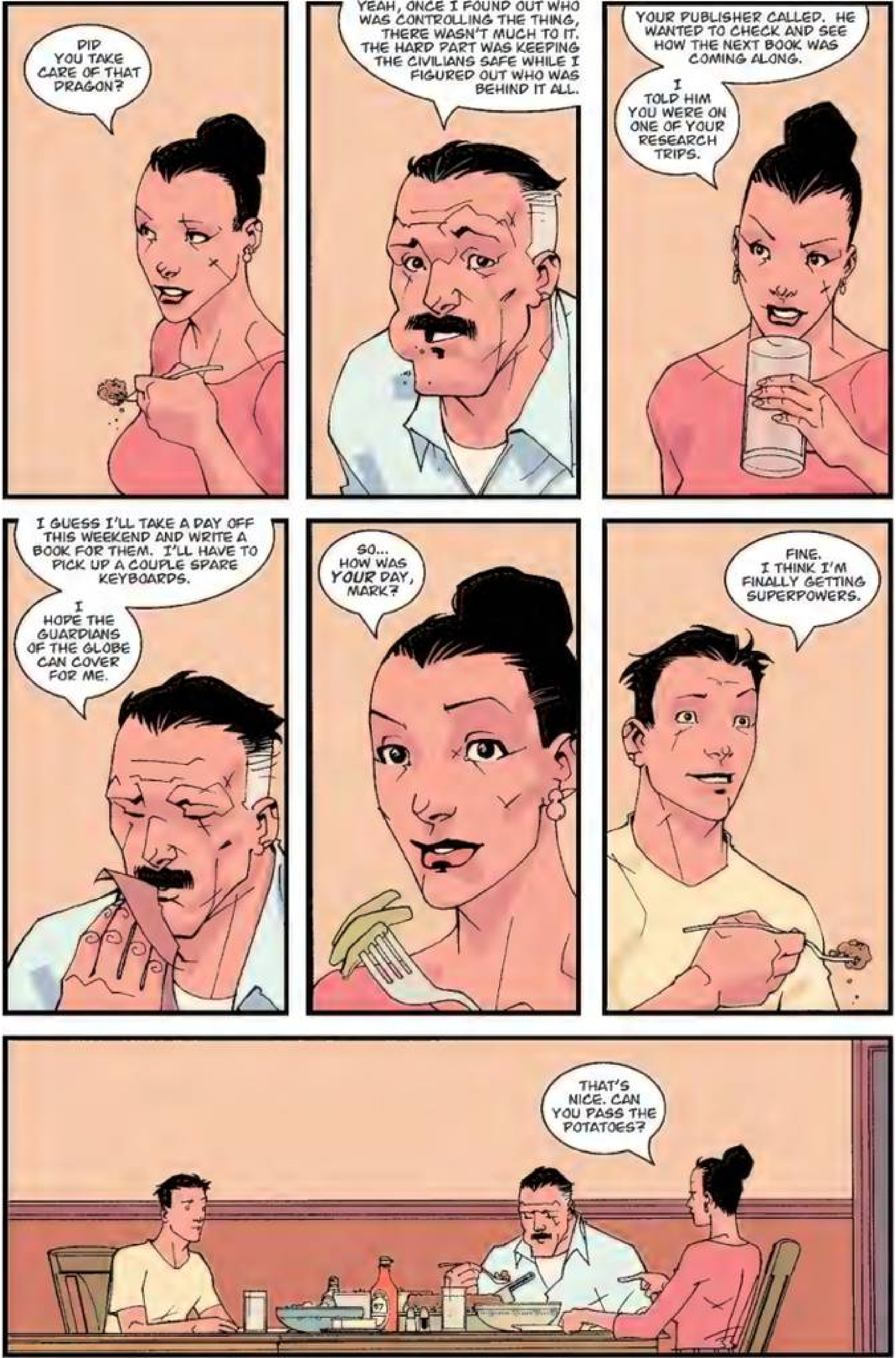

FOUR MONTHS AGO...
IF YOU KEEP THAT UP, YOU'RE GOING TO GIVE YOURSELF A HEART ATTACK!
BANG. BANG.
JESUS, MOM!
I'M JUST READING A COMIC BOOK!
I'LL BE OUT IN A MINUTE!
WELL, YOU NEED TO STOP READING THAT COMIC BOOK AND START GETTING READY.
YOU'RE GOING TO BE LATE FOR SCHOOL!
DON'T WORRY... I WON'T BE LATE.

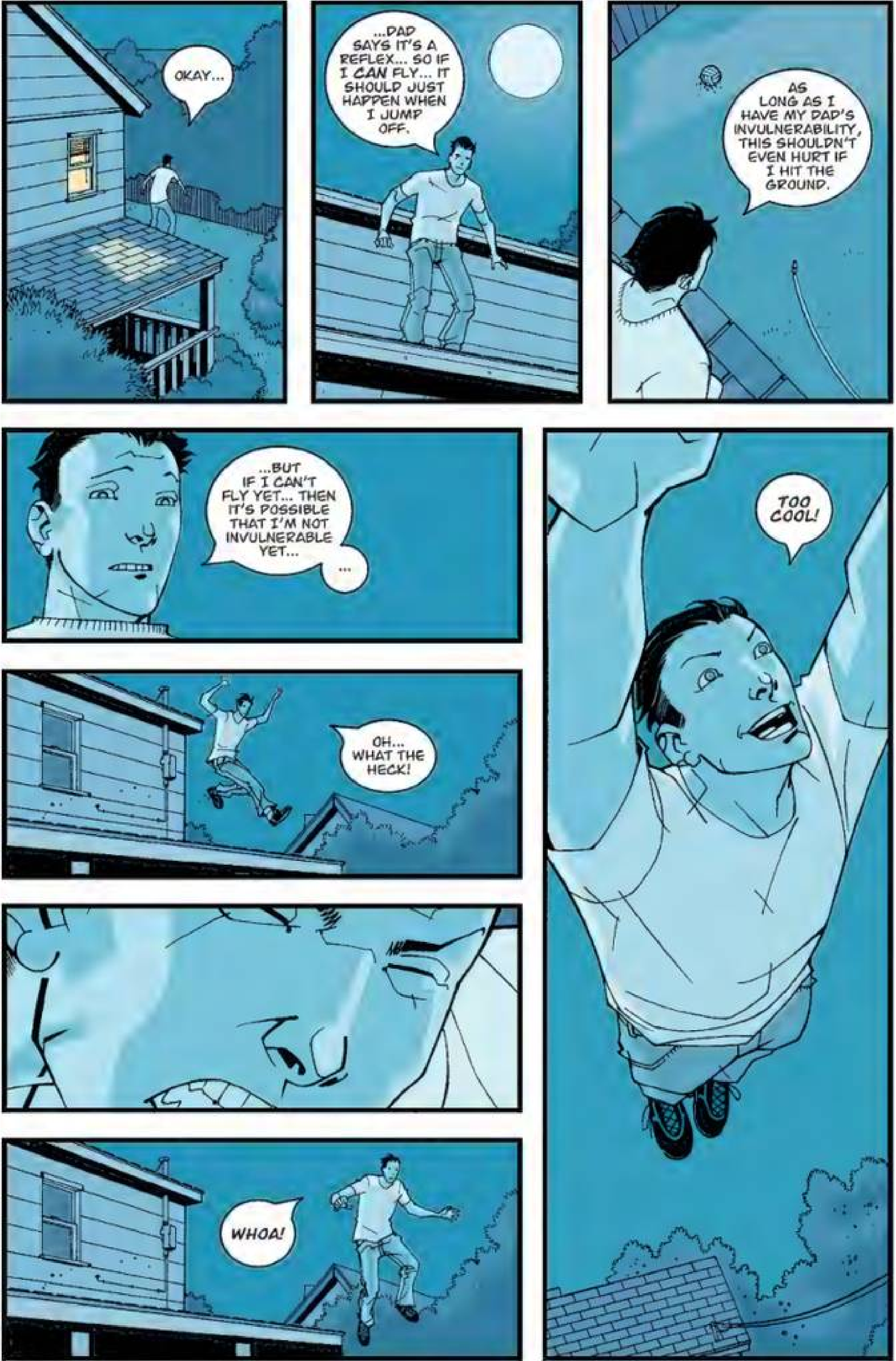

SEE. WHAT'D I TELL YOU?
READY, WITH TEN MINUTES TO SPARE. I SHOULD NEVER HAVE DOUBTED YOU, SON.
WHERE'S DAD AT? DID HE COME HOME LAST NIGHT?
NO, HE'S HAD A LOT OF TROUBLE AT WORK, LATELY. I JUST WISH I KNEW WHERE HE WAS.
CAN YOU TURN THE TV ON, PLEASE?
SURE.
...USING A DRAGON-LIKE MONSTER TO ENSLAVE A PORTION OF TAIWAN. NEW REPORTS REVEAL THE BLURRED FIGURE SEEN IN THIS AMATEUR PHOTOGRAPH TO BE NONE OTHER THAN OMNI-MAN, DEFENDER OF DEMOCRACY.
6 Action News! SPECIAL REPORT
EYEWITNESS REPORTS ARE THAT THE BATTLE HAS BEEN RAGING FOR NEARLY TEN HOURS, DESTROYING PORTIONS OF THE TOWN IN ITS WAKE. STAY TUNED TO CHANNEL SIX, ACTION NEWS FOR ANY FURTHER INFORMATION.
WELL, NOW YOU KNOW WHERE HE IS.
I HOPE HE BRINGS BACK SOMETHING NICE FOR ME.
I'VE NEVER BEEN TO TAIWAN.

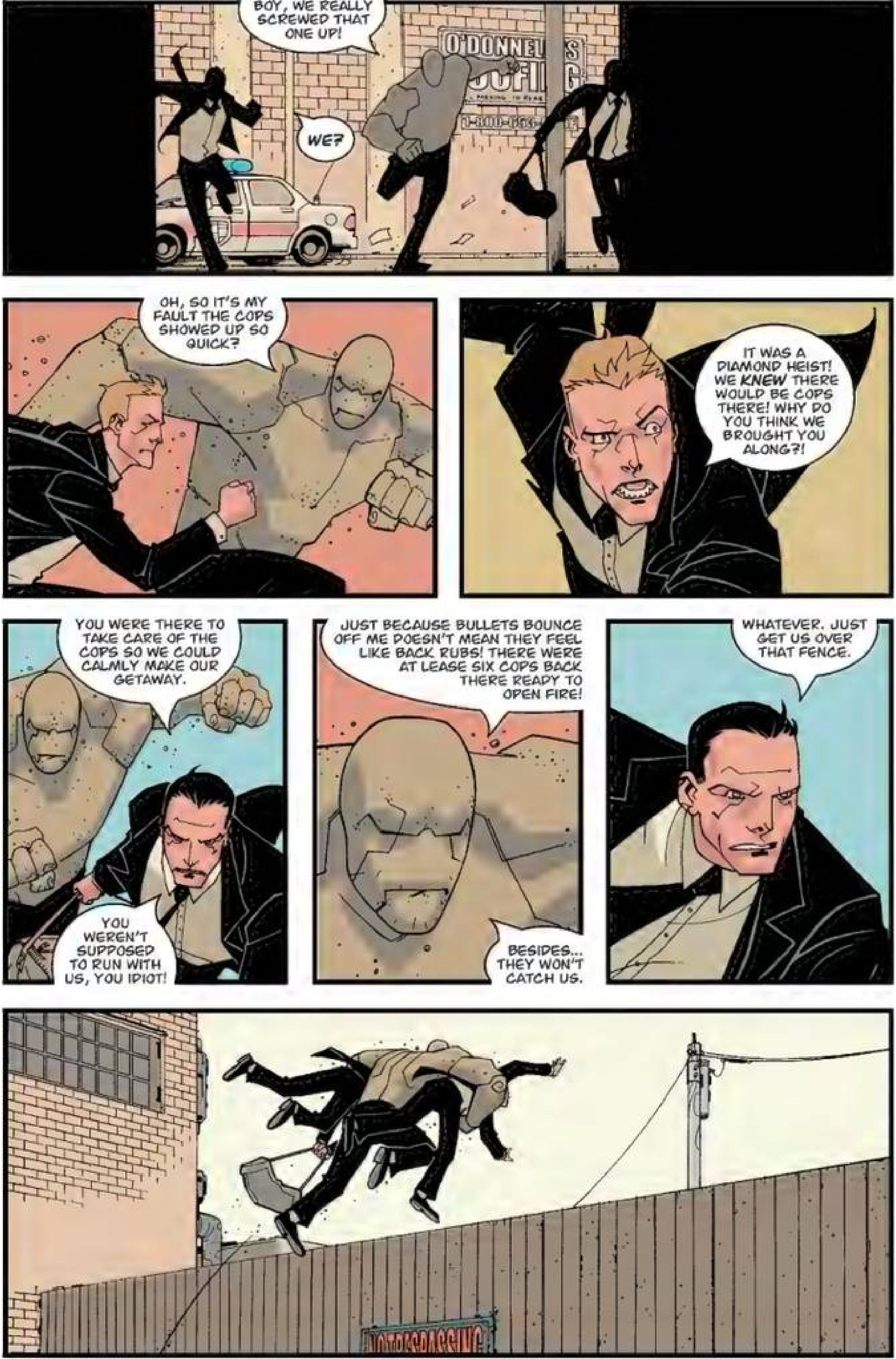

REGINALD VELJOHNSON HIGH SCHOOL
HEY! MARK, WAIT UP!
76
SCHOOL BUS
EMERGENCY DOOR
93
OH. HEY, WILLIAM. WHAT'S UP?
A FEW OF US ARE GONNA GO HANG OUT AT SHENANIGANS TONIGHT. DO YOU WANT TO TAG ALONG?
RAP
NO CAN DO, PAL. I'VE GOT TO BE AT BURGER MART IN ABOUT TWENTY MINUTES!
OH, YEAH. FORGOT ABOUT YOU HAVING THE JOB... SUCKS TO BE YOU.
THANKS, MAN. I'LL SEE YOU LATER.

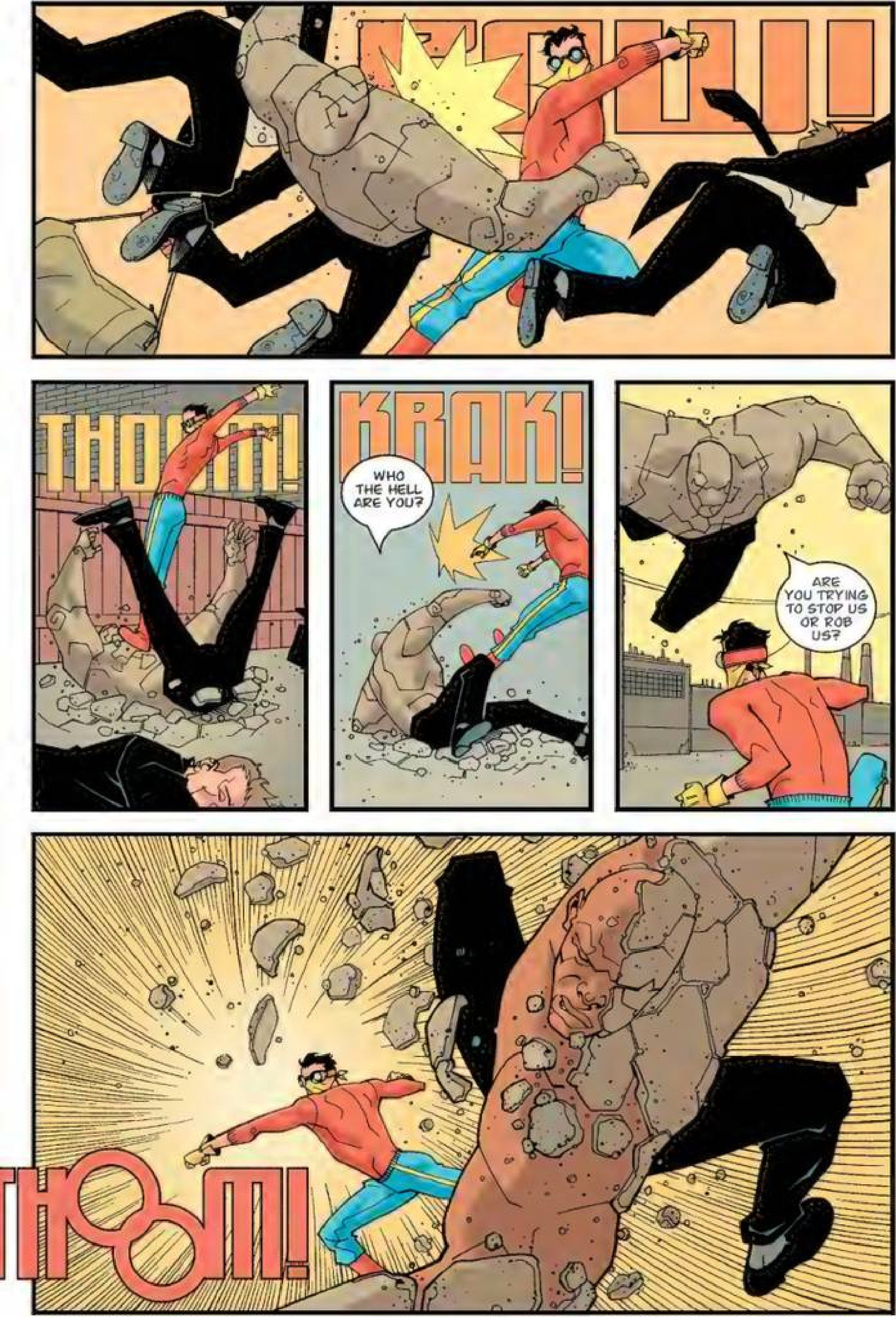

BM
URGER MART
MALL
BFI
BFI
BFI
IT'S ABOUT TIME.

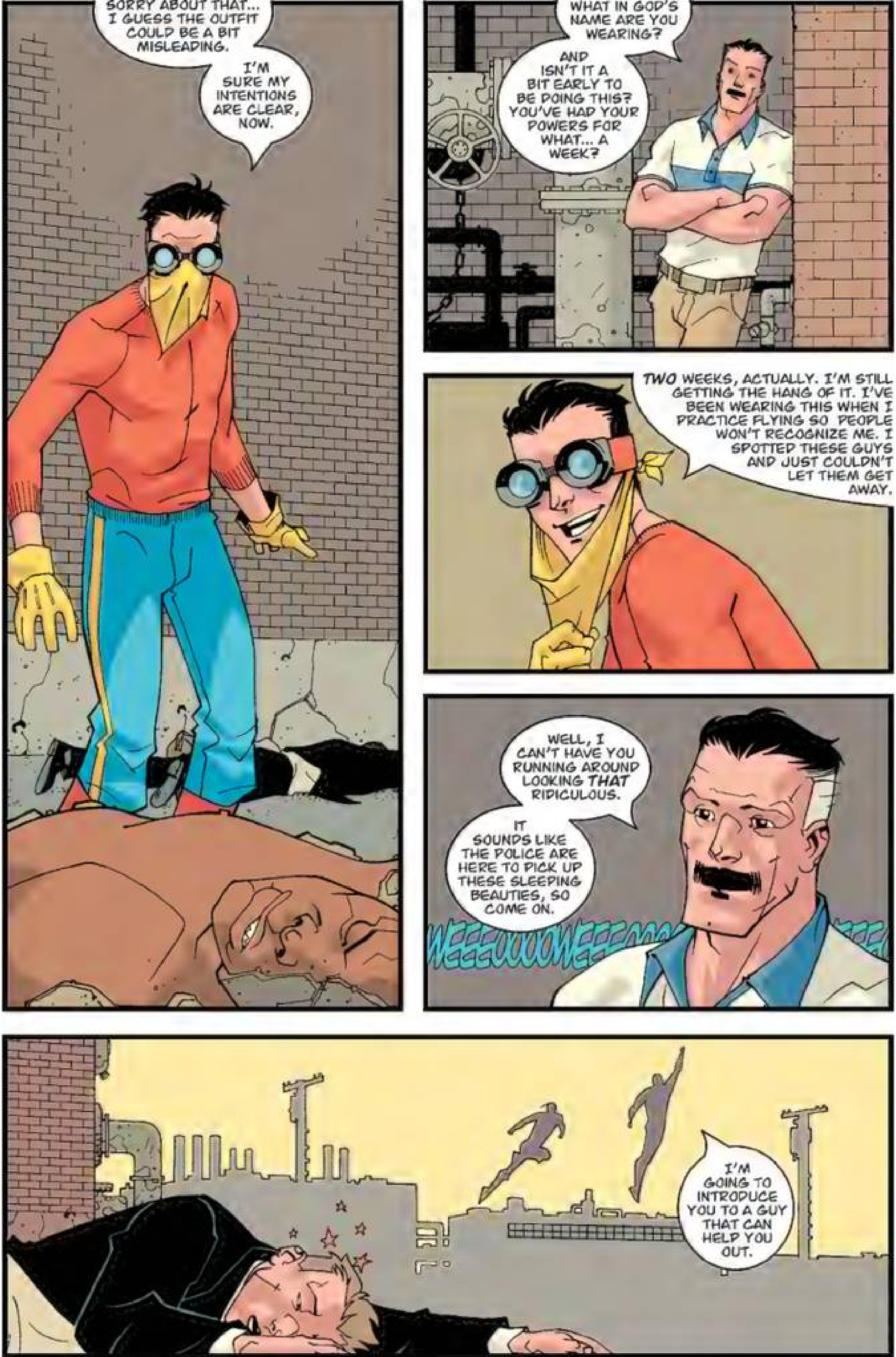

LET'S GO AHEAD AND START. IT DOESN'T LOOK LIKE HE'S GOING TO BE HOME ANY TIME SOON.
I HAD A PRETTY INTERESTING DAY--
WOOOOOOOOOOSH!
SORRY I'M LATE. THERE WAS AN ENCHANTED FLOOD IN EGYPT I HAD TO DEAL WITH ON THE WAY OVER.

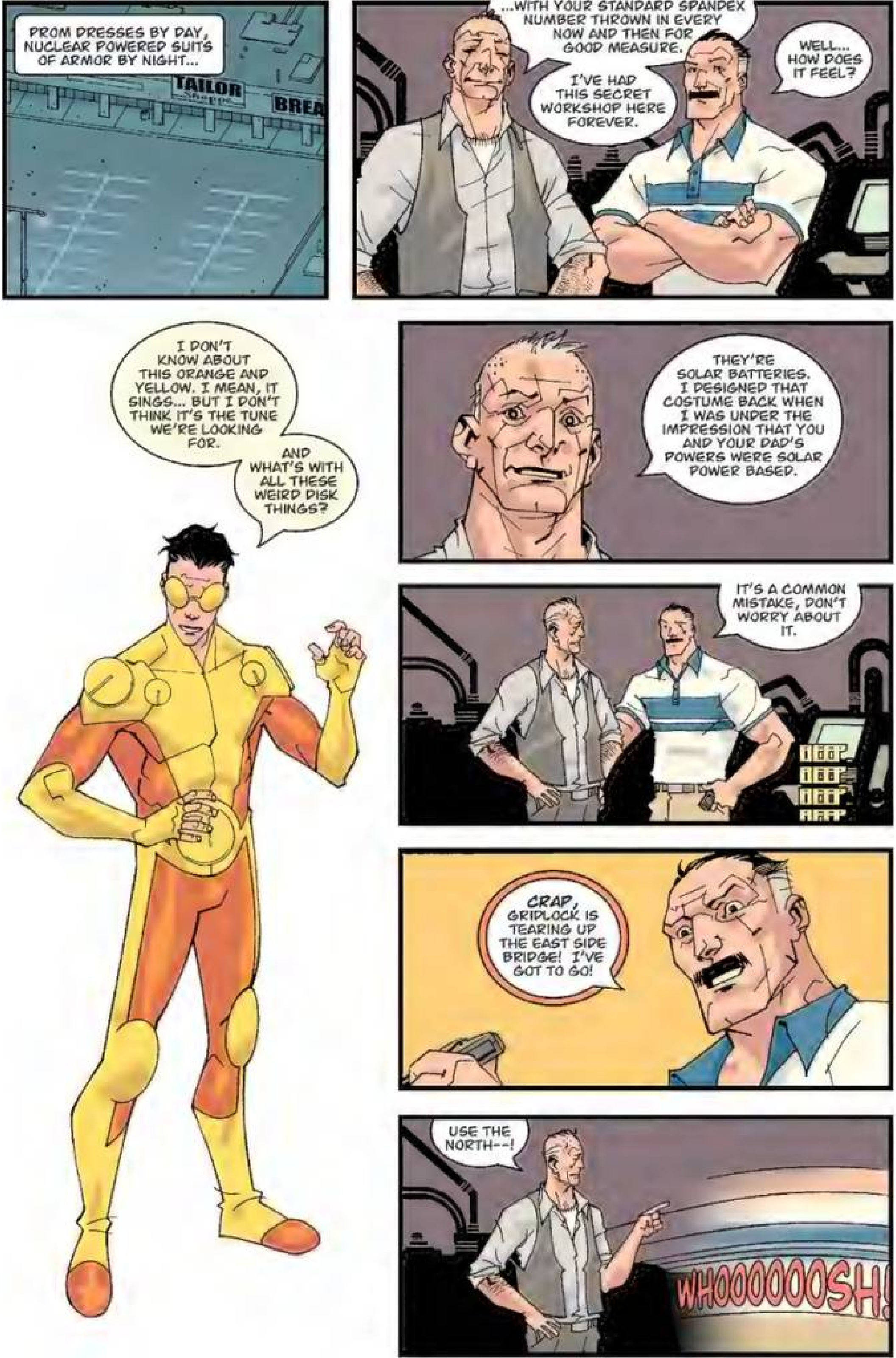

DID YOU TAKE CARE OF THAT DRAGON?
YEAH, ONCE I FOUND OUT WHO WAS CONTROLLING THE THING, THERE WASN'T MUCH TO IT. THE HARD PART WAS KEEPING THE CIVILIANS SAFE WHILE I FIGURED OUT WHO WAS BEHIND IT ALL.
YOUR PUBLISHER CALLED. HE WANTED TO CHECK AND SEE HOW THE NEXT BOOK WAS COMING ALONG.
I TOLD HIM YOU WERE ON ONE OF YOUR RESEARCH TRIPS.
I GUESS I'LL TAKE A DAY OFF THIS WEEKEND AND WRITE A BOOK FOR THEM. I'LL HAVE TO PICK UP A COUPLE SPARE KEYBOARDS.
I HOPE THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE CAN COVER FOR ME.
SO... HOW WAS *YOUR* DAY, MARK?
FINE. I THINK I'M FINALLY GETTING SUPERPOWERS.
THAT'S NICE. CAN YOU PASS THE POTATOES?

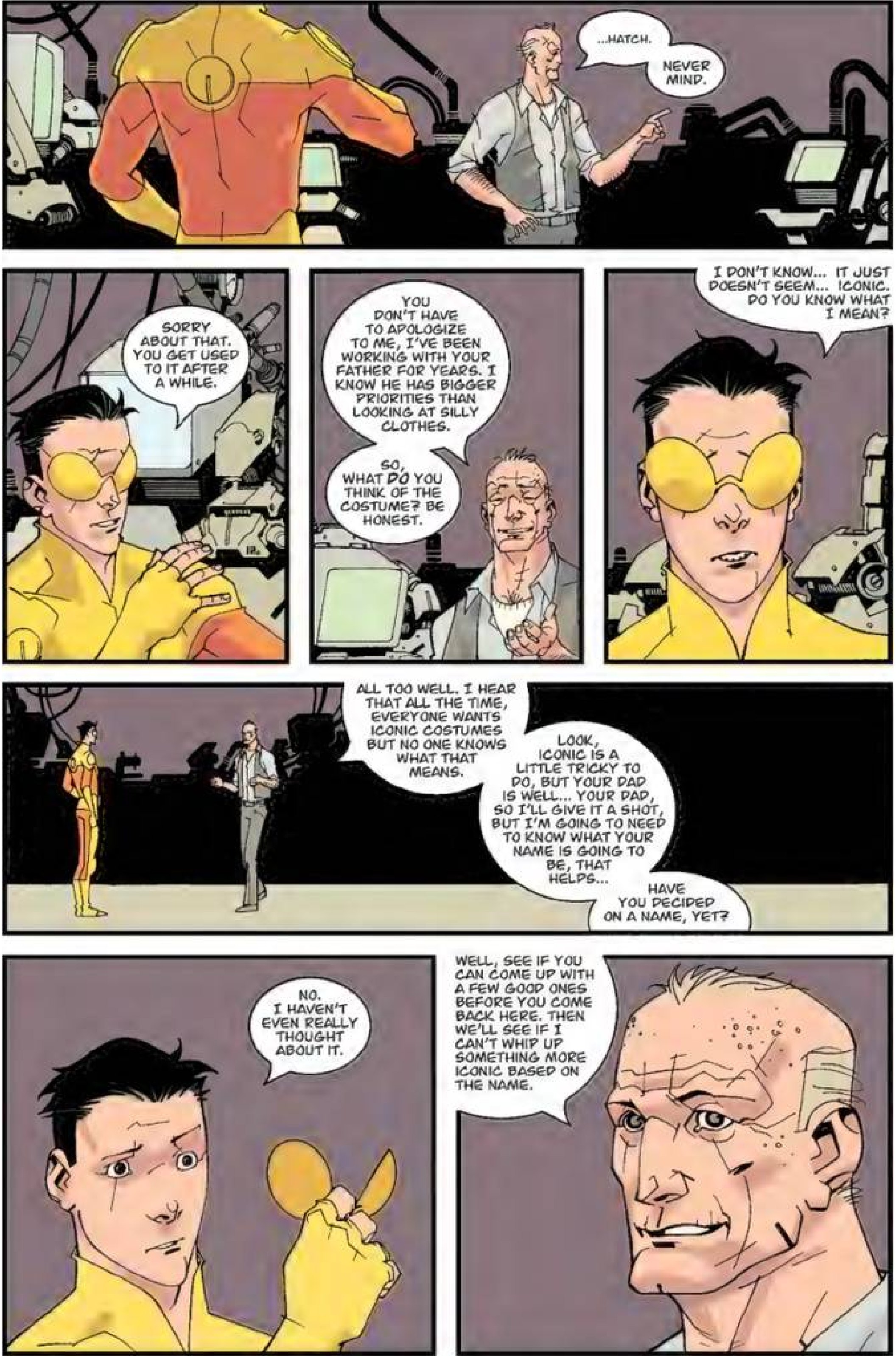

OKAY...
...DAD SAYS IT'S A REFLEX... SO IF I CAN FLY... IT SHOULD JUST HAPPEN WHEN I JUMP OFF.
AS LONG AS I HAVE MY DAD'S INVULNERABILITY, THIS SHOULDN'T EVEN HURT IF I HIT THE GROUND.
...BUT IF I CAN'T FLY YET... THEN IT'S POSSIBLE THAT I'M NOT INVULNERABLE YET...
...
OH... WHAT THE HECK!
WHOA!
TOO COOL!

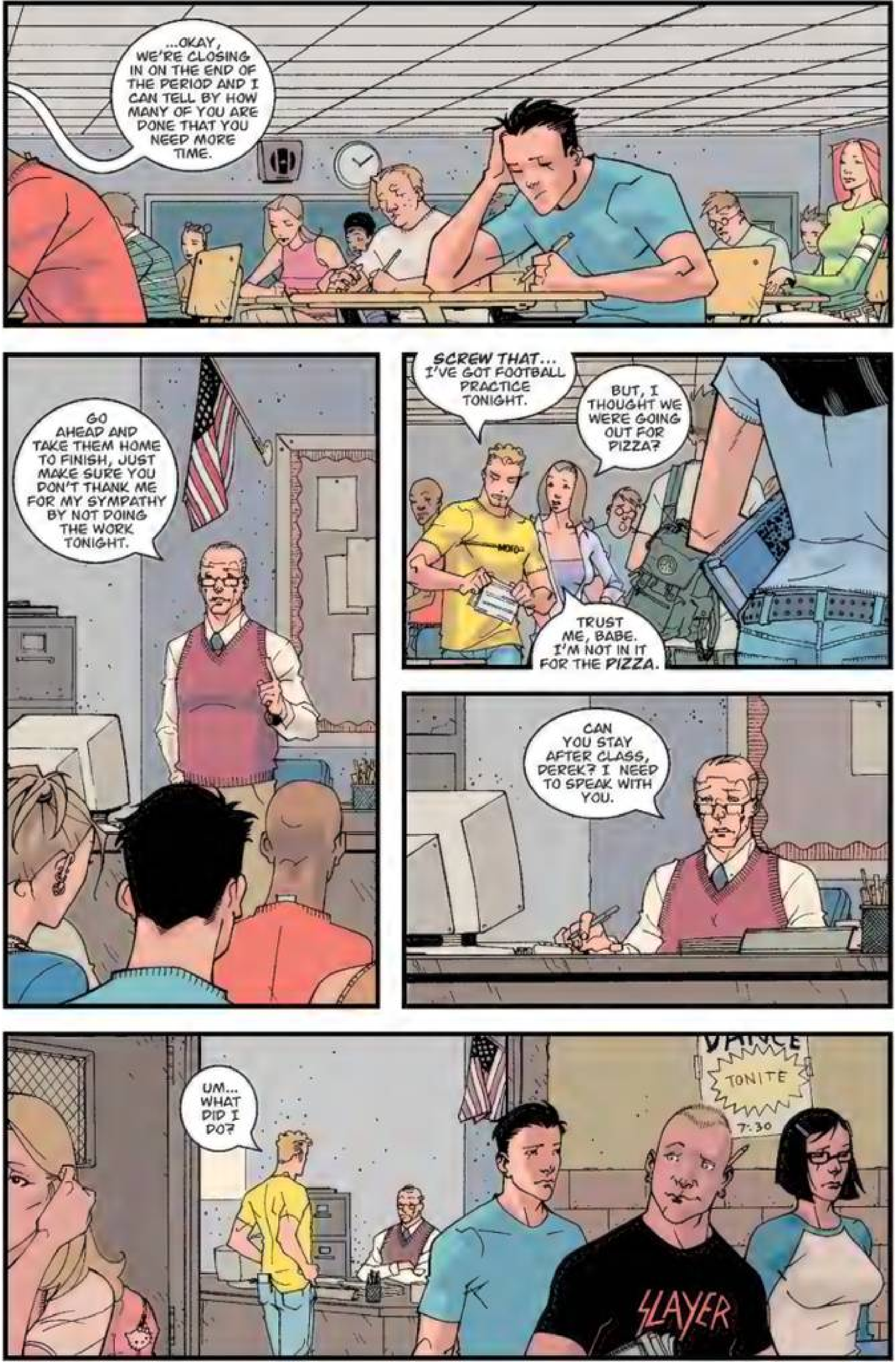

BOY, WE REALLY SCREWED THAT ONE UP!
WE?
OH, SO IT'S MY FAULT THE COPS SHOWED UP SO QUICK?
IT WAS A DIAMOND HEIST! WE *KNEW* THERE WOULD BE COPS THERE! WHY DO YOU THINK WE BROUGHT YOU ALONG?!
YOU WERE THERE TO TAKE CARE OF THE COPS SO WE COULD CALMLY MAKE OUR GETAWAY.
YOU WEREN'T SUPPOSED TO RUN WITH US, YOU IDIOT!
JUST BECAUSE BULLETS BOUNCE OFF ME DOESN'T MEAN THEY FEEL LIKE BACK RUBS! THERE WERE AT LEASE SIX COPS BACK THERE READY TO OPEN FIRE!
BESIDES... THEY WON'T CATCH US.
WHATEVER. JUST GET US OVER THAT FENCE.

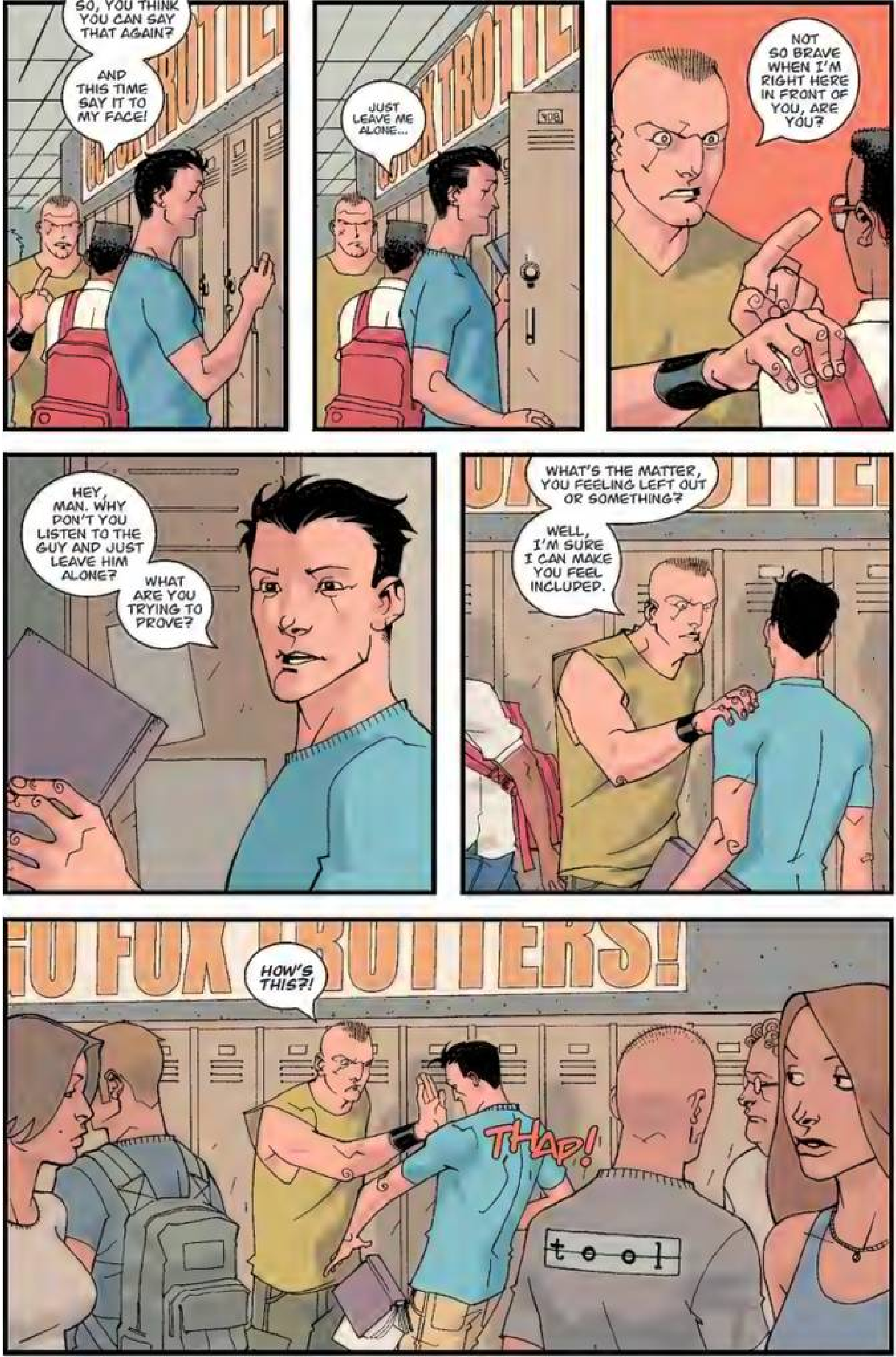

THOOM!
KRAK!
WHO THE HELL ARE YOU?
ARE YOU TRYING TO STOP US OR ROB US?
THOOM!

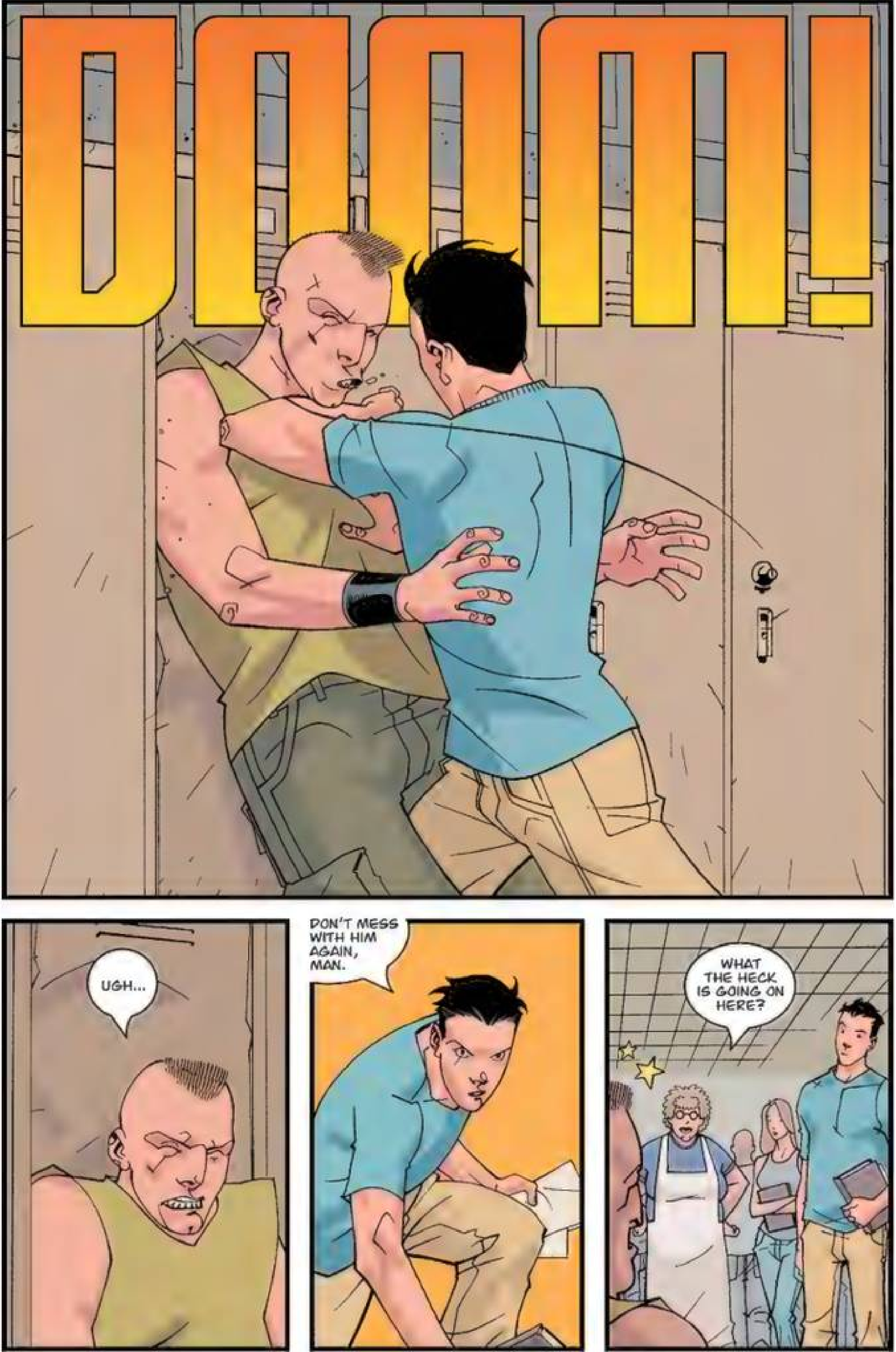

SORRY ABOUT THAT... I GUESS THE OUTFIT COULD BE A BIT MISLEADING.
I'M SURE MY INTENTIONS ARE CLEAR, NOW.
WHAT IN GOD'S NAME ARE YOU WEARING?
AND ISN'T IT A BIT EARLY TO BE DOING THIS? YOU'VE HAD YOUR POWERS FOR WHAT... A WEEK?
TWO WEEKS, ACTUALLY. I'M STILL GETTING THE HANG OF IT. I'VE BEEN WEARING THIS WHEN I PRACTICE FLYING SO PEOPLE WON'T RECOGNIZE ME. I SPOTTED THESE GUYS AND JUST COULDN'T LET THEM GET AWAY.
WELL, I CAN'T HAVE YOU RUNNING AROUND LOOKING THAT RIDICULOUS.
IT SOUNDS LIKE THE POLICE ARE HERE TO PICK UP THESE SLEEPING BEAUTIES, SO COME ON.
WEEEOOOOWEEEOOO
I'M GOING TO INTRODUCE YOU TO A GUY THAT CAN HELP YOU OUT.

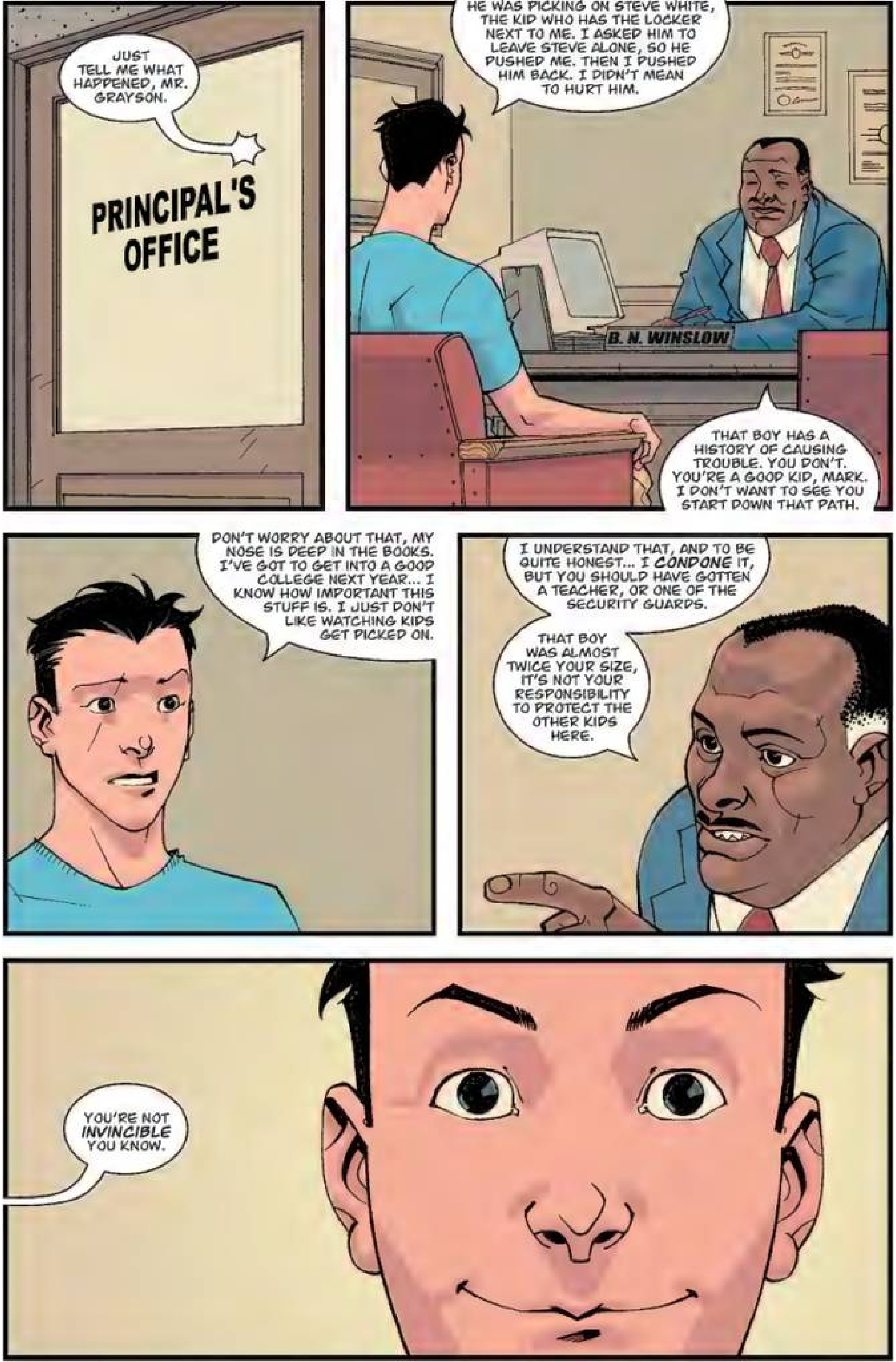

PROM DRESSES BY DAY, NUCLEAR POWERED SUITS OF ARMOR BY NIGHT...
TAILOR Shoppe
BREA
...WITH YOUR STANDARD SPANDEX NUMBER THROWN IN EVERY NOW AND THEN FOR GOOD MEASURE.
I'VE HAD THIS SECRET WORKSHOP HERE FOREVER.
WELL... HOW DOES IT FEEL?
I DON'T KNOW ABOUT THIS ORANGE AND YELLOW. I MEAN, IT SINGS... BUT I DON'T THINK IT'S THE TUNE WE'RE LOOKING FOR.
AND WHAT'S WITH ALL THESE WEIRD DISK THINGS?
THEY'RE SOLAR BATTERIES. I DESIGNED THAT COSTUME BACK WHEN I WAS UNDER THE IMPRESSION THAT YOU AND YOUR DAD'S POWERS WERE SOLAR POWER BASED.
IT'S A COMMON MISTAKE, DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT.
BEEP
BEEP
BEEP
BEEEP
CRAP, GRIDLOCK IS TEARING UP THE EAST SIDE BRIDGE! I'VE GOT TO GO!
USE THE NORTH--!
WHOOOOOOSH!

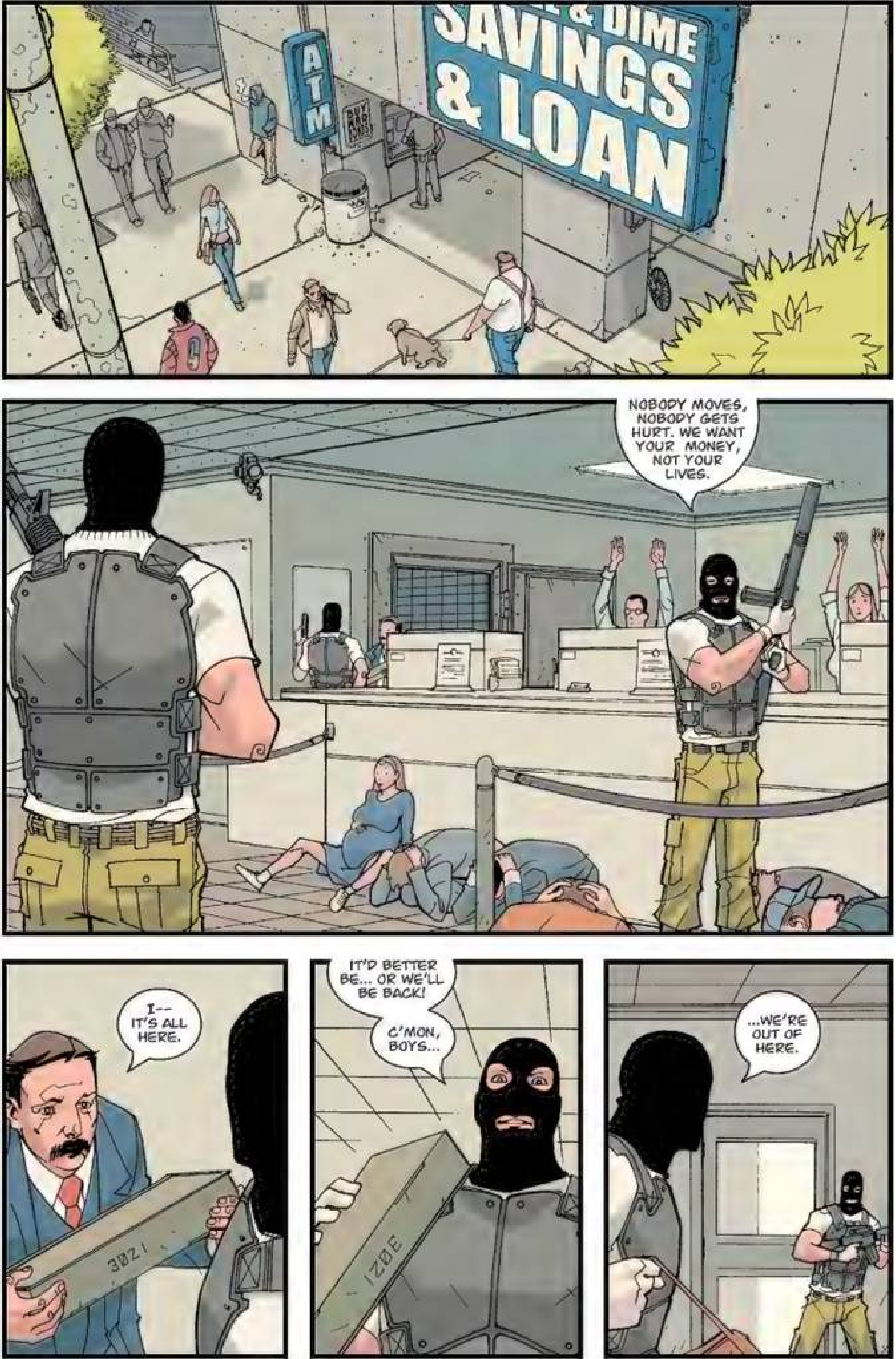

...HATCH.
NEVER MIND.
SORRY ABOUT THAT. YOU GET USED TO IT AFTER A WHILE.
YOU DON'T HAVE TO APOLOGIZE TO ME, I'VE BEEN WORKING WITH YOUR FATHER FOR YEARS. I KNOW HE HAS BIGGER PRIORITIES THAN LOOKING AT SILLY CLOTHES.
SO, WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THE COSTUME? BE HONEST.
I DON'T KNOW... IT JUST DOESN'T SEEM... ICONIC. DO YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN?
ALL TOO WELL. I HEAR THAT ALL THE TIME, EVERYONE WANTS ICONIC COSTUMES BUT NO ONE KNOWS WHAT THAT MEANS.
LOOK, ICONIC IS A LITTLE TRICKY TO DO, BUT YOUR DAD IS WELL... YOUR DAD, SO I'LL GIVE IT A SHOT, BUT I'M GOING TO NEED TO KNOW WHAT YOUR NAME IS GOING TO BE, THAT HELPS...
HAVE YOU DECIDED ON A NAME, YET?
NO. I HAVEN'T EVEN REALLY THOUGHT ABOUT IT.
WELL, SEE IF YOU CAN COME UP WITH A FEW GOOD ONES BEFORE YOU COME BACK HERE. THEN WE'LL SEE IF I CAN'T WHIP UP SOMETHING MORE ICONIC BASED ON THE NAME.

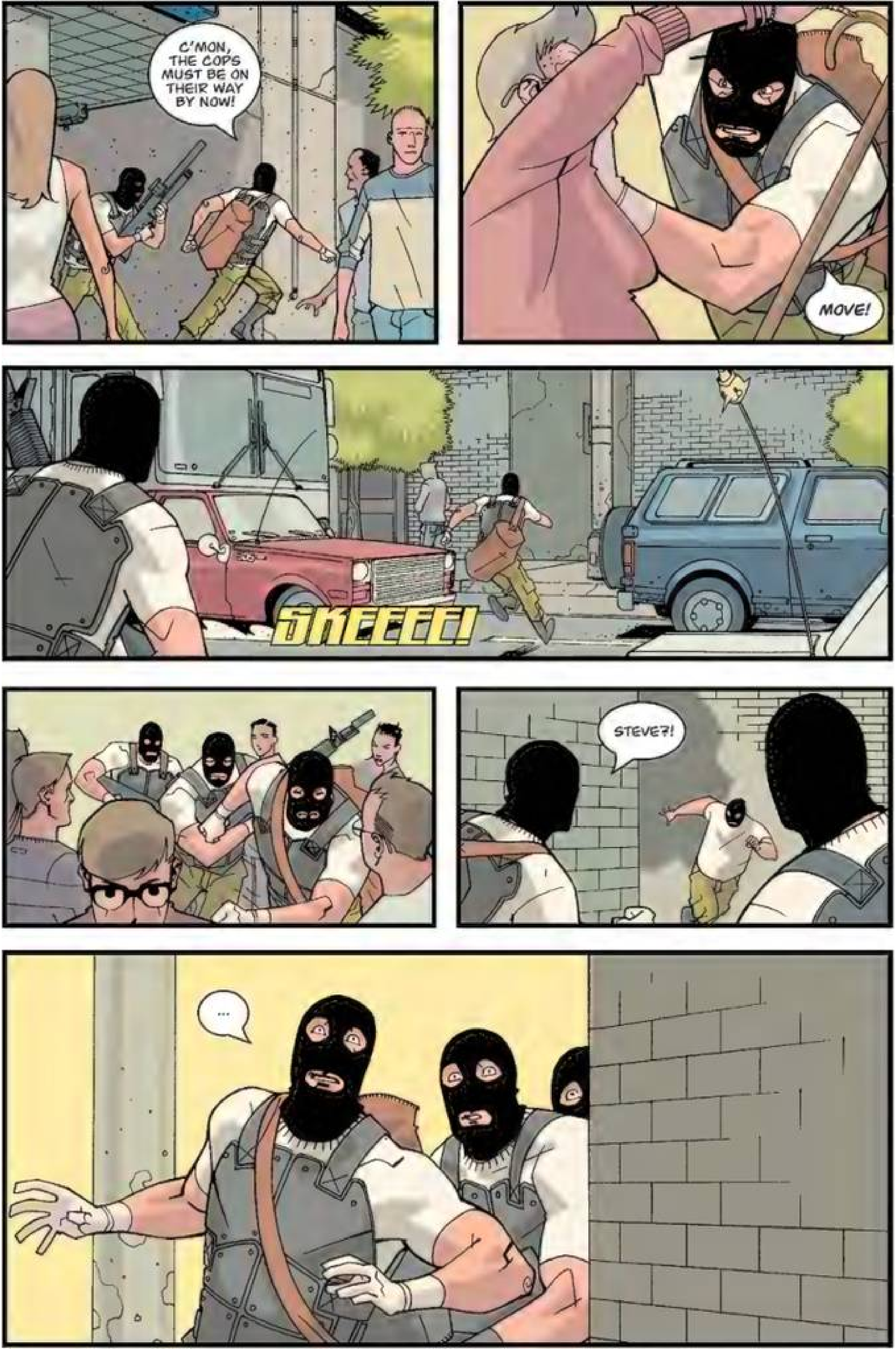

...OKAY, WE'RE CLOSING IN ON THE END OF THE PERIOD AND I CAN TELL BY HOW MANY OF YOU ARE DONE THAT YOU NEED MORE TIME.
GO AHEAD AND TAKE THEM HOME TO FINISH, JUST MAKE SURE YOU DON'T THANK ME FOR MY SYMPATHY BY NOT DOING THE WORK TONIGHT.
SCREW THAT... I'VE GOT FOOTBALL PRACTICE TONIGHT.
BUT, I THOUGHT WE WERE GOING OUT FOR PIZZA?
MOJO
TRUST ME, BABE. I'M NOT IN IT FOR THE PIZZA.
CAN YOU STAY AFTER CLASS, DEREK? I NEED TO SPEAK WITH YOU.
UM... WHAT DID I DO?
DANCE
TONITE
7:30
SLAYER

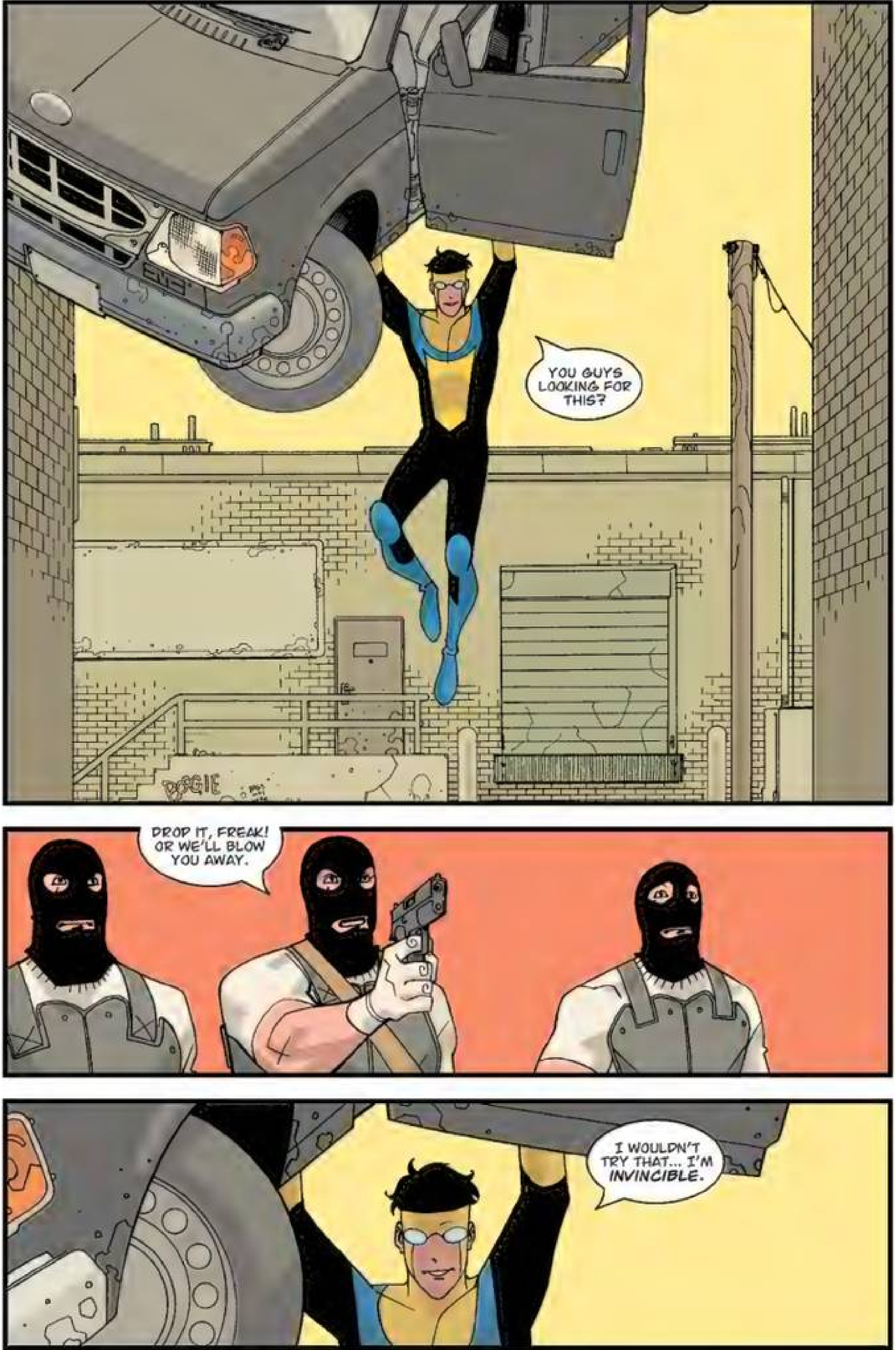

SO, YOU THINK YOU CAN SAY THAT AGAIN?
AND THIS TIME SAY IT TO MY FACE!
JUST LEAVE ME ALONE...
108
NOT SO BRAVE WHEN I'M RIGHT HERE IN FRONT OF YOU, ARE YOU?
HEY, MAN. WHY DON'T YOU LISTEN TO THE GUY AND JUST LEAVE HIM ALONE?
WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO PROVE?
WHAT'S THE MATTER, YOU FEELING LEFT OUT OR SOMETHING?
WELL, I'M SURE I CAN MAKE YOU FEEL INCLUDED.
O FOX TROTTERS!
HOW'S THIS?!
THAP!
tool

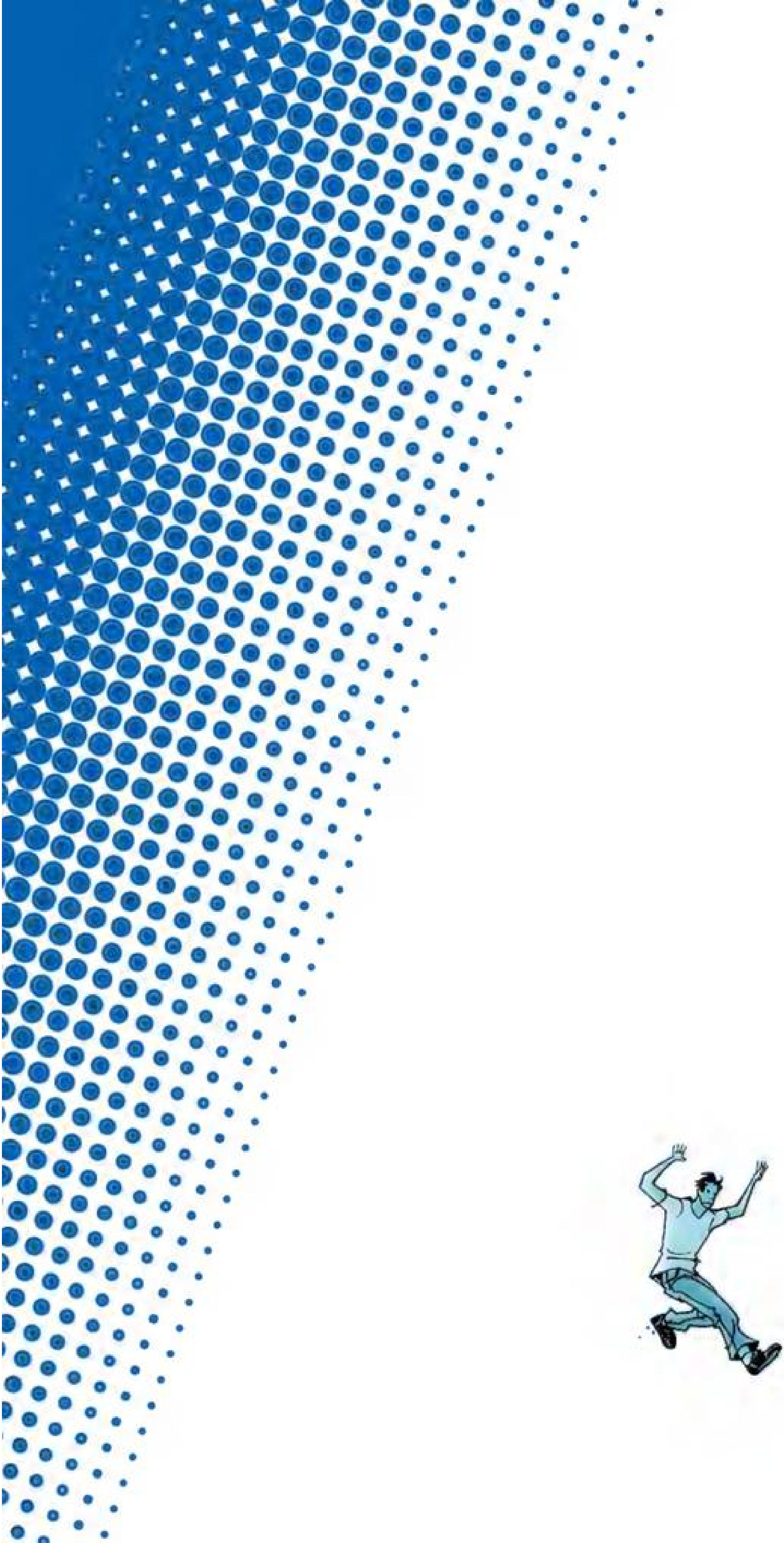

DOOM!
UGH...
DON'T MESS WITH HIM AGAIN, MAN.
WHAT THE HECK IS GOING ON HERE?


JUST TELL ME WHAT HAPPENED, MR. GRAYSON.
PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE
HE WAS PICKING ON STEVE WHITE, THE KID WHO HAS THE LOCKER NEXT TO ME. I ASKED HIM TO LEAVE STEVE ALONE, SO HE PUSHED ME. THEN I PUSHED HIM BACK. I DIDN'T MEAN TO HURT HIM.
B. N. WINSLOW
THAT BOY HAS A HISTORY OF CAUSING TROUBLE. YOU DON'T. YOU'RE A GOOD KID, MARK. I DON'T WANT TO SEE YOU START DOWN THAT PATH.
DON'T WORRY ABOUT THAT, MY NOSE IS DEEP IN THE BOOKS. I'VE GOT TO GET INTO A GOOD COLLEGE NEXT YEAR... I KNOW HOW IMPORTANT THIS STUFF IS. I JUST DON'T LIKE WATCHING KIDS GET PICKED ON.
I UNDERSTAND THAT, AND TO BE QUITE HONEST... I CONDONE IT, BUT YOU SHOULD HAVE GOTTEN A TEACHER, OR ONE OF THE SECURITY GUARDS.
THAT BOY WAS ALMOST TWICE YOUR SIZE, IT'S NOT YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT THE OTHER KIDS HERE.
YOU'RE NOT INVINCIBLE YOU KNOW.

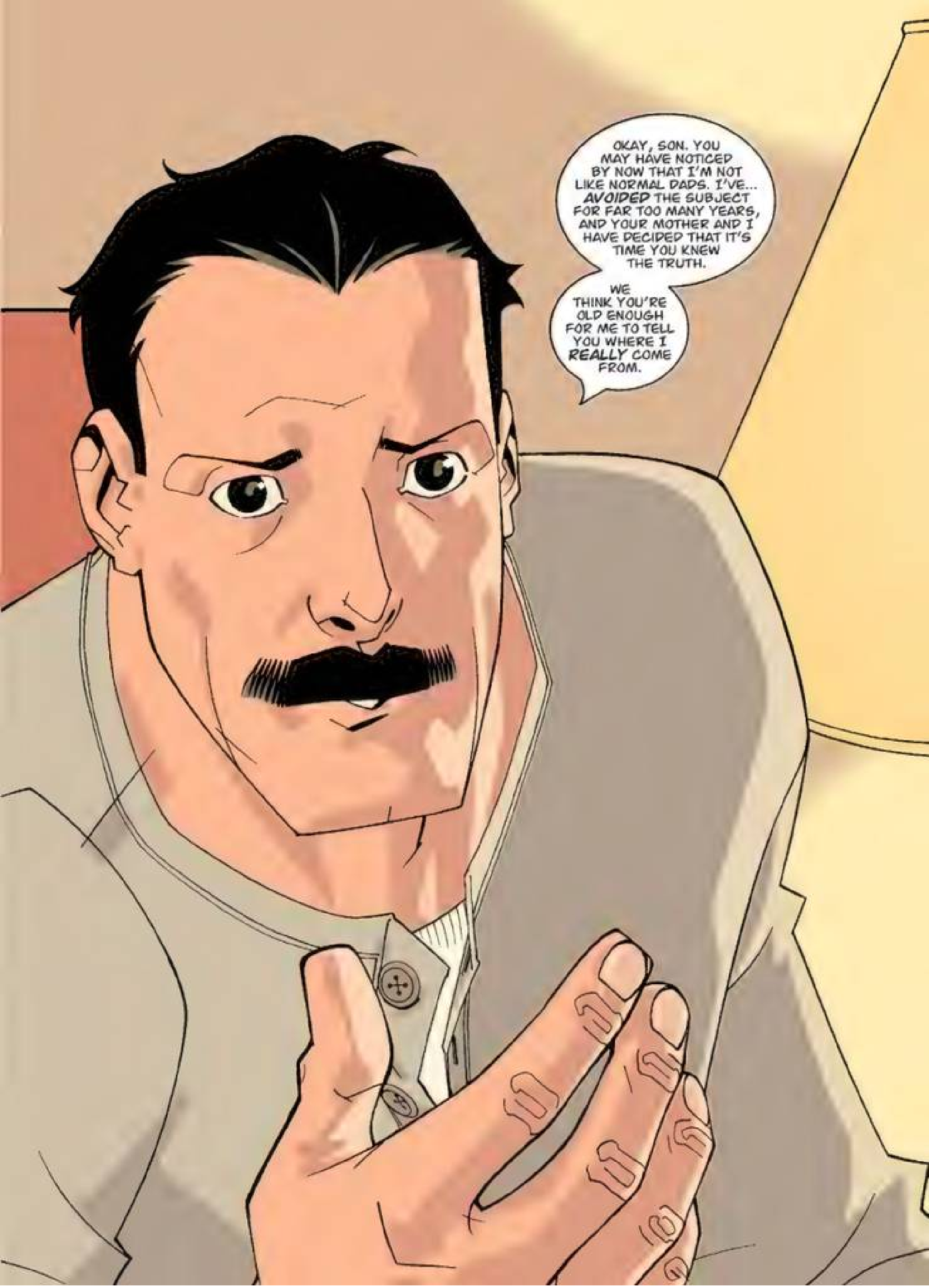

& DIME
SAVINGS
& LOAN
ATM
NOBODY MOVES, NOBODY GETS HURT. WE WANT YOUR MONEY, NOT YOUR LIVES.
I-- IT'S ALL HERE.
3021
IT'D BETTER BE... OR WE'LL BE BACK!
C'MON, BOYS...
3021
...WE'RE OUT OF HERE.

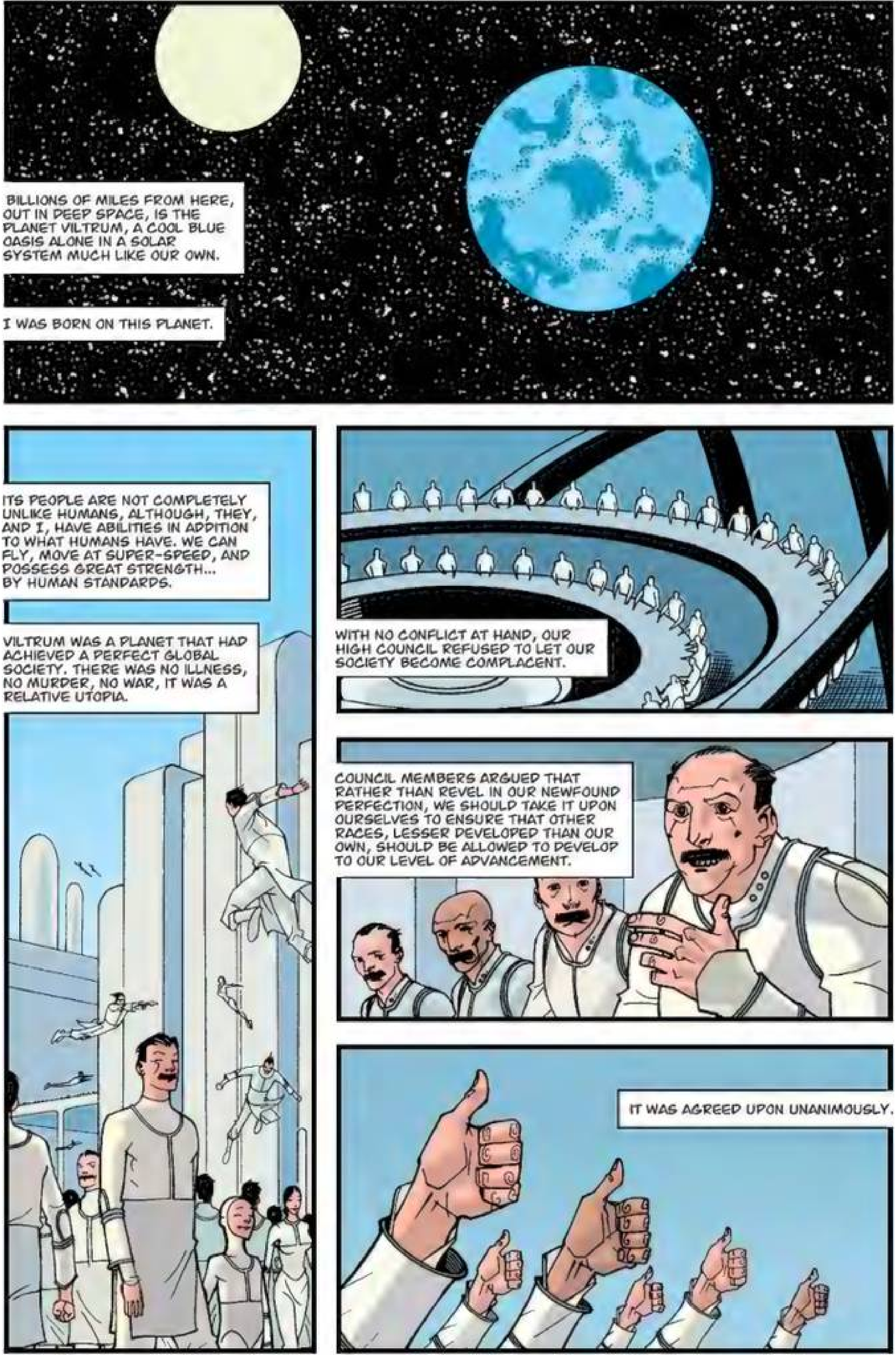

C'MON, THE COPS MUST BE ON THEIR WAY BY NOW!
MOVE!
SKEEEE!
STEVE?!
...

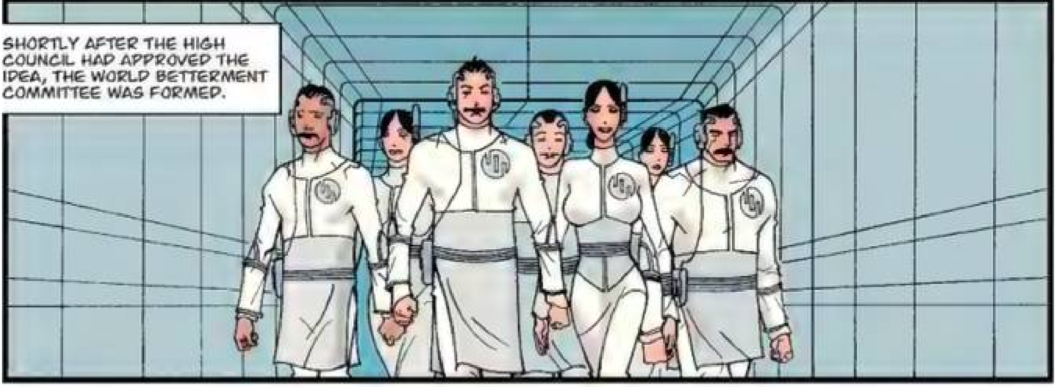

YOU GUYS LOOKING FOR THIS?
DROP IT, FREAK! OR WE'LL BLOW YOU AWAY.
I WOULDN'T TRY THAT... I'M *INVINCIBLE*.

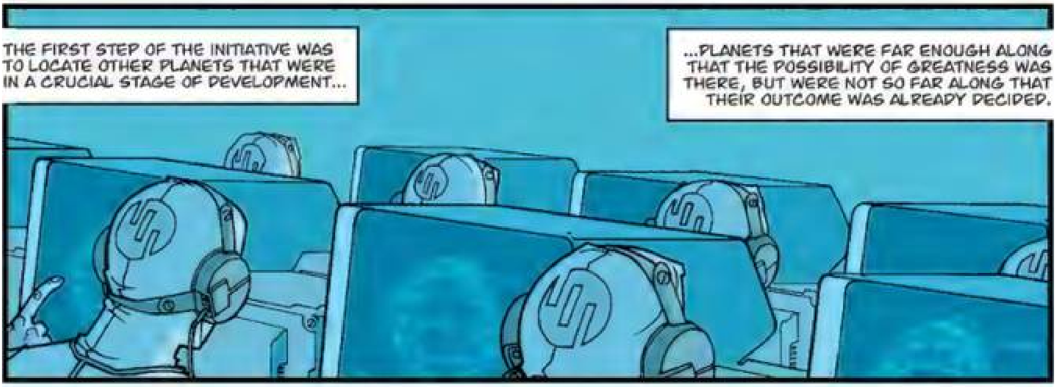


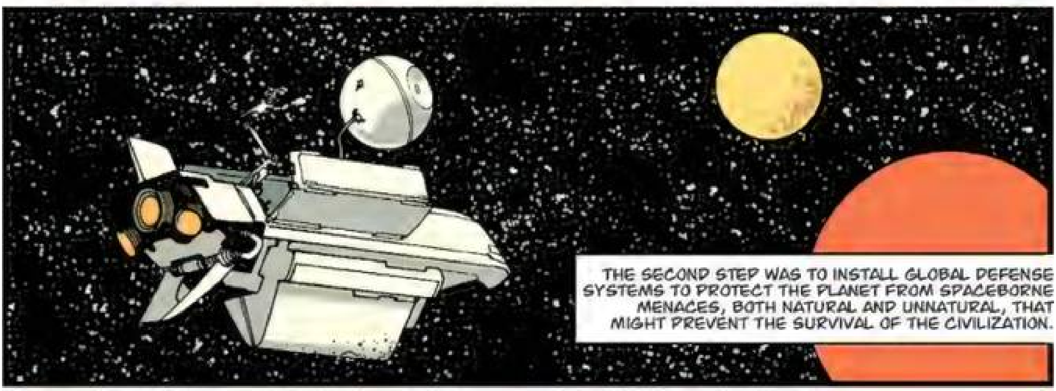
ISSUE TWO

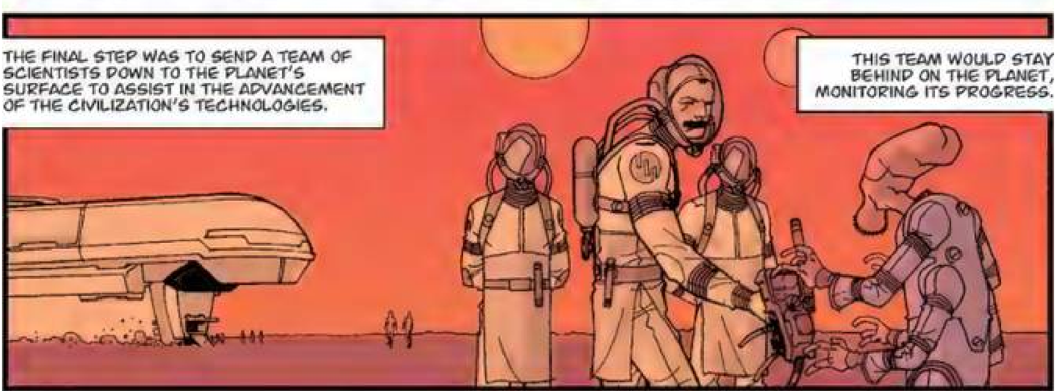

OKAY, SON. YOU MAY HAVE NOTICED BY NOW THAT I'M NOT LIKE NORMAL DADS. I'VE... ***AVOIDED*** THE SUBJECT FOR FAR TOO MANY YEARS, AND YOUR MOTHER AND I HAVE DECIDED THAT IT'S TIME YOU KNEW THE TRUTH.
WE THINK YOU'RE OLD ENOUGH FOR ME TO TELL YOU WHERE I ***REALLY*** COME FROM.

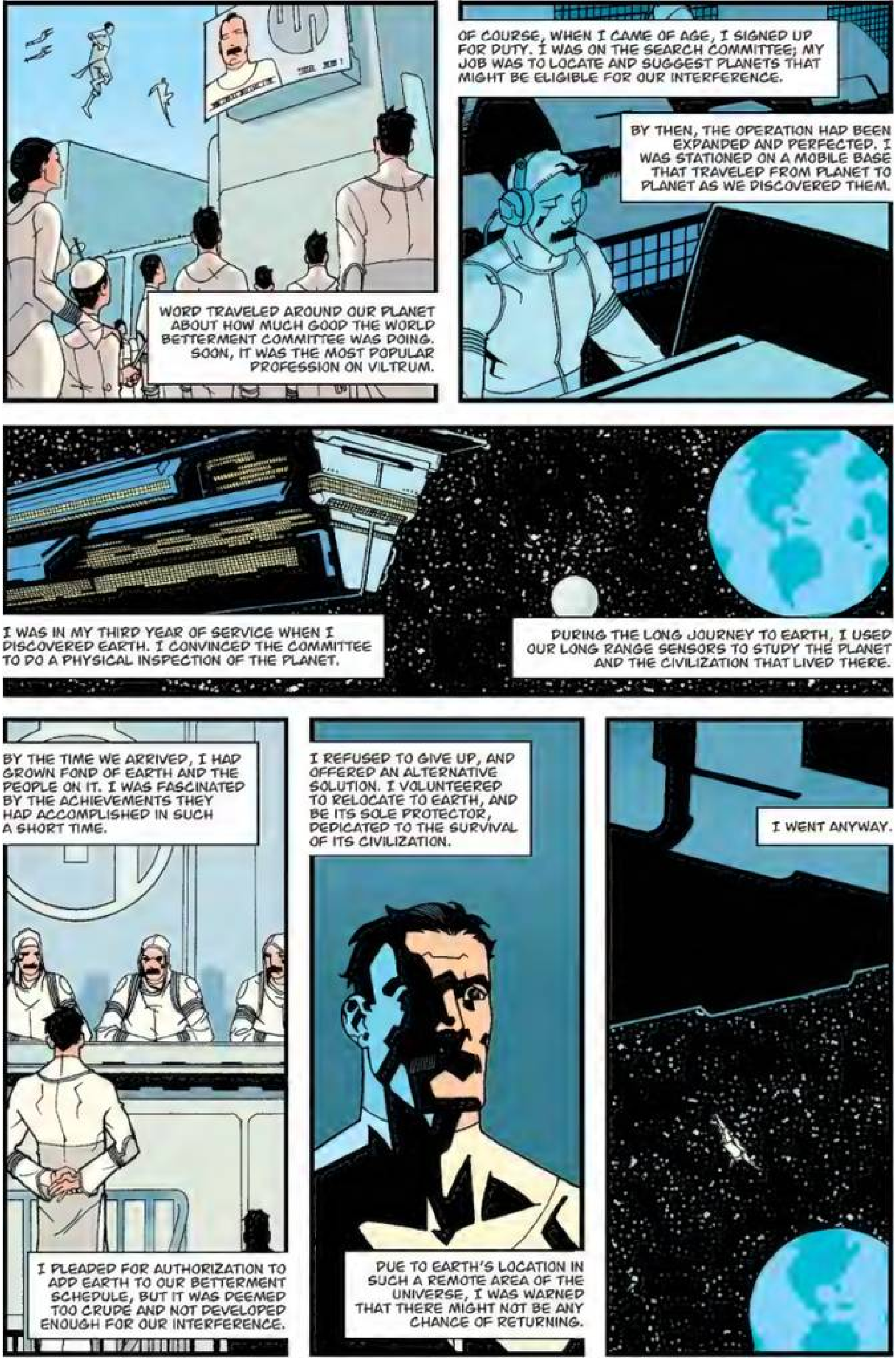

BILLIONS OF MILES FROM HERE, OUT IN DEEP SPACE, IS THE PLANET VILTRUM, A COOL BLUE OASIS ALONE IN A SOLAR SYSTEM MUCH LIKE OUR OWN.
I WAS BORN ON THIS PLANET.
ITS PEOPLE ARE NOT COMPLETELY UNLIKE HUMANS, ALTHOUGH, THEY, AND I, HAVE ABILITIES IN ADDITION TO WHAT HUMANS HAVE. WE CAN FLY, MOVE AT SUPER-SPEED, AND POSSESS GREAT STRENGTH... BY HUMAN STANDARDS.
VILTRUM WAS A PLANET THAT HAD ACHIEVED A PERFECT GLOBAL SOCIETY. THERE WAS NO ILLNESS, NO MURDER, NO WAR, IT WAS A RELATIVE UTOPIA.
WITH NO CONFLICT AT HAND, OUR HIGH COUNCIL REFUSED TO LET OUR SOCIETY BECOME COMPLACENT.
COUNCIL MEMBERS ARGUED THAT RATHER THAN REVEL IN OUR NEWFOUND PERFECTION, WE SHOULD TAKE IT UPON OURSELVES TO ENSURE THAT OTHER RACES, LESSER DEVELOPED THAN OUR OWN, SHOULD BE ALLOWED TO DEVELOP TO OUR LEVEL OF ADVANCEMENT.
IT WAS AGREED UPON UNANIMOUSLY.

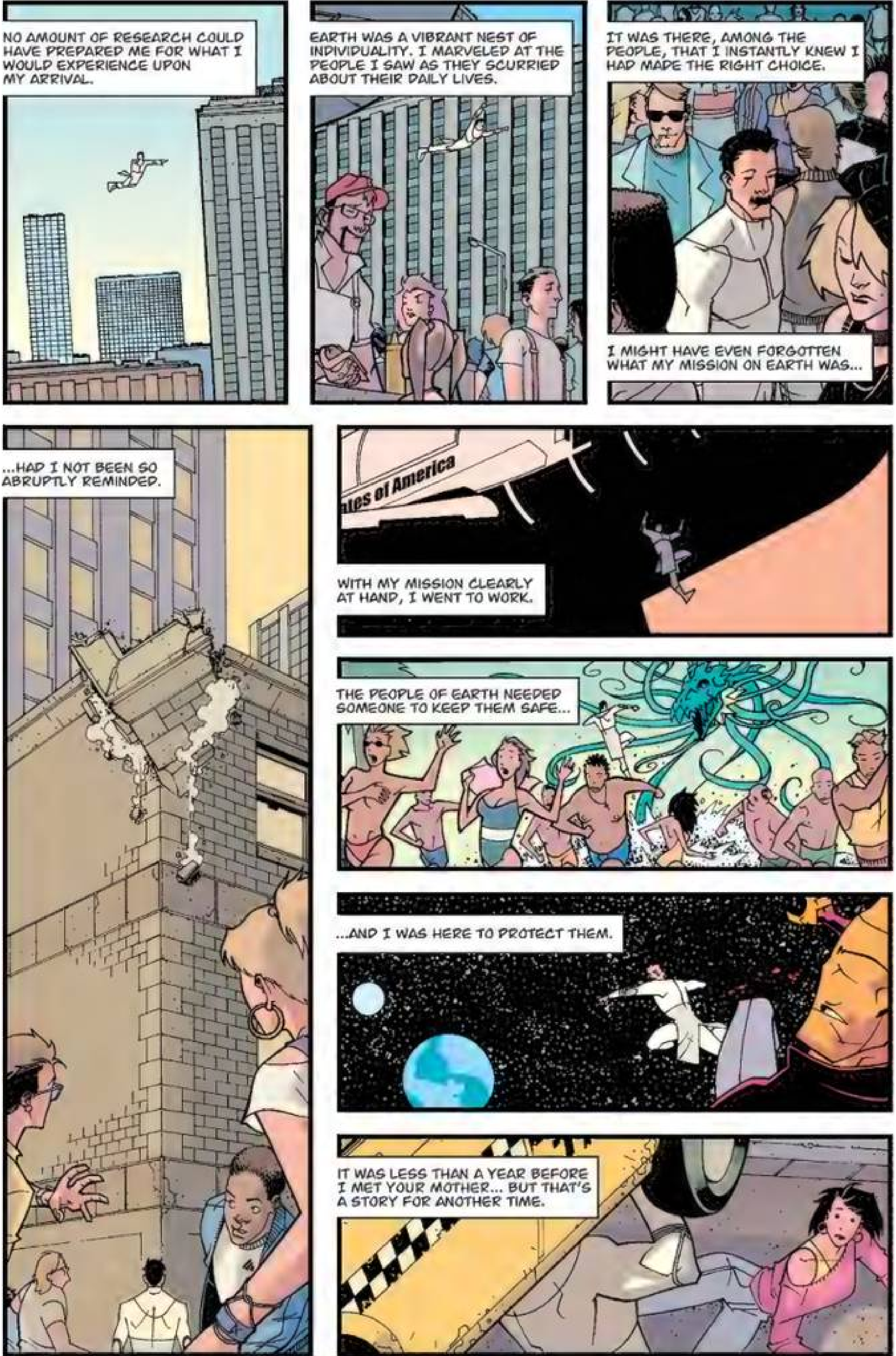

SHORTLY AFTER THE HIGH COUNCIL HAD APPROVED THE IDEA, THE WORLD BETTERMENT COMMITTEE WAS FORMED.

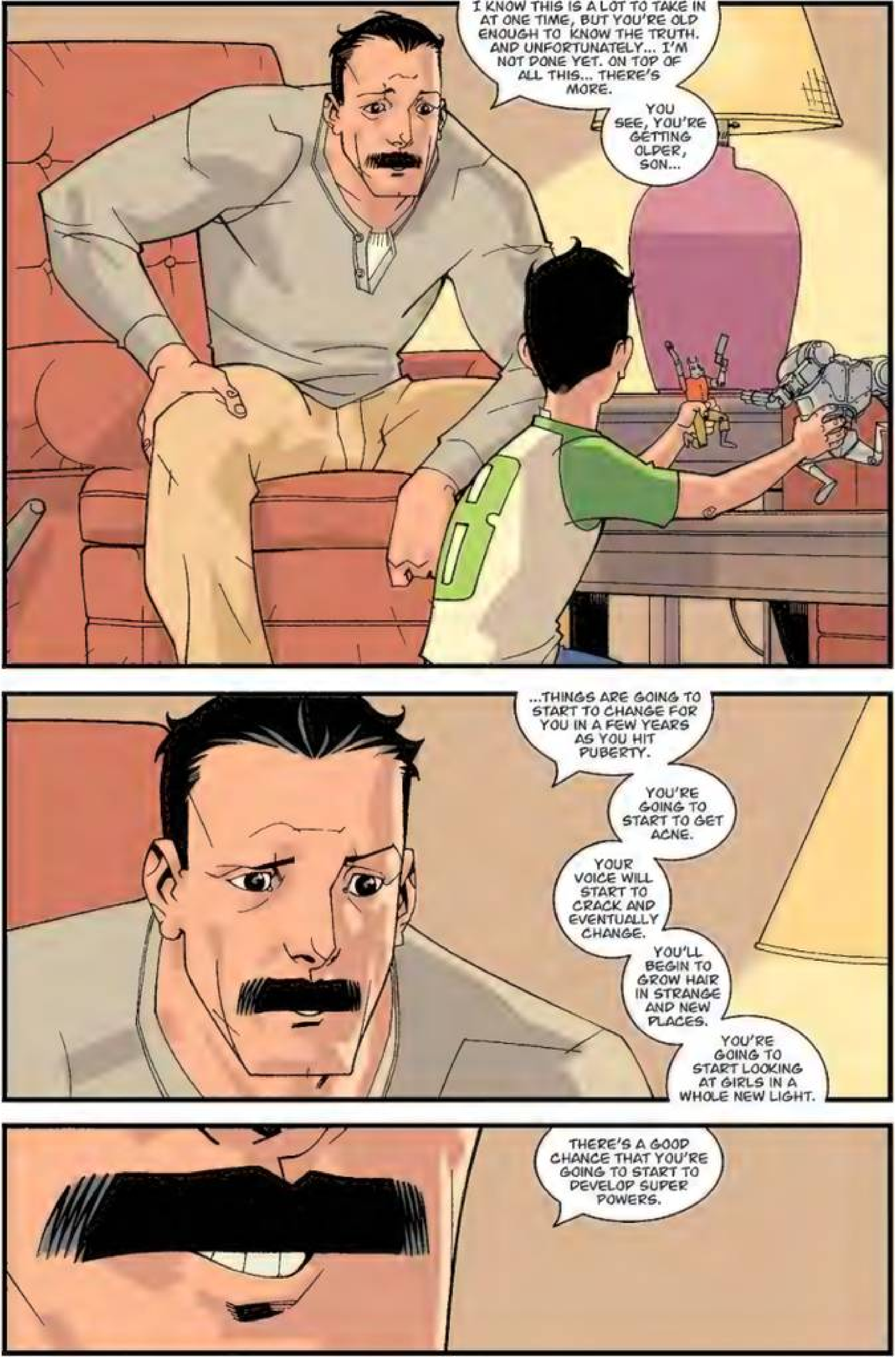

THE FIRST STEP OF THE INITIATIVE WAS TO LOCATE OTHER PLANETS THAT WERE IN A CRUCIAL STAGE OF DEVELOPMENT...
...PLANETS THAT WERE FAR ENOUGH ALONG THAT THE POSSIBILITY OF GREATNESS WAS THERE, BUT WERE NOT SO FAR ALONG THAT THEIR OUTCOME WAS ALREADY DECIDED.

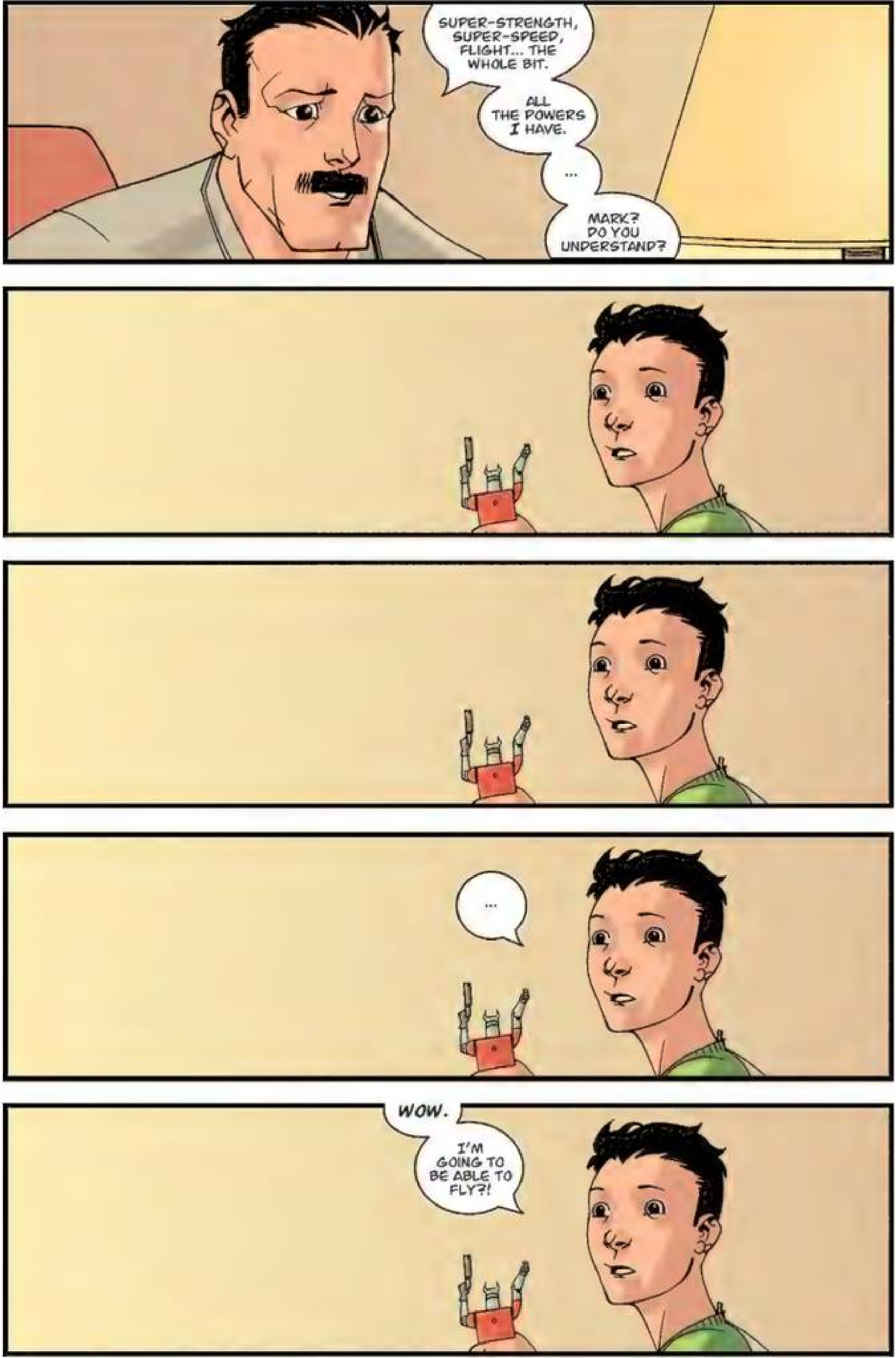

THE SECOND STEP WAS TO INSTALL GLOBAL DEFENSE SYSTEMS TO PROTECT THE PLANET FROM SPACEBORNE MENACES, BOTH NATURAL AND UNNATURAL, THAT MIGHT PREVENT THE SURVIVAL OF THE CIVILIZATION.

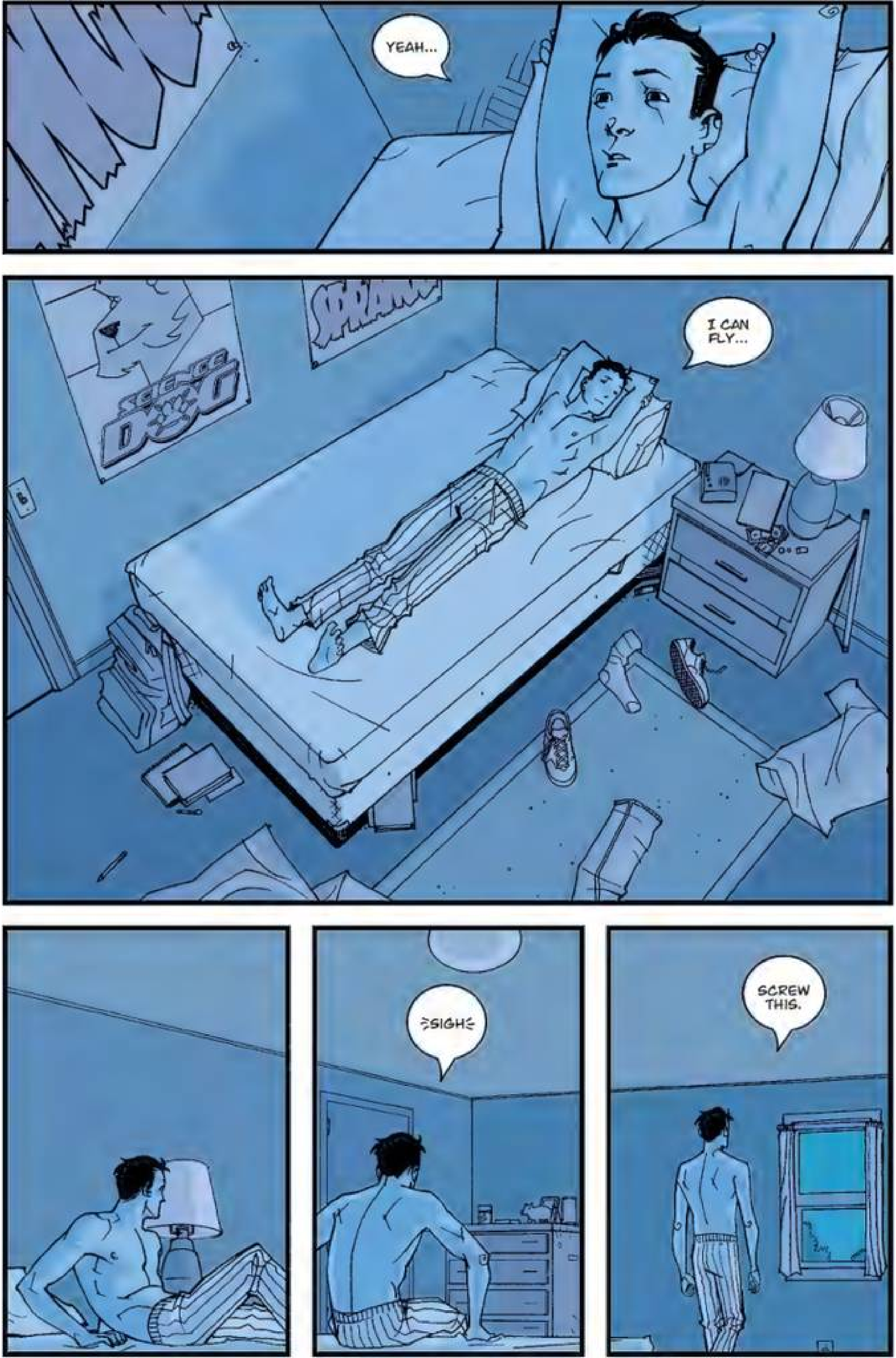

THE FINAL STEP WAS TO SEND A TEAM OF SCIENTISTS DOWN TO THE PLANET'S SURFACE TO ASSIST IN THE ADVANCEMENT OF THE CIVILIZATION'S TECHNOLOGIES.
THIS TEAM WOULD STAY BEHIND ON THE PLANET, MONITORING ITS PROGRESS.

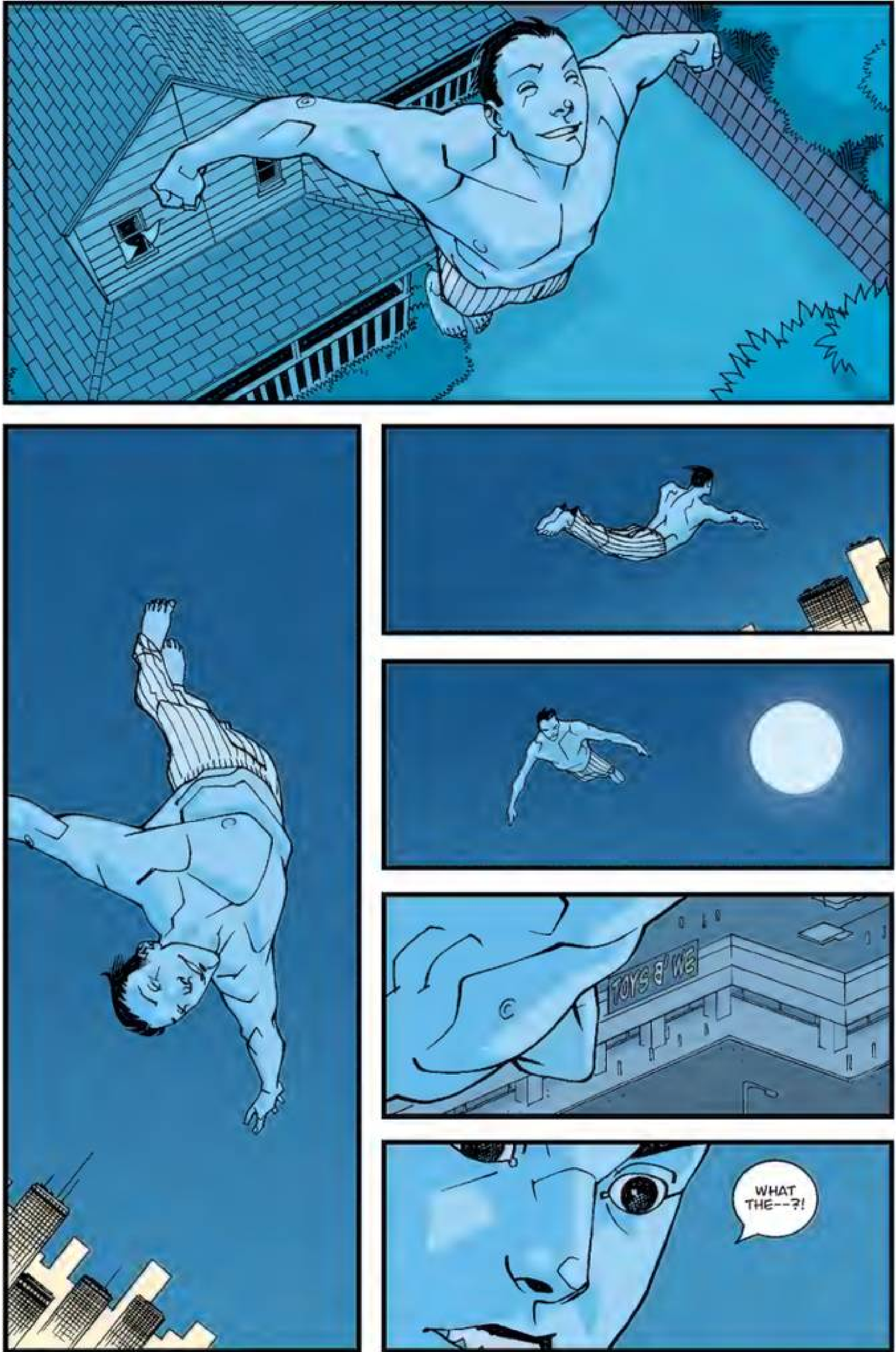

WORD TRAVELED AROUND OUR PLANET ABOUT HOW MUCH GOOD THE WORLD BETTERMENT COMMITTEE WAS DOING. SOON, IT WAS THE MOST POPULAR PROFESSION ON VILTRUM.
OF COURSE, WHEN I CAME OF AGE, I SIGNED UP FOR DUTY. I WAS ON THE SEARCH COMMITTEE; MY JOB WAS TO LOCATE AND SUGGEST PLANETS THAT MIGHT BE ELIGIBLE FOR OUR INTERFERENCE.
BY THEN, THE OPERATION HAD BEEN EXPANDED AND PERFECTED. I WAS STATIONED ON A MOBILE BASE THAT TRAVELED FROM PLANET TO PLANET AS WE DISCOVERED THEM.
I WAS IN MY THIRD YEAR OF SERVICE WHEN I DISCOVERED EARTH. I CONVINCED THE COMMITTEE TO DO A PHYSICAL INSPECTION OF THE PLANET.
DURING THE LONG JOURNEY TO EARTH, I USED OUR LONG RANGE SENSORS TO STUDY THE PLANET AND THE CIVILIZATION THAT LIVED THERE.
BY THE TIME WE ARRIVED, I HAD GROWN FOND OF EARTH AND THE PEOPLE ON IT. I WAS FASCINATED BY THE ACHIEVEMENTS THEY HAD ACCOMPLISHED IN SUCH A SHORT TIME.
I PLEADED FOR AUTHORIZATION TO ADD EARTH TO OUR BETTERMENT SCHEDULE, BUT IT WAS DEEMED TOO CRUDE AND NOT DEVELOPED ENOUGH FOR OUR INTERFERENCE.
I REFUSED TO GIVE UP, AND OFFERED AN ALTERNATIVE SOLUTION. I VOLUNTEERED TO RELOCATE TO EARTH, AND BE ITS SOLE PROTECTOR, DEDICATED TO THE SURVIVAL OF ITS CIVILIZATION.
DUE TO EARTH'S LOCATION IN SUCH A REMOTE AREA OF THE UNIVERSE, I WAS WARNED THAT THERE MIGHT NOT BE ANY CHANCE OF RETURNING.
I WENT ANYWAY.

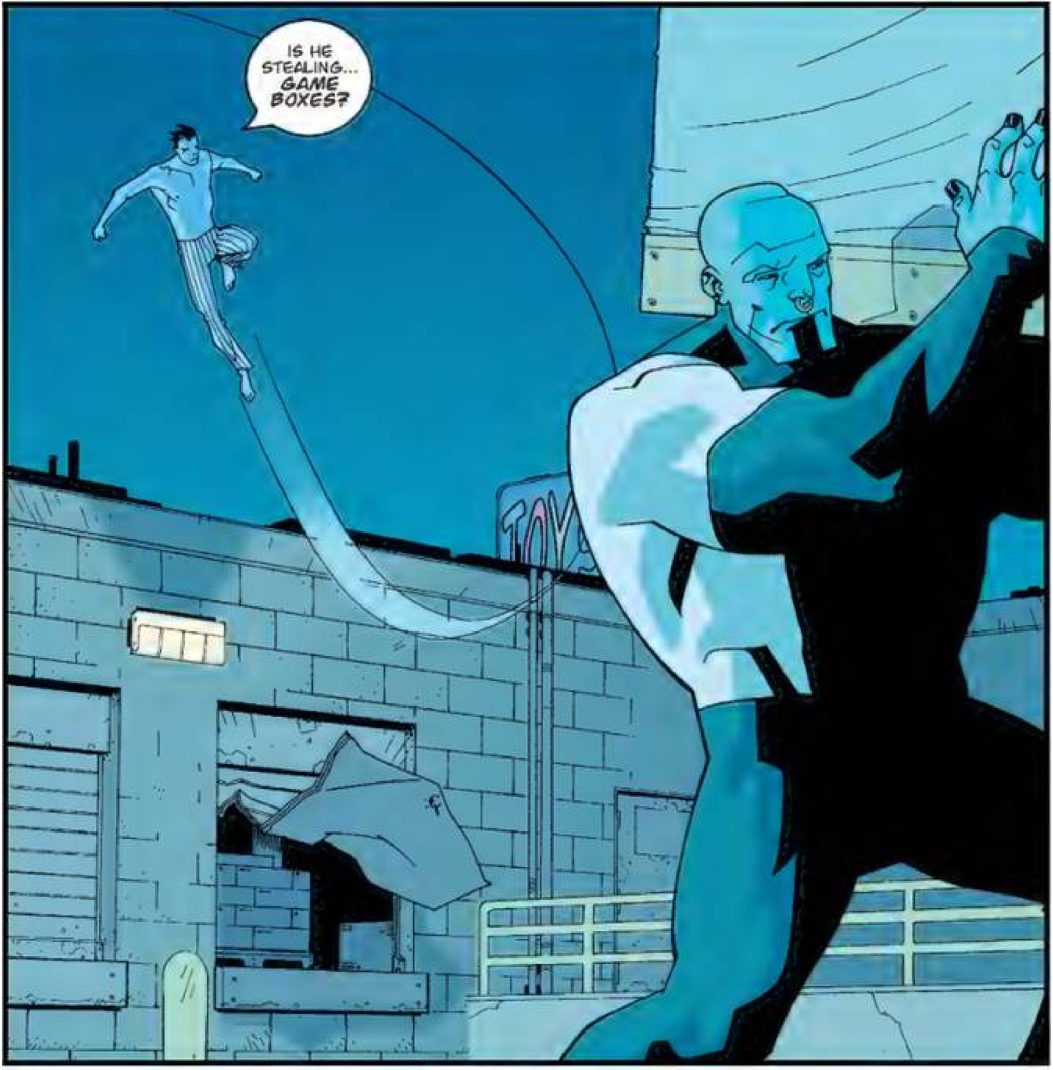

NO AMOUNT OF RESEARCH COULD HAVE PREPARED ME FOR WHAT I WOULD EXPERIENCE UPON MY ARRIVAL.
EARTH WAS A VIBRANT NEST OF INDIVIDUALITY. I MARVELED AT THE PEOPLE I SAW AS THEY SCURRIED ABOUT THEIR DAILY LIVES.
IT WAS THERE, AMONG THE PEOPLE, THAT I INSTANTLY KNEW I HAD MADE THE RIGHT CHOICE.
I MIGHT HAVE EVEN FORGOTTEN WHAT MY MISSION ON EARTH WAS...
...HAD I NOT BEEN SO ABRUPTLY REMINDED.
ates of America
WITH MY MISSION CLEARLY AT HAND, I WENT TO WORK.
THE PEOPLE OF EARTH NEEDED SOMEONE TO KEEP THEM SAFE...
...AND I WAS HERE TO PROTECT THEM.
IT WAS LESS THAN A YEAR BEFORE I MET YOUR MOTHER... BUT THAT'S A STORY FOR ANOTHER TIME.

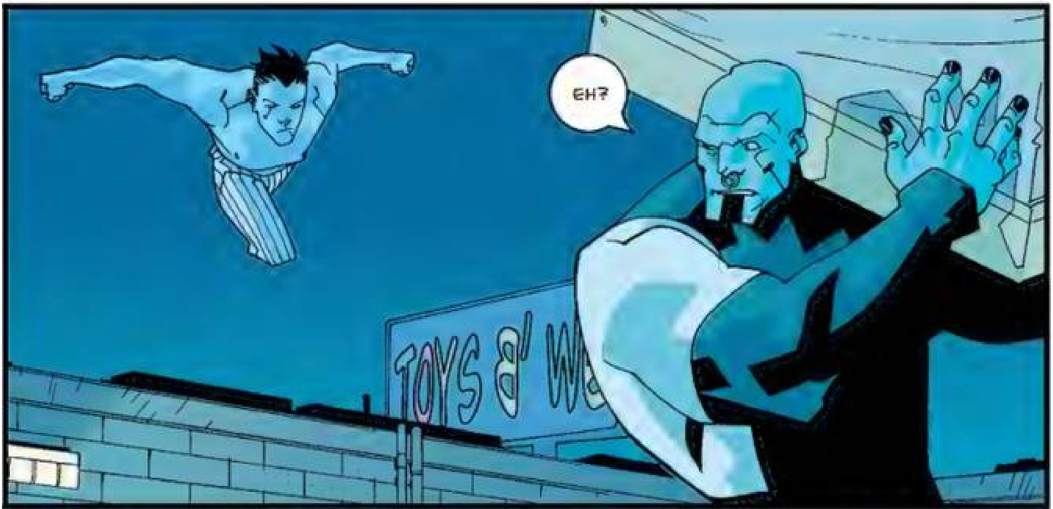

I KNOW THIS IS A LOT TO TAKE IN AT ONE TIME, BUT YOU'RE OLD ENOUGH TO KNOW THE TRUTH. AND UNFORTUNATELY... I'M NOT DONE YET. ON TOP OF ALL THIS... THERE'S MORE.
YOU SEE, YOU'RE GETTING OLDER, SON...
...THINGS ARE GOING TO START TO CHANGE FOR YOU IN A FEW YEARS AS YOU HIT PUBERTY.
YOU'RE GOING TO START TO GET ACNE.
YOUR VOICE WILL START TO CRACK AND EVENTUALLY CHANGE.
YOU'LL BEGIN TO GROW HAIR IN STRANGE AND NEW PLACES.
YOU'RE GOING TO START LOOKING AT GIRLS IN A WHOLE NEW LIGHT.
THERE'S A GOOD CHANCE THAT YOU'RE GOING TO START TO DEVELOP SUPER POWERS.

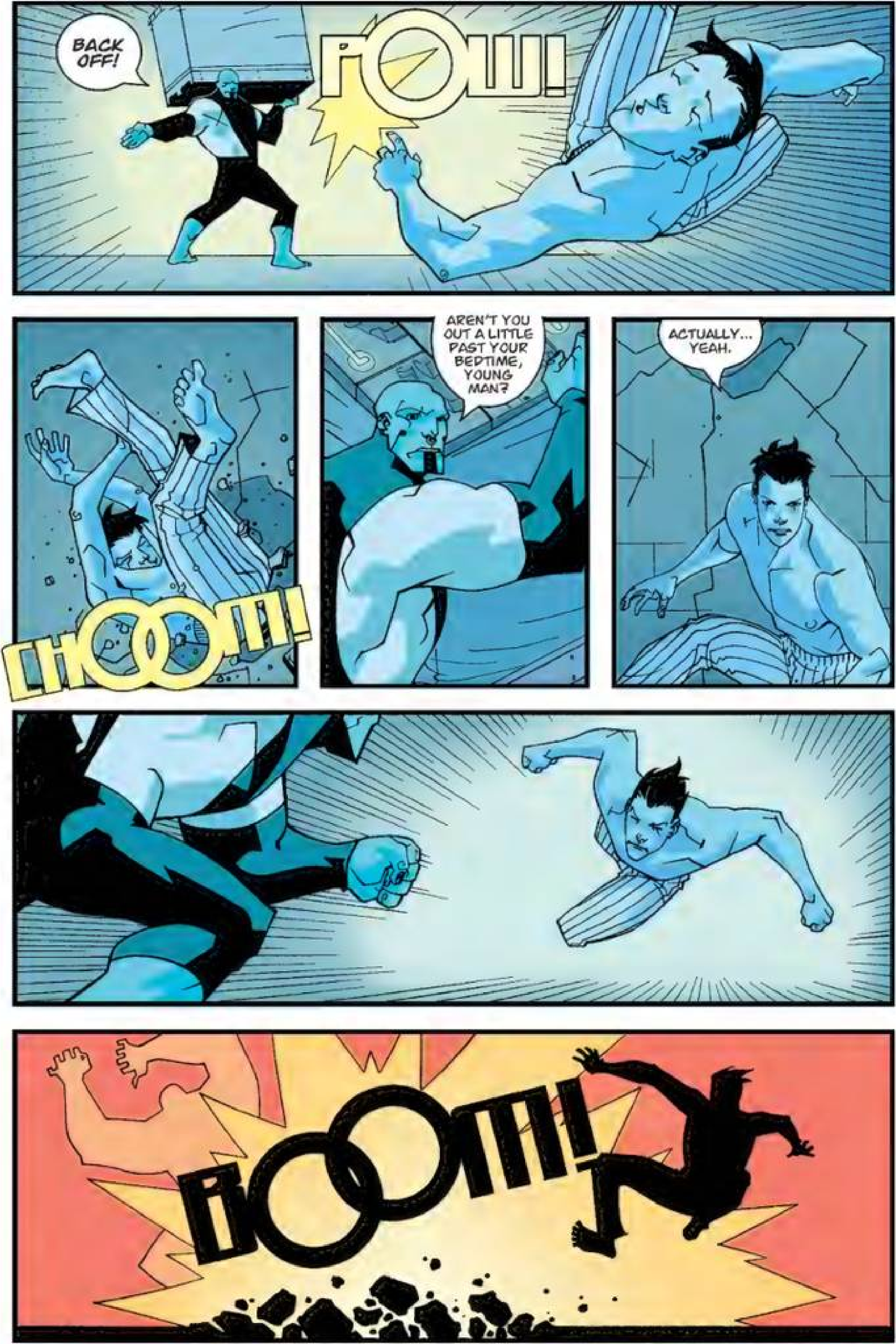

SUPER-STRENGTH, SUPER-SPEED, FLIGHT... THE WHOLE BIT.
ALL THE POWERS I HAVE.
...
MARK? DO YOU UNDERSTAND?
...
WOW.
I'M GOING TO BE ABLE TO FLY?!

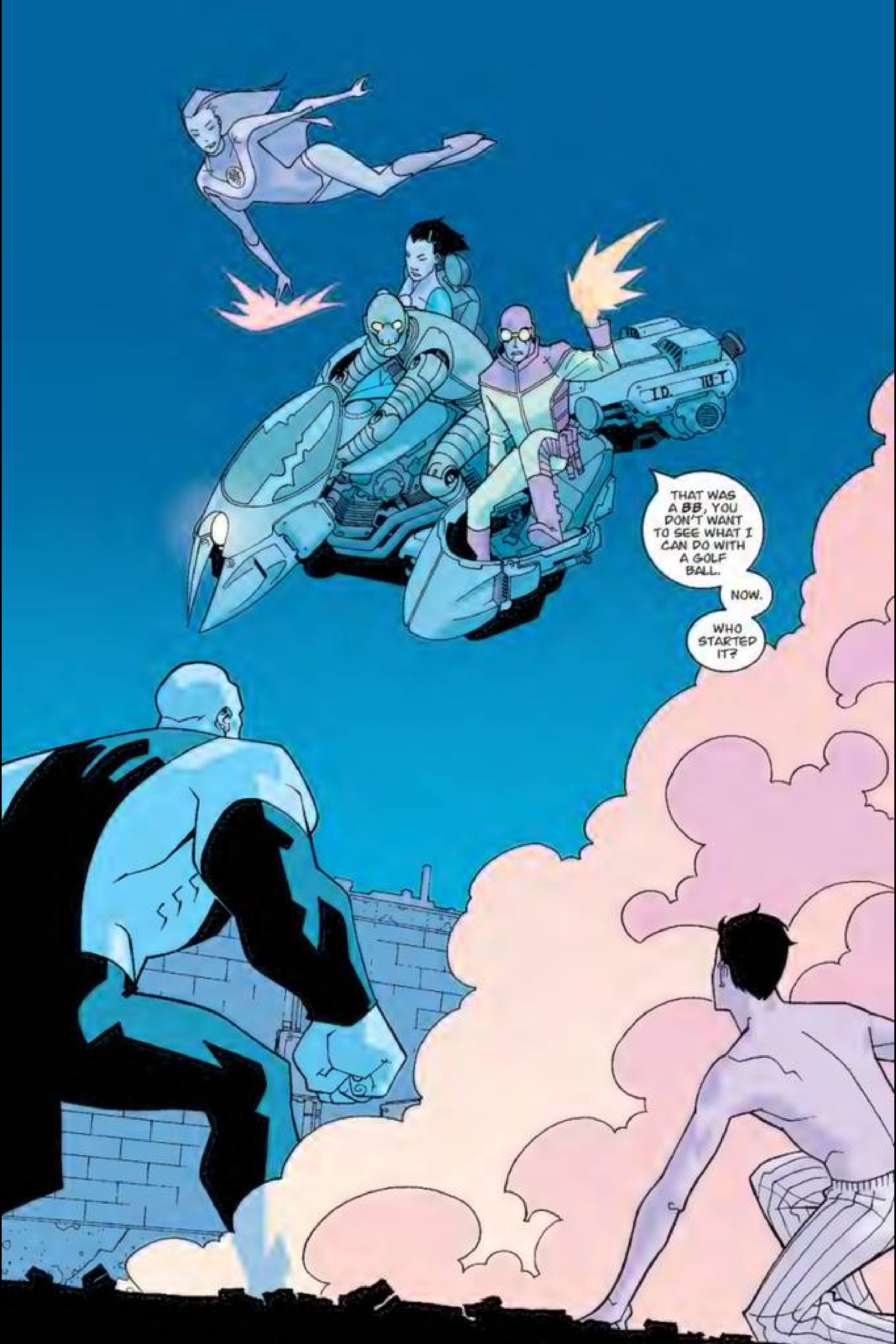

YEAH...
I CAN FLY...
≈SIGH≈
SCREW THIS.

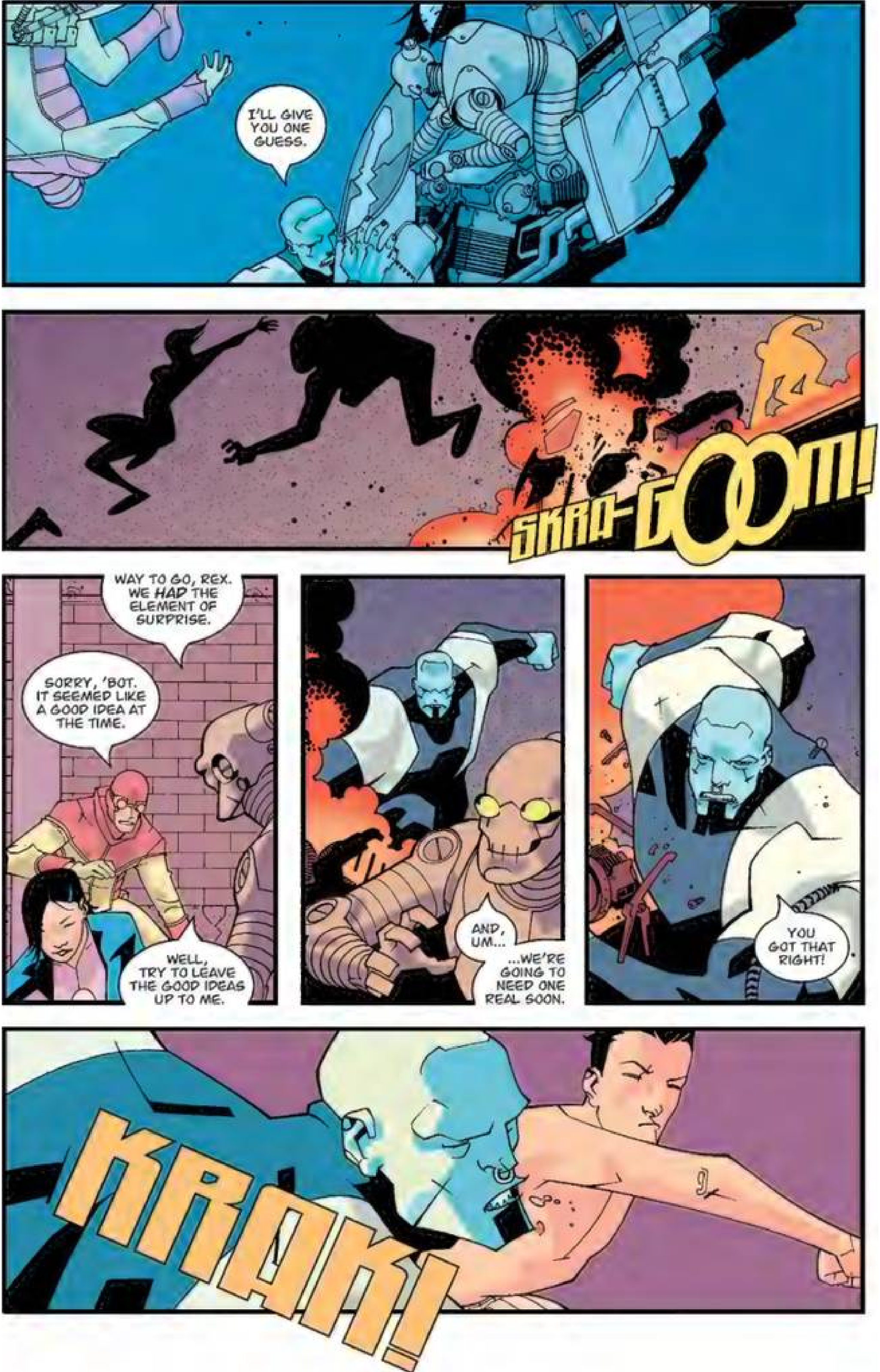

TOYS B' WE
WHAT THE--?!

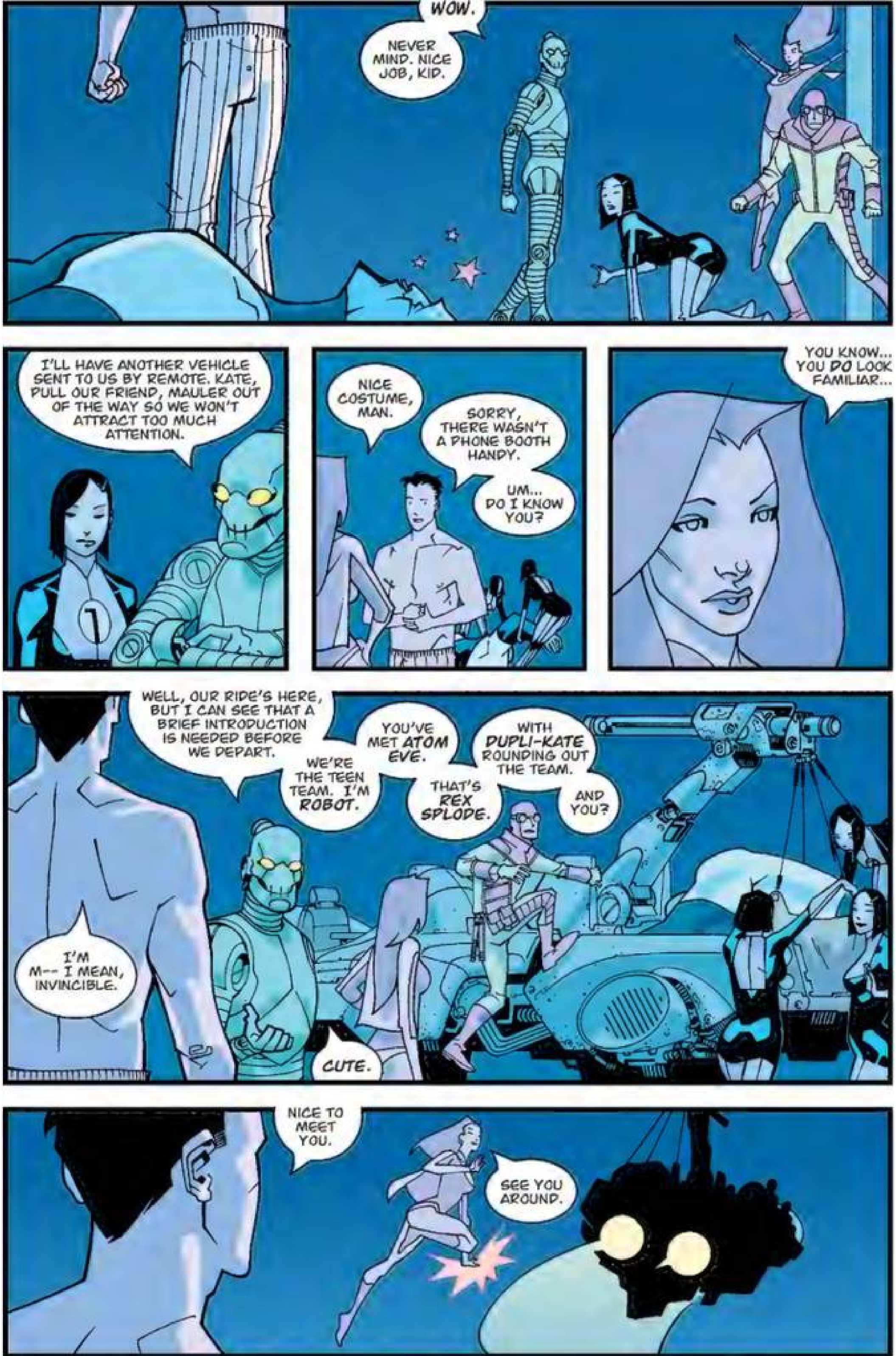

IS HE STEALING... *GAME BOXES?*
TOYS

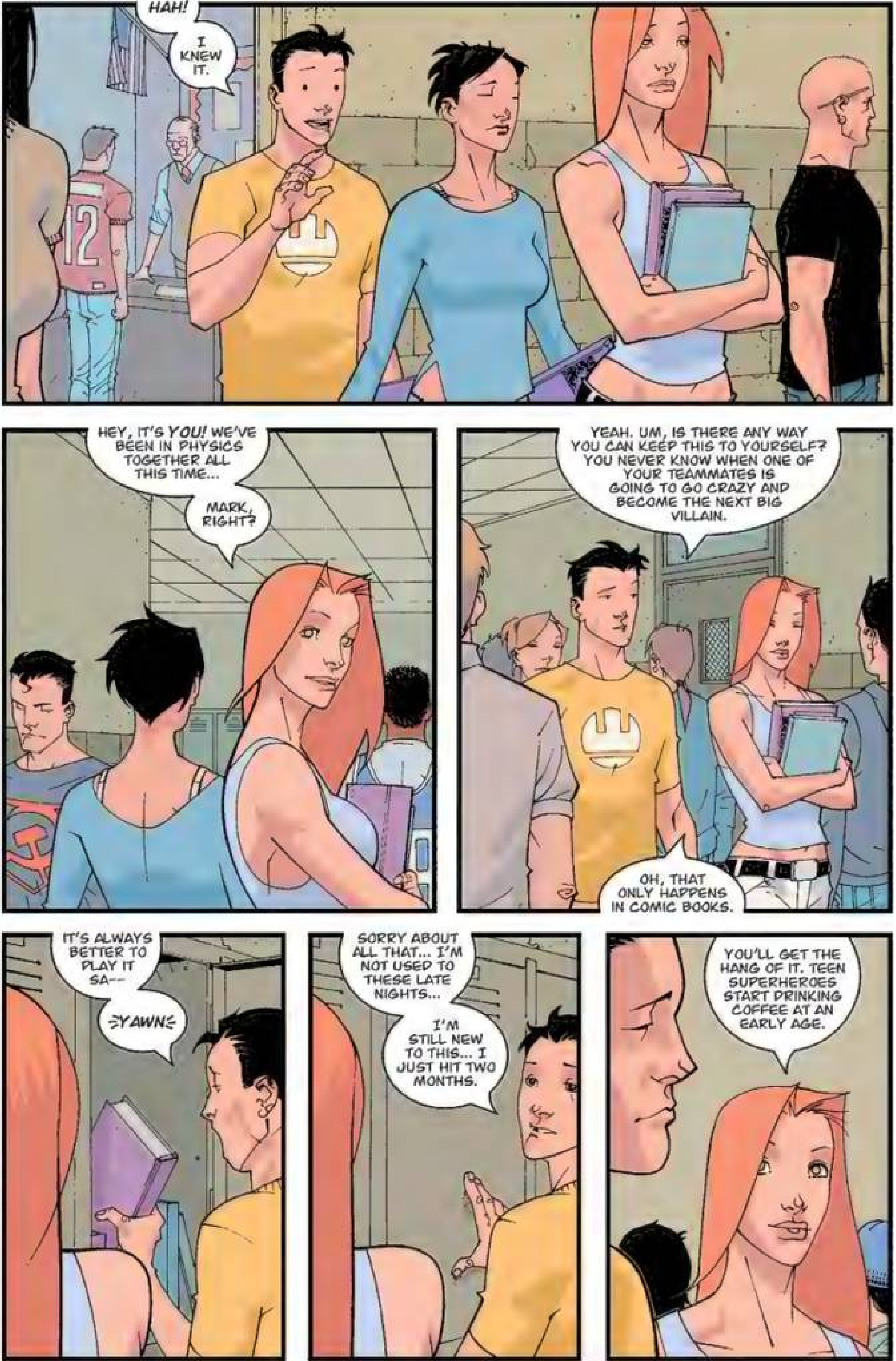

EH?
TOYS & W

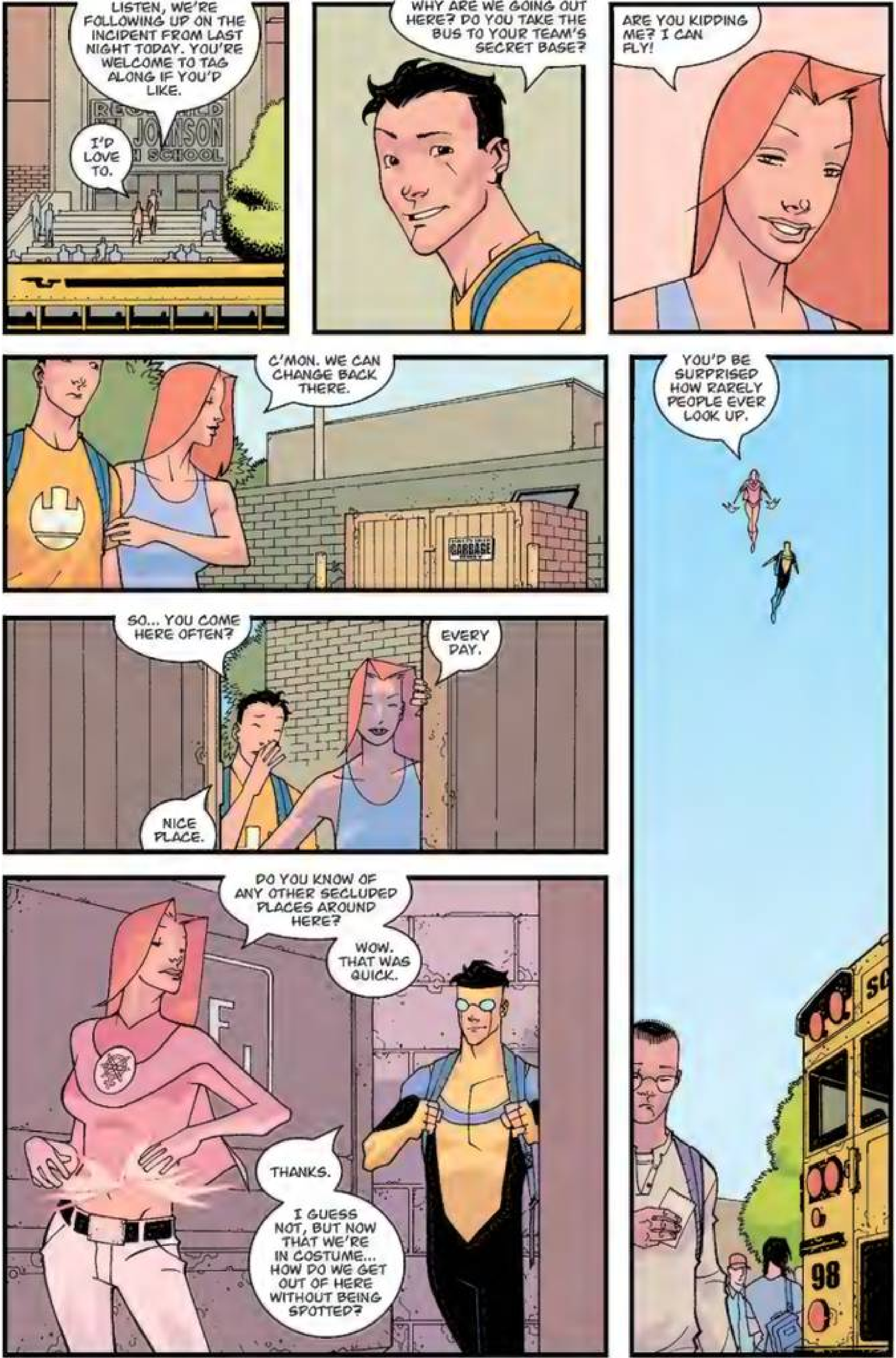

BACK OFF!
POW!
CHOOM!
AREN'T YOU OUT A LITTLE PAST YOUR BEDTIME, YOUNG MAN?
ACTUALLY... YEAH.
BOOM!

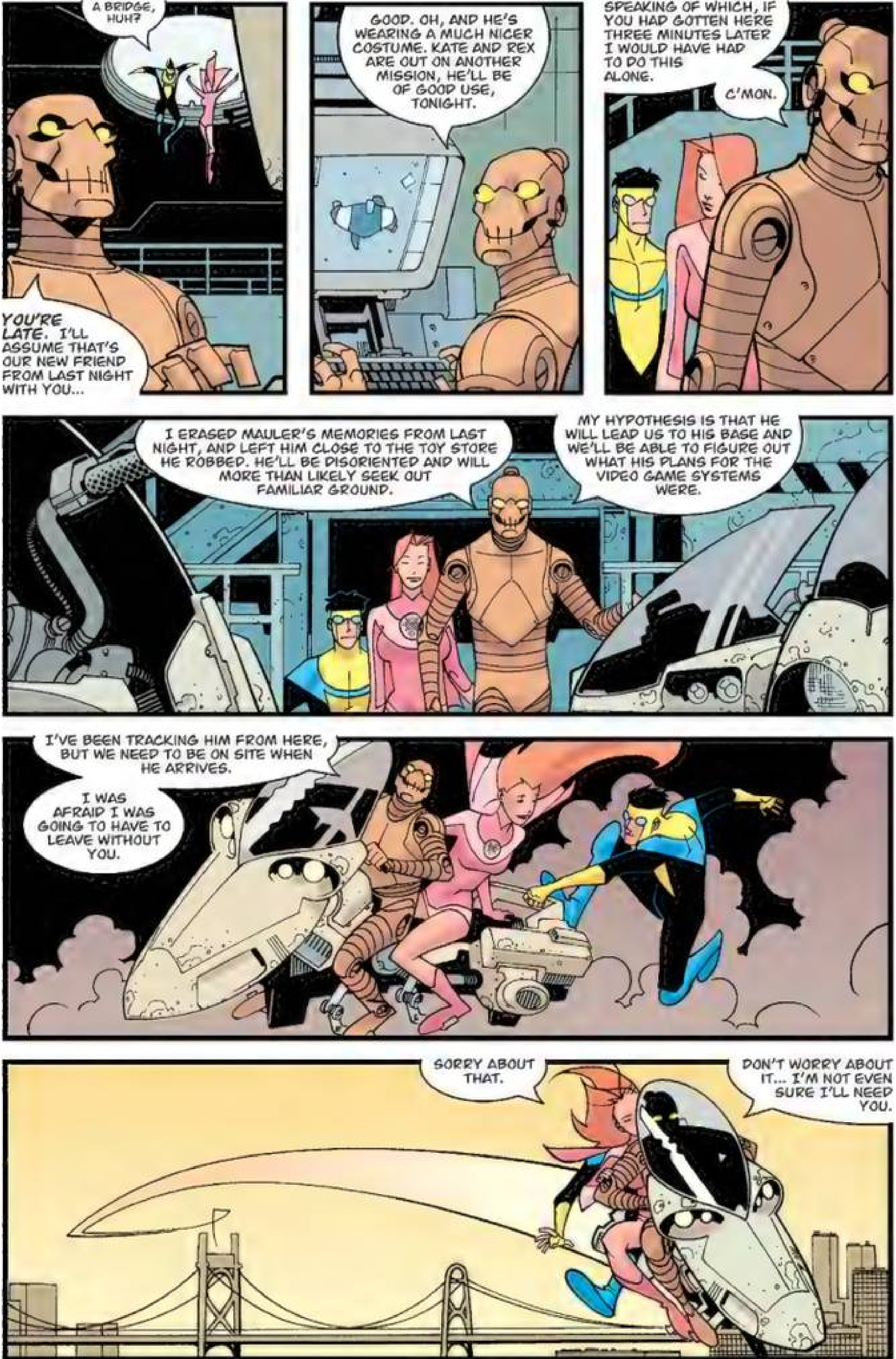

I.D.
III-I
THAT WAS A BB, YOU DON'T WANT TO SEE WHAT I CAN DO WITH A GOLF BALL.
NOW.
WHO STARTED IT?

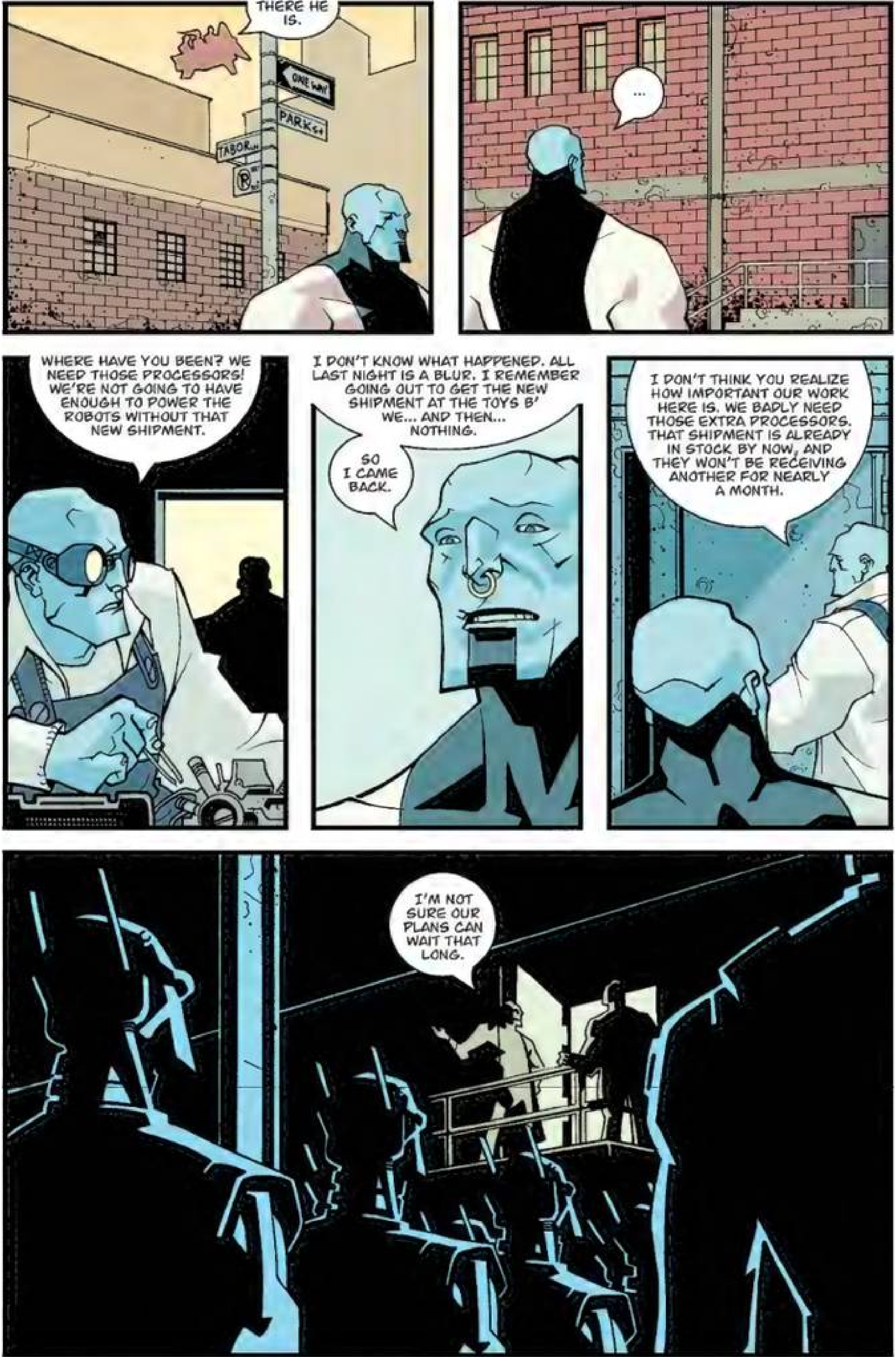

I'LL GIVE YOU ONE GUESS.
SKRA-GOOOM!
WAY TO GO, REX. WE *HAD* THE ELEMENT OF SURPRISE.
SORRY, 'BOT. IT SEEMED LIKE A GOOD IDEA AT THE TIME.
WELL, TRY TO LEAVE THE GOOD IDEAS UP TO ME.
AND, UM...
...WE'RE GOING TO NEED ONE REAL SOON.
YOU GOT THAT RIGHT!
KRAAK!

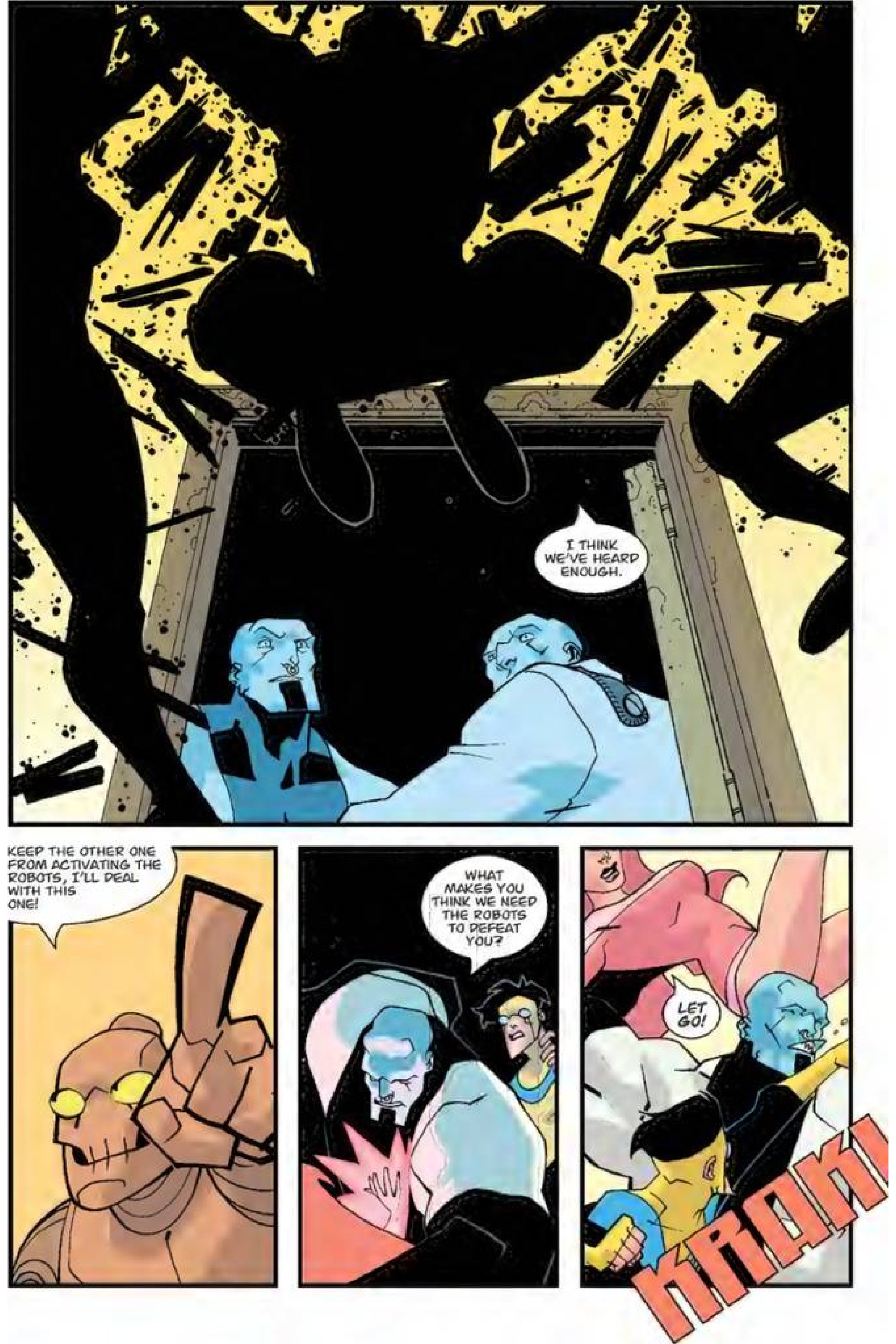

WOW.
NEVER MIND. NICE JOB, KID.
I'LL HAVE ANOTHER VEHICLE SENT TO US BY REMOTE. KATE, PULL OUR FRIEND, MAULER OUT OF THE WAY SO WE WON'T ATTRACT TOO MUCH ATTENTION.
NICE COSTUME, MAN.
SORRY, THERE WASN'T A PHONE BOOTH HANDY.
UM... DO I KNOW YOU?
YOU KNOW... YOU **DO** LOOK FAMILIAR...
WELL, OUR RIDE'S HERE, BUT I CAN SEE THAT A BRIEF INTRODUCTION IS NEEDED BEFORE WE DEPART.
WE'RE THE TEEN TEAM. I'M **ROBOT**.
YOU'VE MET **ATOM EVE**.
THAT'S **REX SPLODE**.
WITH **DUPLI-KATE** ROUNDING OUT THE TEAM.
AND YOU?
I'M M-- I MEAN, INVINCIBLE.
CUTE.
NICE TO MEET YOU.
SEE YOU AROUND.

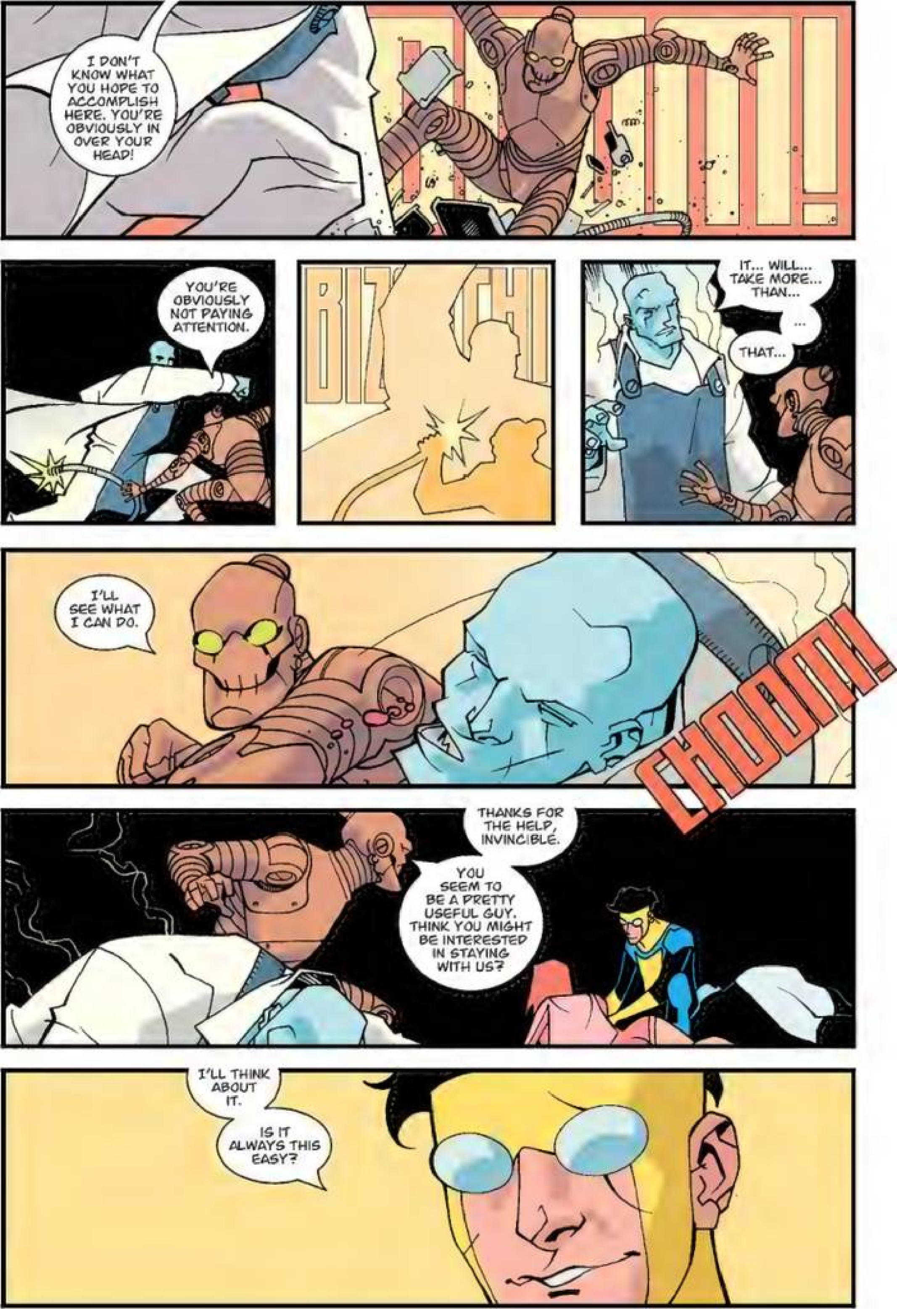

HAH!
I KNEW IT.
HEY, IT'S *YOU!* WE'VE BEEN IN PHYSICS TOGETHER ALL THIS TIME...
MARK, RIGHT?
YEAH. UM, IS THERE ANY WAY YOU CAN KEEP THIS TO YOURSELF? YOU NEVER KNOW WHEN ONE OF YOUR TEAMMATES IS GOING TO GO CRAZY AND BECOME THE NEXT BIG VILLAIN.
OH, THAT ONLY HAPPENS IN COMIC BOOKS.
IT'S ALWAYS BETTER TO PLAY IT SA--
YAWN
SORRY ABOUT ALL THAT... I'M NOT USED TO THESE LATE NIGHTS...
I'M STILL NEW TO THIS... I JUST HIT TWO MONTHS.
YOU'LL GET THE HANG OF IT. TEEN SUPERHEROES START DRINKING COFFEE AT AN EARLY AGE.

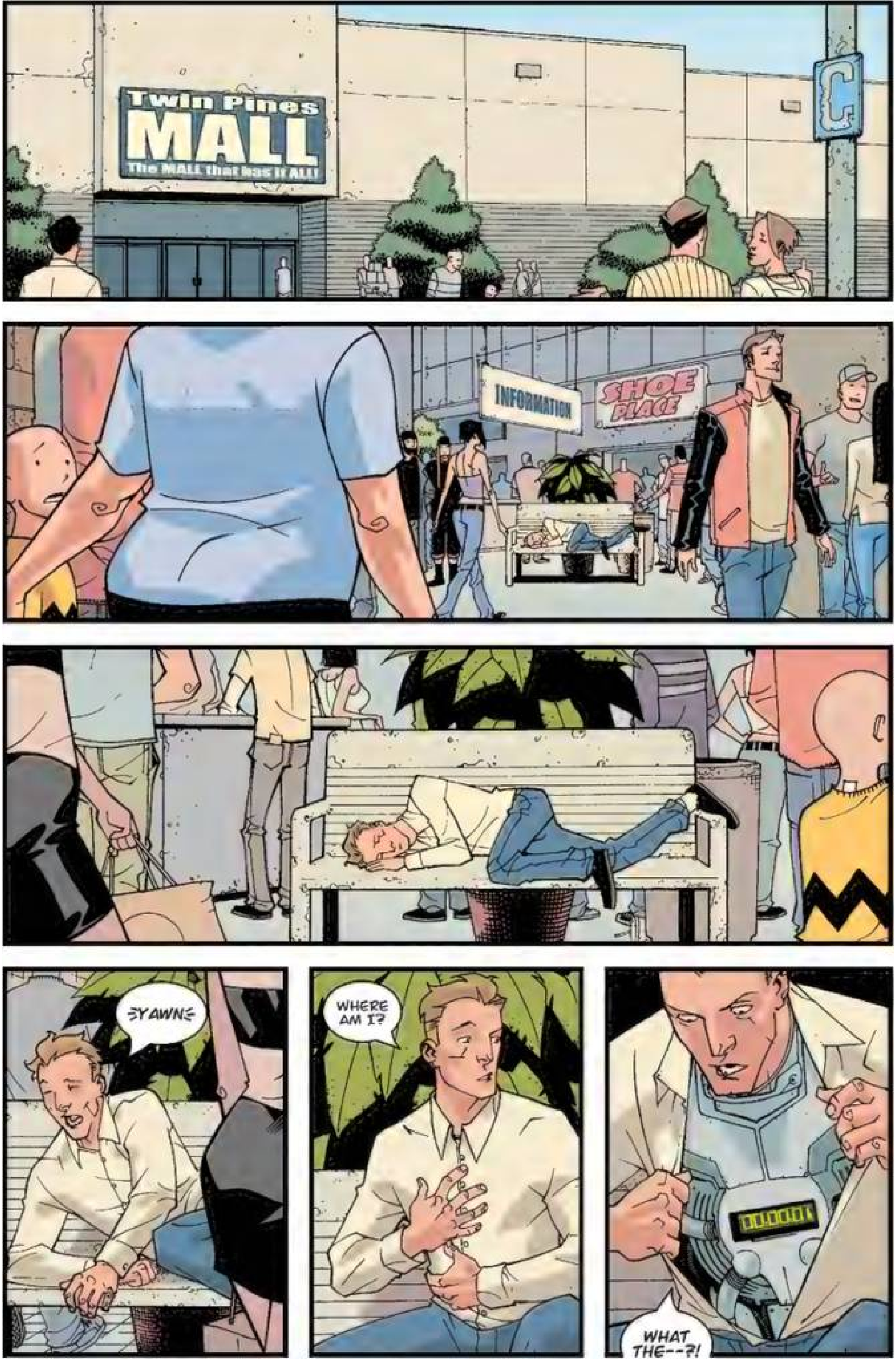

LISTEN, WE'RE FOLLOWING UP ON THE INCIDENT FROM LAST NIGHT TODAY. YOU'RE WELCOME TO TAG ALONG IF YOU'D LIKE.
JOHNSON
SCHOOL
I'D LOVE TO.
WHY ARE WE GOING OUT HERE? DO YOU TAKE THE BUS TO YOUR TEAM'S SECRET BASE?
ARE YOU KIDDING ME? I CAN FLY!
C'MON. WE CAN CHANGE BACK THERE.
GARBAGE
SO... YOU COME HERE OFTEN?
EVERY DAY.
NICE PLACE.
DO YOU KNOW OF ANY OTHER SECLUDED PLACES AROUND HERE?
WOW. THAT WAS QUICK.
THANKS.
I GUESS NOT, BUT NOW THAT WE'RE IN COSTUME... HOW DO WE GET OUT OF HERE WITHOUT BEING SPOTTED?
YOU'D BE SURPRISED HOW RARELY PEOPLE EVER LOOK UP.
98

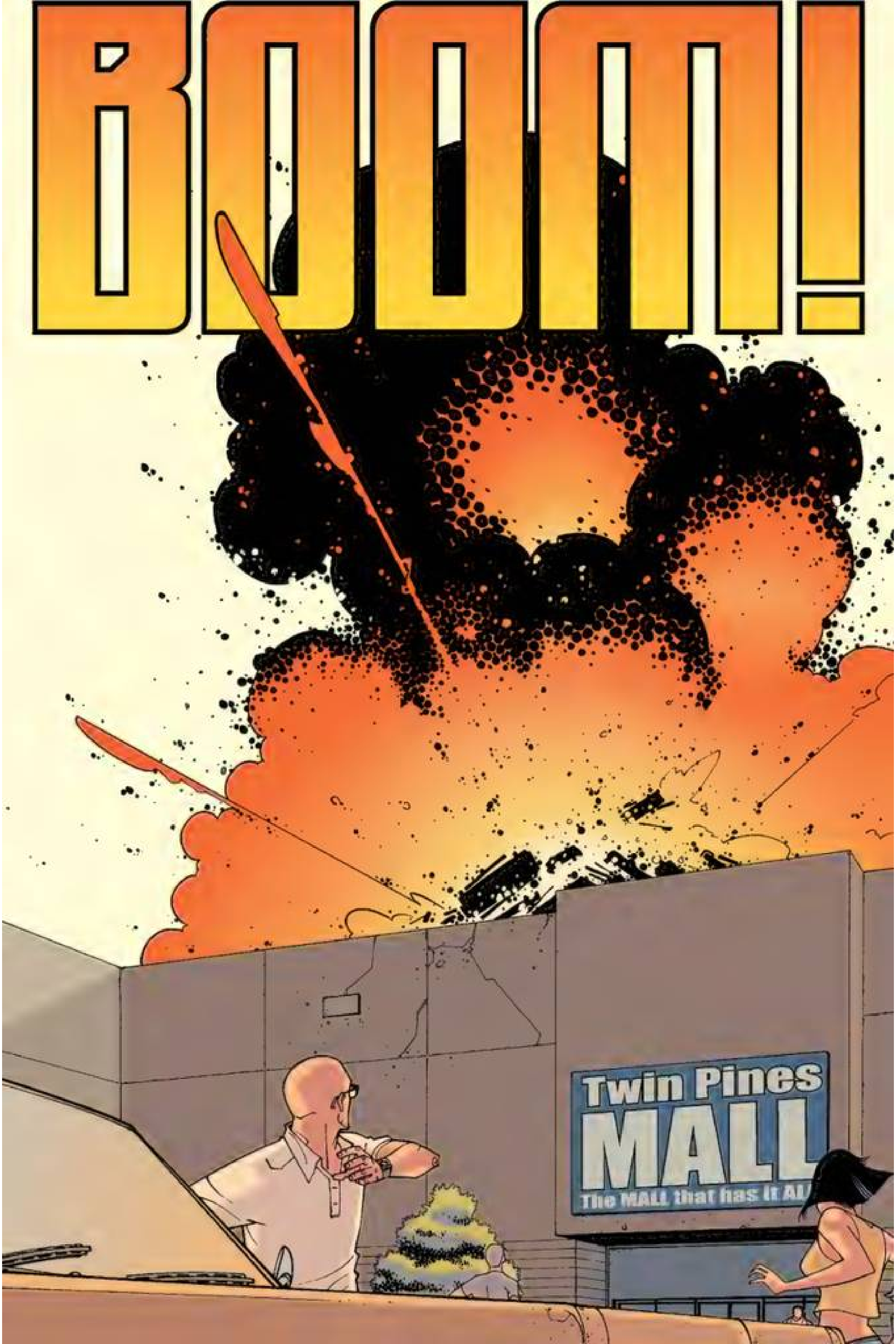

A BRIDGE, HUH?
YOU'RE LATE. I'LL ASSUME THAT'S OUR NEW FRIEND FROM LAST NIGHT WITH YOU...
GOOD. OH, AND HE'S WEARING A MUCH NICER COSTUME. KATE AND REX ARE OUT ON ANOTHER MISSION, HE'LL BE OF GOOD USE, TONIGHT.
SPEAKING OF WHICH, IF YOU HAD GOTTEN HERE THREE MINUTES LATER I WOULD HAVE HAD TO DO THIS ALONE.
C'MON.
I ERASED MAULER'S MEMORIES FROM LAST NIGHT, AND LEFT HIM CLOSE TO THE TOY STORE HE ROBBED. HE'LL BE DISORIENTED AND WILL MORE THAN LIKELY SEEK OUT FAMILIAR GROUND.
MY HYPOTHESIS IS THAT HE WILL LEAD US TO HIS BASE AND WE'LL BE ABLE TO FIGURE OUT WHAT HIS PLANS FOR THE VIDEO GAME SYSTEMS WERE.
I'VE BEEN TRACKING HIM FROM HERE, BUT WE NEED TO BE ON SITE WHEN HE ARRIVES.
I WAS AFRAID I WAS GOING TO HAVE TO LEAVE WITHOUT YOU.
SORRY ABOUT THAT.
DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT... I'M NOT EVEN SURE I'LL NEED YOU.

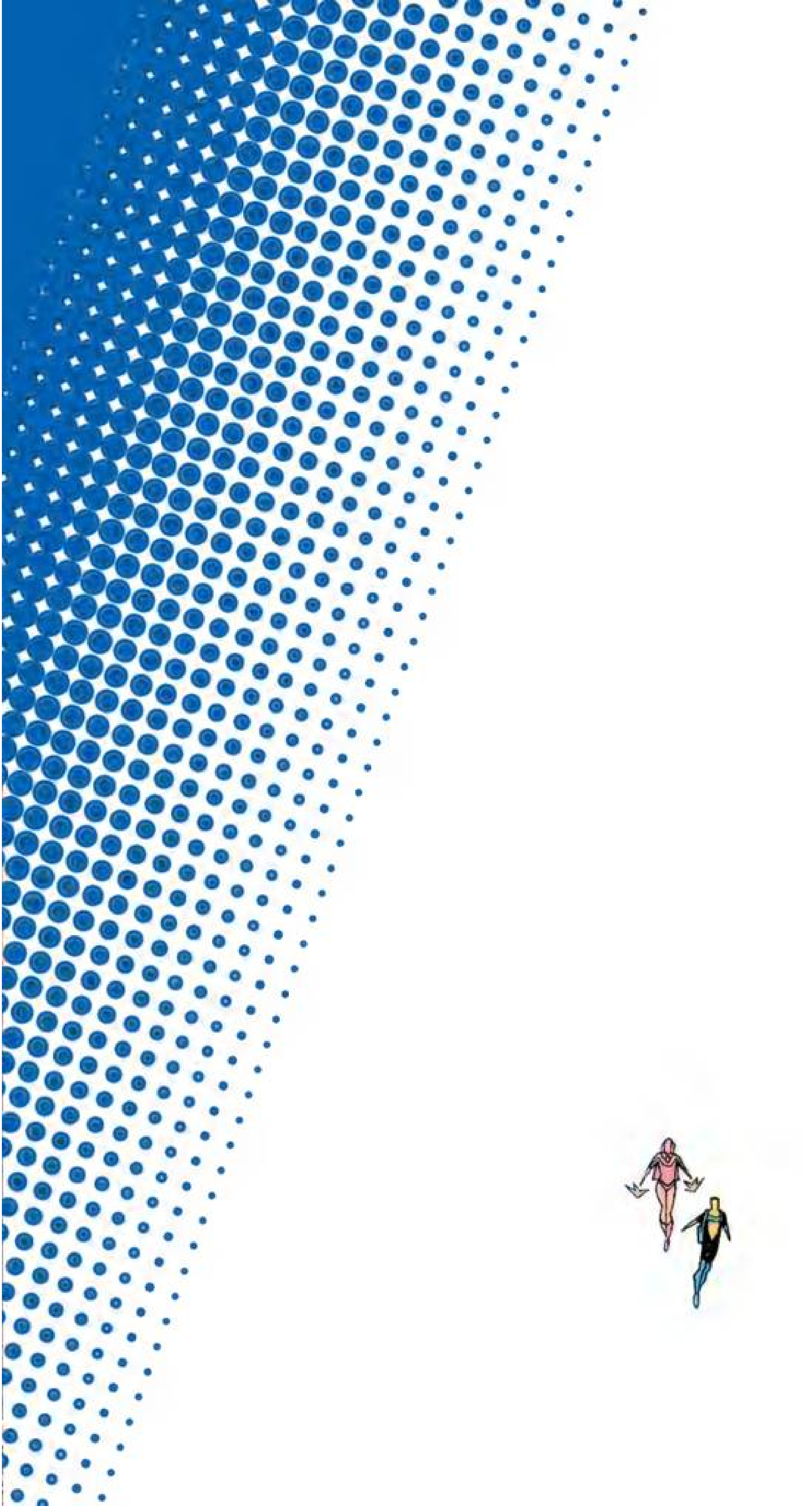

THERE HE IS.
ONE WAY
PARK
TABOR
...
WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN? WE NEED THOSE PROCESSORS! WE'RE NOT GOING TO HAVE ENOUGH TO POWER THE ROBOTS WITHOUT THAT NEW SHIPMENT.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT HAPPENED. ALL LAST NIGHT IS A BLUR. I REMEMBER GOING OUT TO GET THE NEW SHIPMENT AT THE TOYS B' WE... AND THEN... NOTHING.
SO I CAME BACK.
I DON'T THINK YOU REALIZE HOW IMPORTANT OUR WORK HERE IS. WE BADLY NEED THOSE EXTRA PROCESSORS. THAT SHIPMENT IS ALREADY IN STOCK BY NOW, AND THEY WON'T BE RECEIVING ANOTHER FOR NEARLY A MONTH.
I'M NOT SURE OUR PLANS CAN WAIT THAT LONG.


I THINK WE'VE HEARD ENOUGH.
KEEP THE OTHER ONE FROM ACTIVATING THE ROBOTS, I'LL DEAL WITH THIS ONE!
WHAT MAKES YOU THINK WE NEED THE ROBOTS TO DEFEAT YOU?
LET GO!
KRAAK

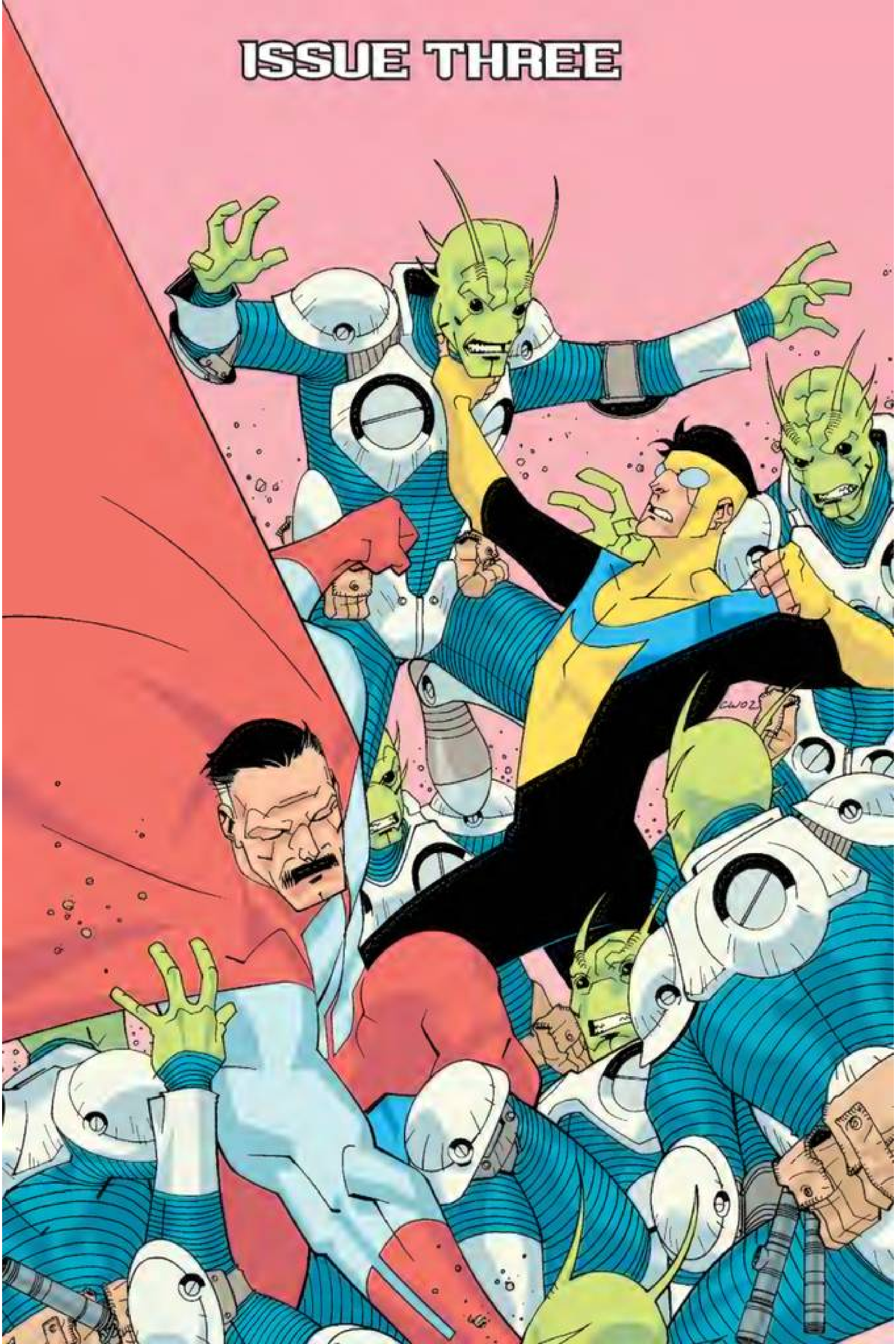

I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU HOPE TO ACCOMPLISH HERE. YOU'RE OBVIOUSLY IN OVER YOUR HEAD!
YOU'RE OBVIOUSLY NOT PAYING ATTENTION.
IT... WILL... TAKE MORE... THAN...
...
THAT...
I'LL SEE WHAT I CAN DO.
CHOOM!
THANKS FOR THE HELP, INVINCIBLE.
YOU SEEM TO BE A PRETTY USEFUL GUY. THINK YOU MIGHT BE INTERESTED IN STAYING WITH US?
I'LL THINK ABOUT IT.
IS IT ALWAYS THIS EASY?

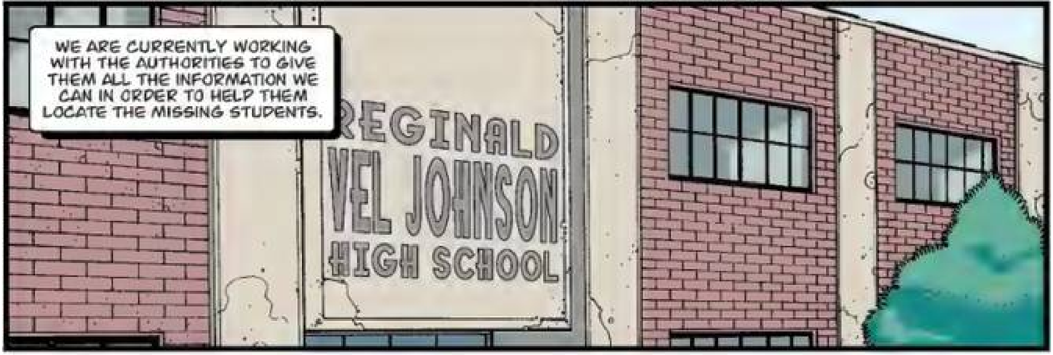

Twin Pines
MALL
The MALL that has it ALL!
C
INFORMATION
SHOE PLACE
YAWN
WHERE AM I?
WHAT THE--?!

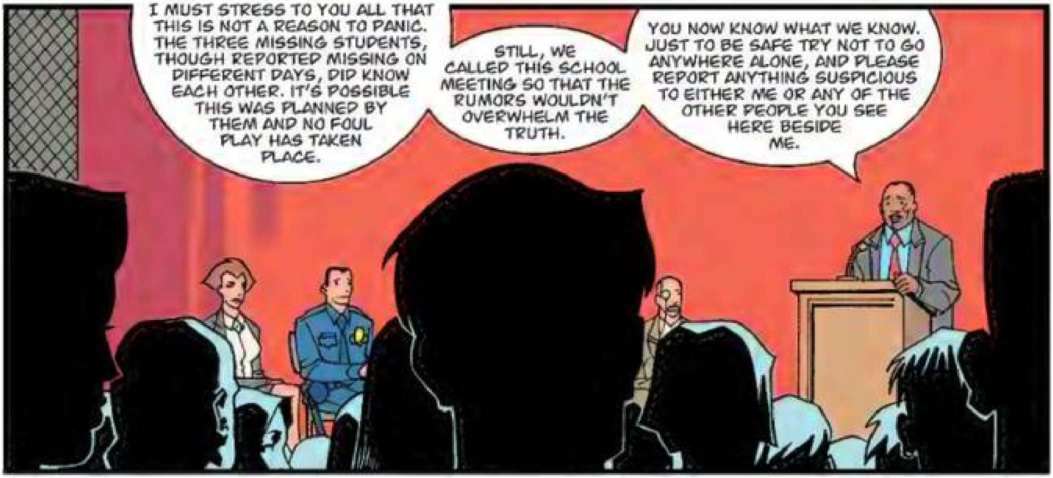

BOOM!
Twin Pines
MALL
The MALL that has it AL

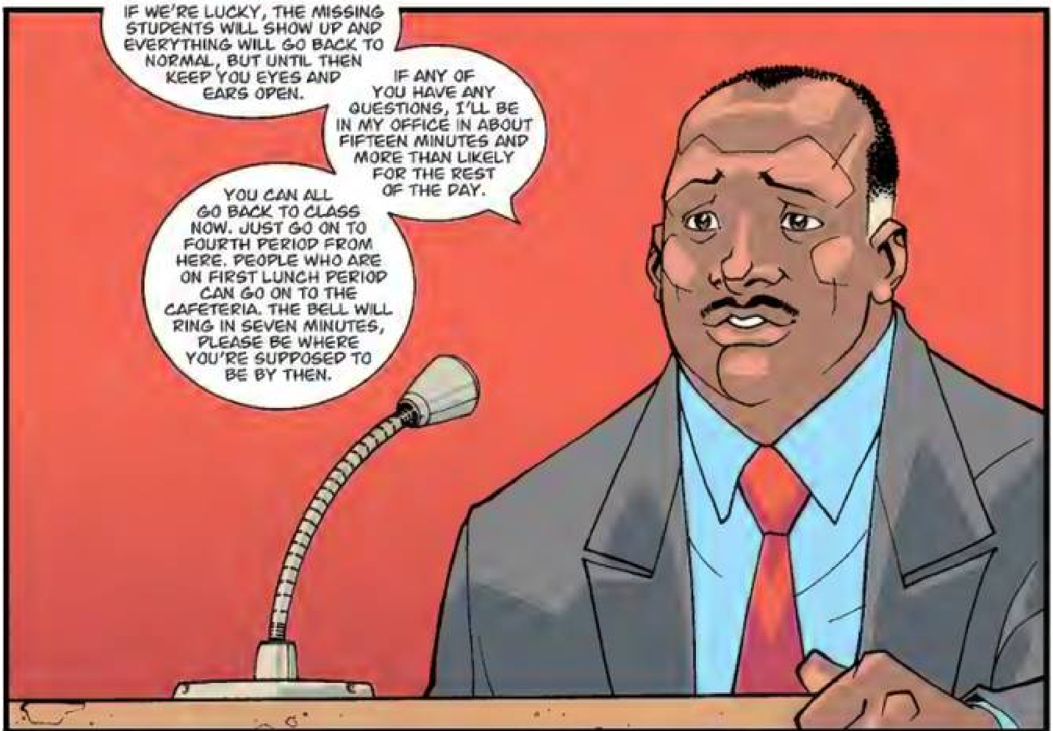


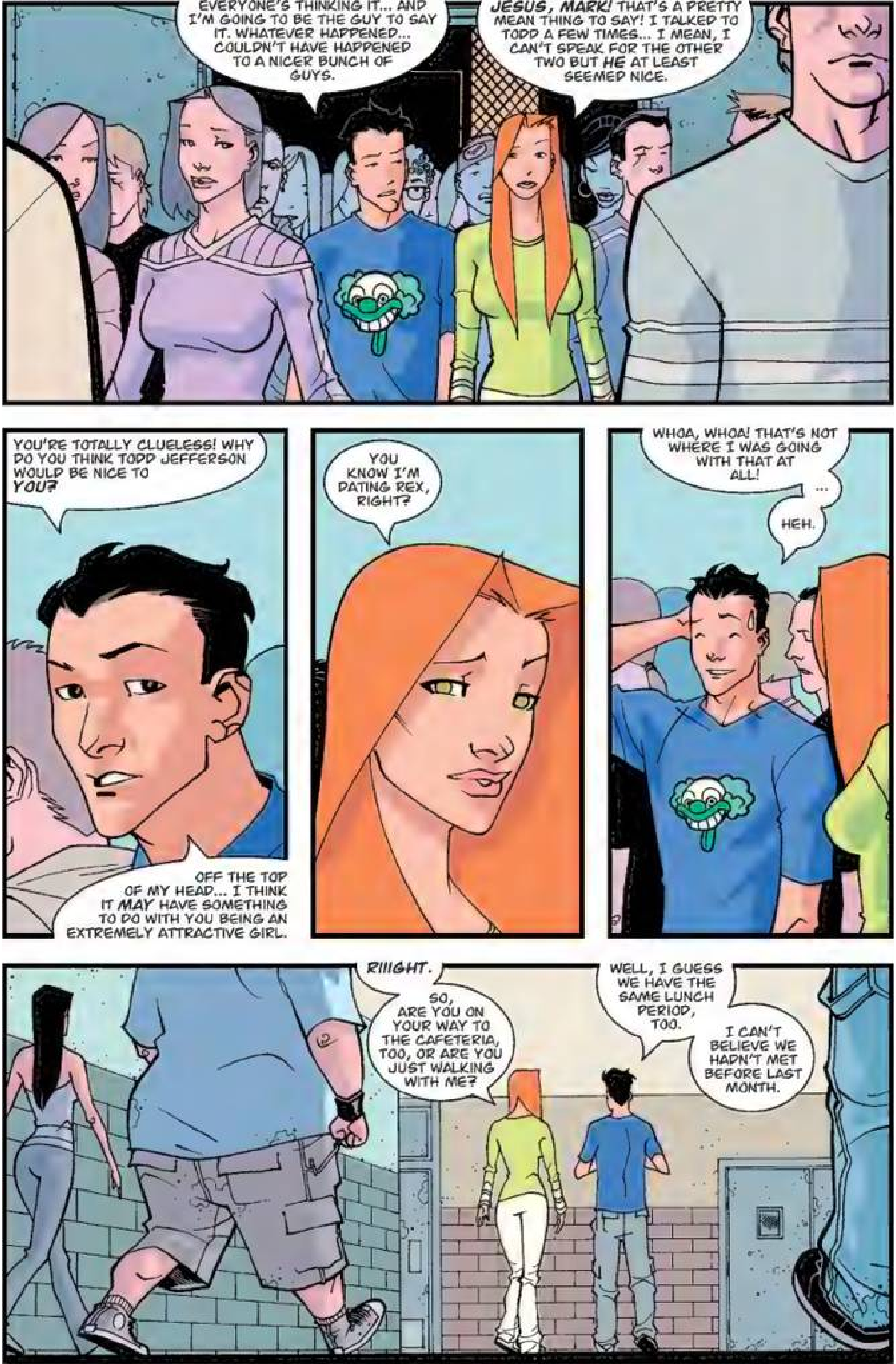
ISSUE THREE

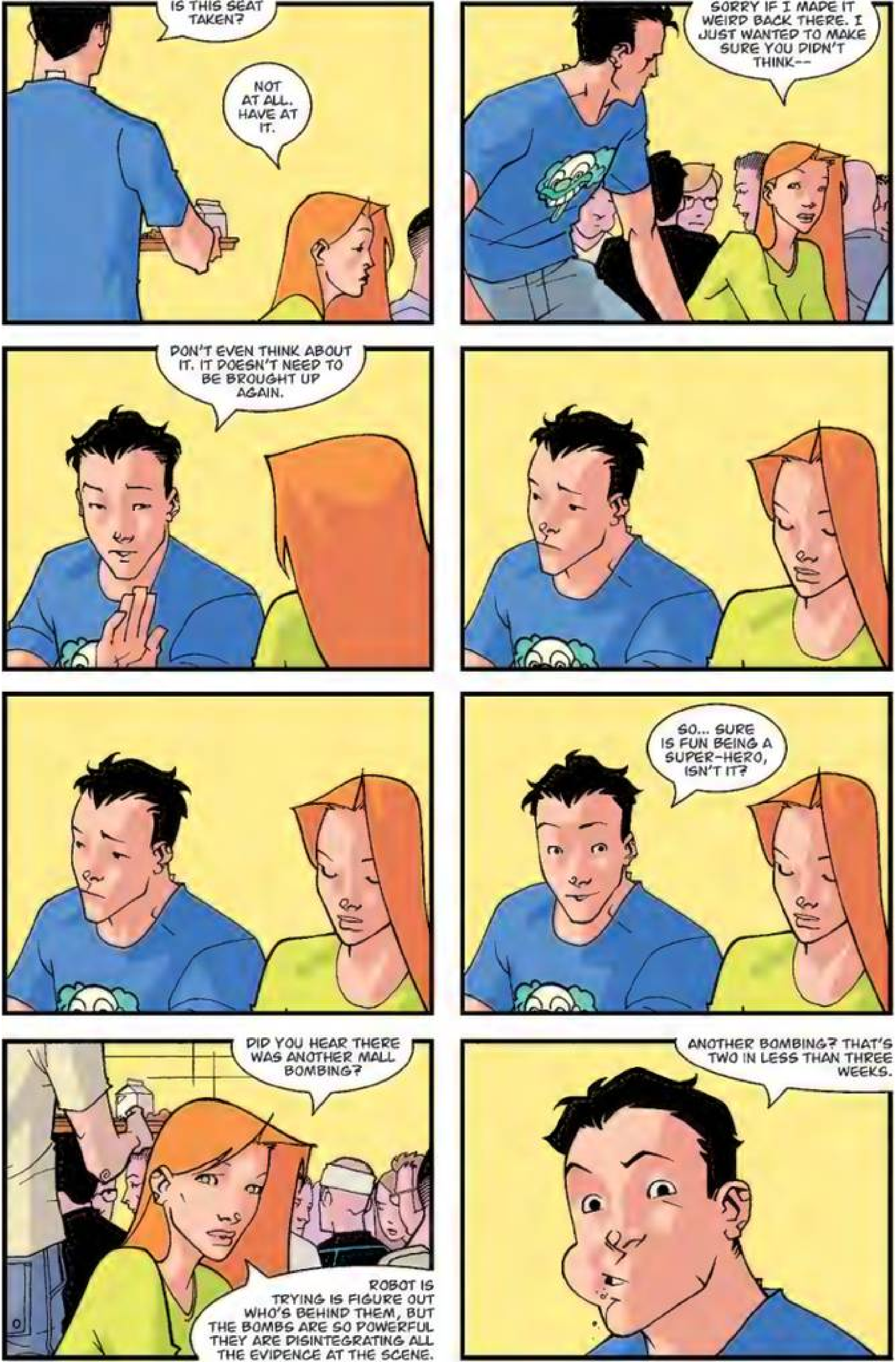


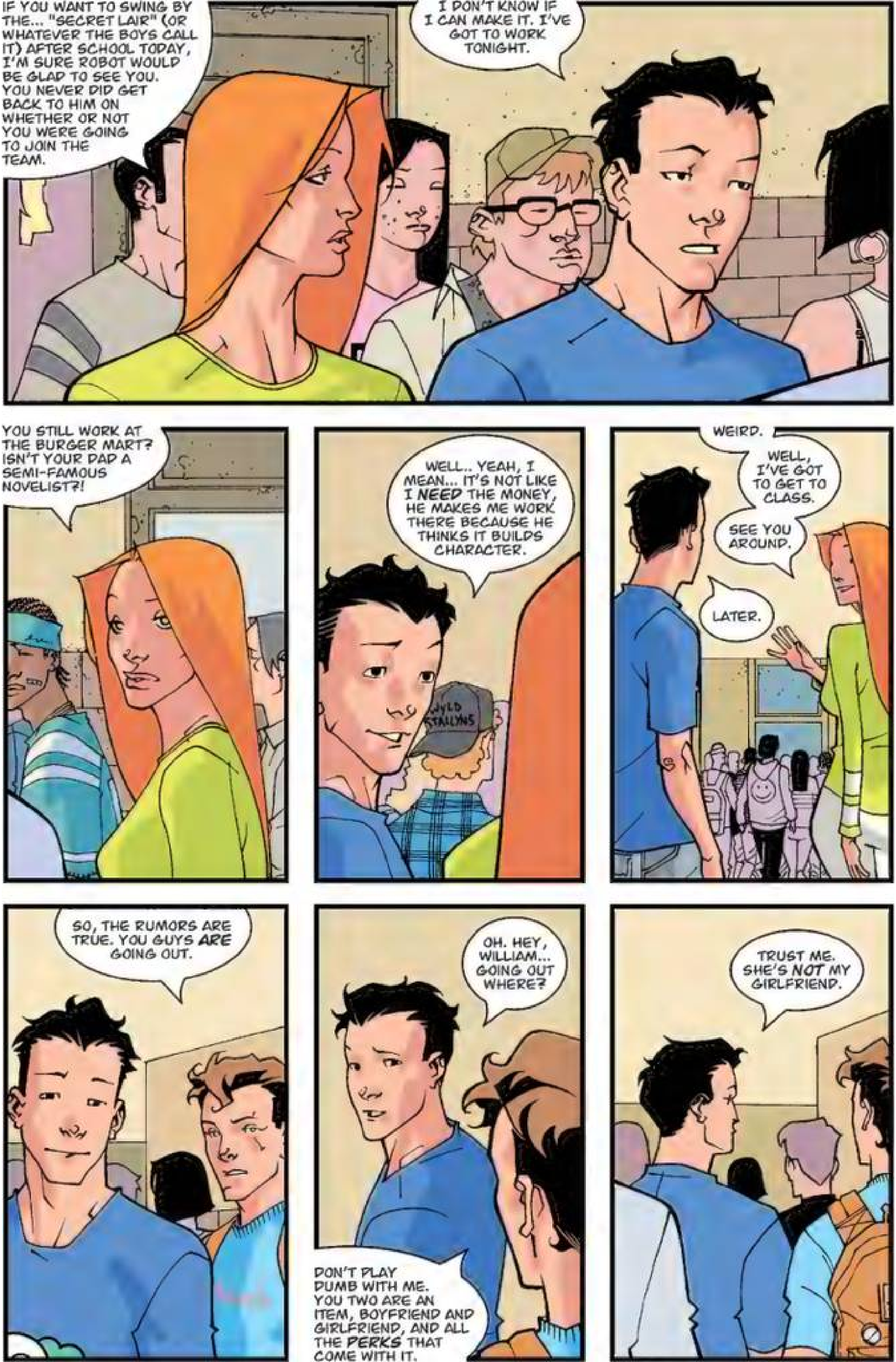

WE ARE CURRENTLY WORKING WITH THE AUTHORITIES TO GIVE THEM ALL THE INFORMATION WE CAN IN ORDER TO HELP THEM LOCATE THE MISSING STUDENTS.
REGINALD VEL JOHNSON HIGH SCHOOL

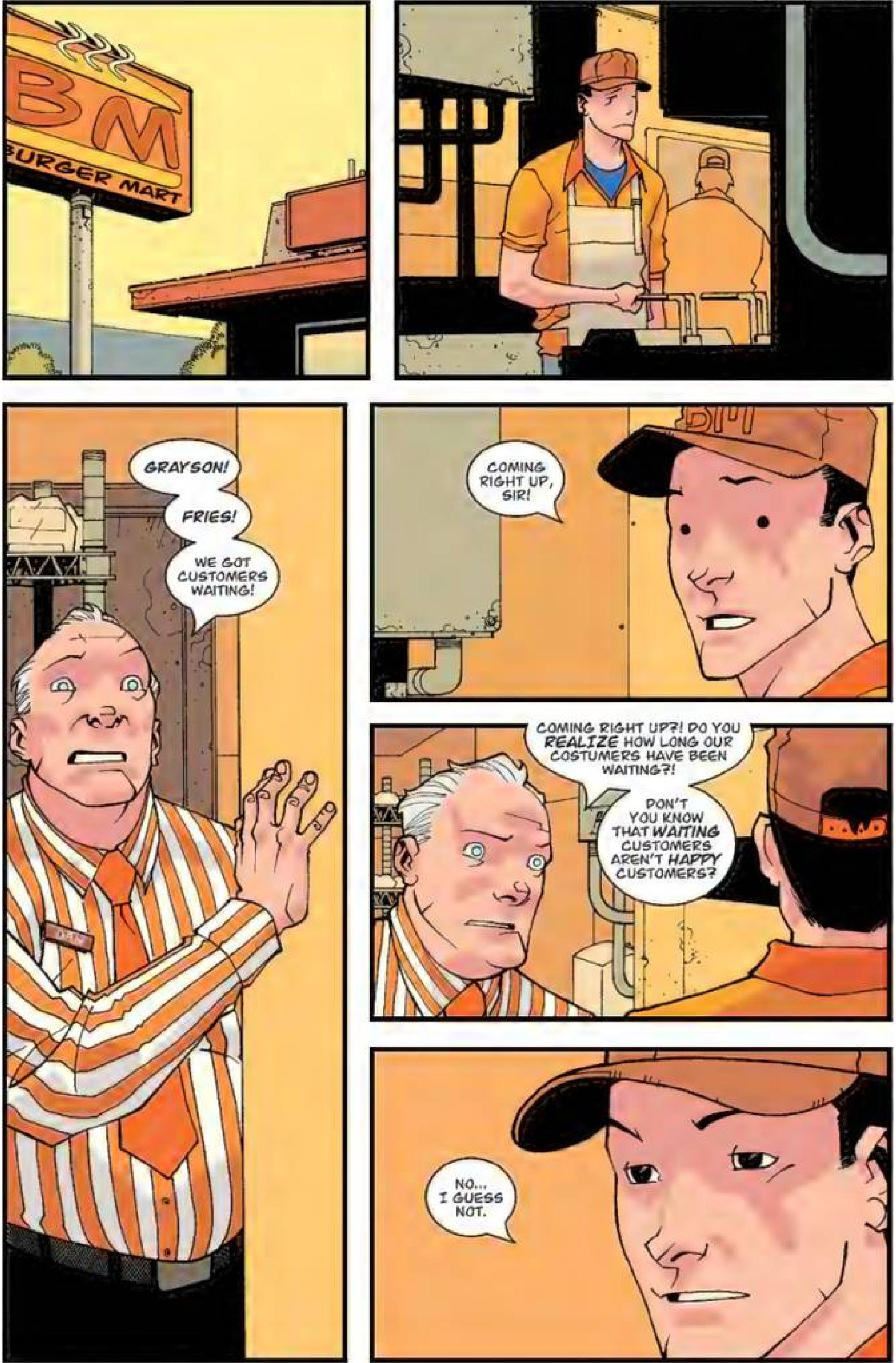

I MUST STRESS TO YOU ALL THAT THIS IS NOT A REASON TO PANIC. THE THREE MISSING STUDENTS, THOUGH REPORTED MISSING ON DIFFERENT DAYS, DID KNOW EACH OTHER. IT'S POSSIBLE THIS WAS PLANNED BY THEM AND NO FOUL PLAY HAS TAKEN PLACE.
STILL, WE CALLED THIS SCHOOL MEETING SO THAT THE RUMORS WOULDN'T OVERWHELM THE TRUTH.
YOU NOW KNOW WHAT WE KNOW. JUST TO BE SAFE TRY NOT TO GO ANYWHERE ALONE, AND PLEASE REPORT ANYTHING SUSPICIOUS TO EITHER ME OR ANY OF THE OTHER PEOPLE YOU SEE HERE BESIDE ME.

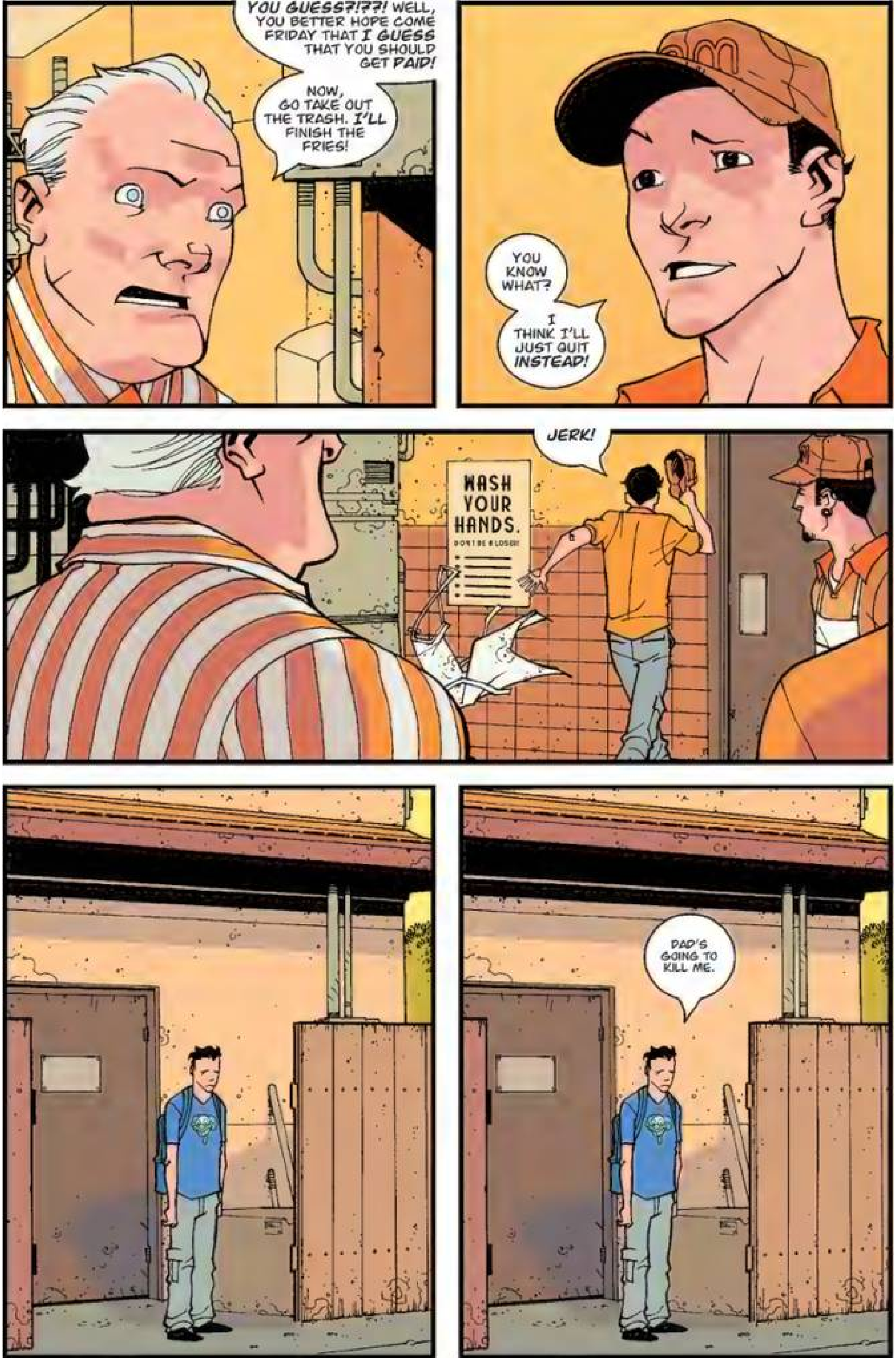

IF WE'RE LUCKY, THE MISSING STUDENTS WILL SHOW UP AND EVERYTHING WILL GO BACK TO NORMAL, BUT UNTIL THEN KEEP YOU EYES AND EARS OPEN.
IF ANY OF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS, I'LL BE IN MY OFFICE IN ABOUT FIFTEEN MINUTES AND MORE THAN LIKELY FOR THE REST OF THE DAY.
YOU CAN ALL GO BACK TO CLASS NOW. JUST GO ON TO FOURTH PERIOD FROM HERE. PEOPLE WHO ARE ON FIRST LUNCH PERIOD CAN GO ON TO THE CAFETERIA. THE BELL WILL RING IN SEVEN MINUTES, PLEASE BE WHERE YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BE BY THEN.

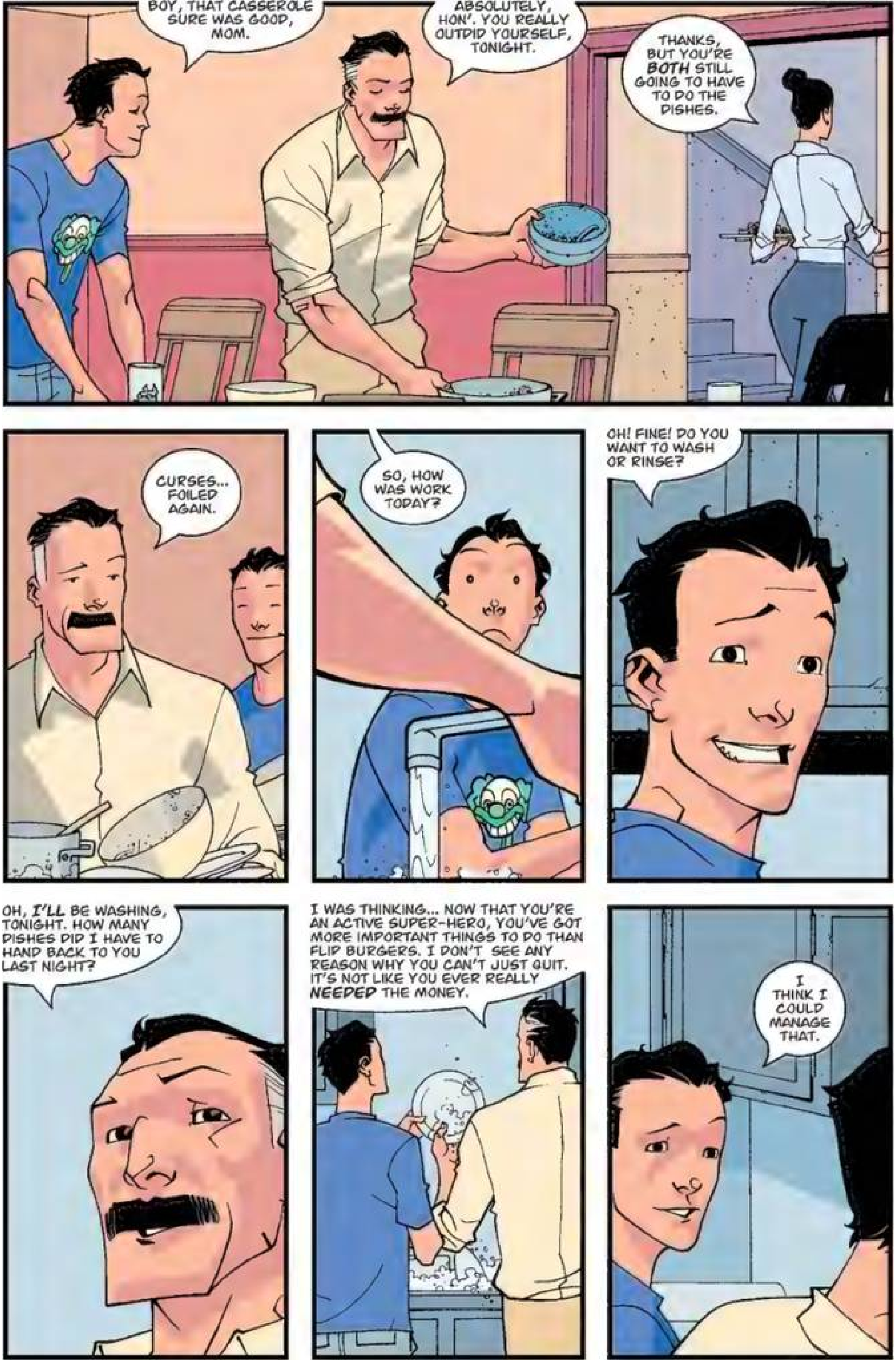

EVERYONE'S THINKING IT... AND I'M GOING TO BE THE GUY TO SAY IT. WHATEVER HAPPENED... COULDN'T HAVE HAPPENED TO A NICER BUNCH OF GUYS.
JESUS, MARK! THAT'S A PRETTY MEAN THING TO SAY! I TALKED TO TODD A FEW TIMES... I MEAN, I CAN'T SPEAK FOR THE OTHER TWO BUT *HE* AT LEAST SEEMED NICE.
YOU'RE TOTALLY CLUELESS! WHY DO YOU THINK TODD JEFFERSON WOULD BE NICE TO *YOU?*
OFF THE TOP OF MY HEAD... I THINK IT *MAY* HAVE SOMETHING TO DO WITH YOU BEING AN EXTREMELY ATTRACTIVE GIRL.
YOU KNOW I'M DATING REX, RIGHT?
WHOA, WHOA! THAT'S NOT WHERE I WAS GOING WITH THAT AT ALL!
...
HEH.
RIIIGHT.
SO, ARE YOU ON YOUR WAY TO THE CAFETERIA, TOO, OR ARE YOU JUST WALKING WITH ME?
WELL, I GUESS WE HAVE THE SAME LUNCH PERIOD, TOO.
I CAN'T BELIEVE WE HADN'T MET BEFORE LAST MONTH.

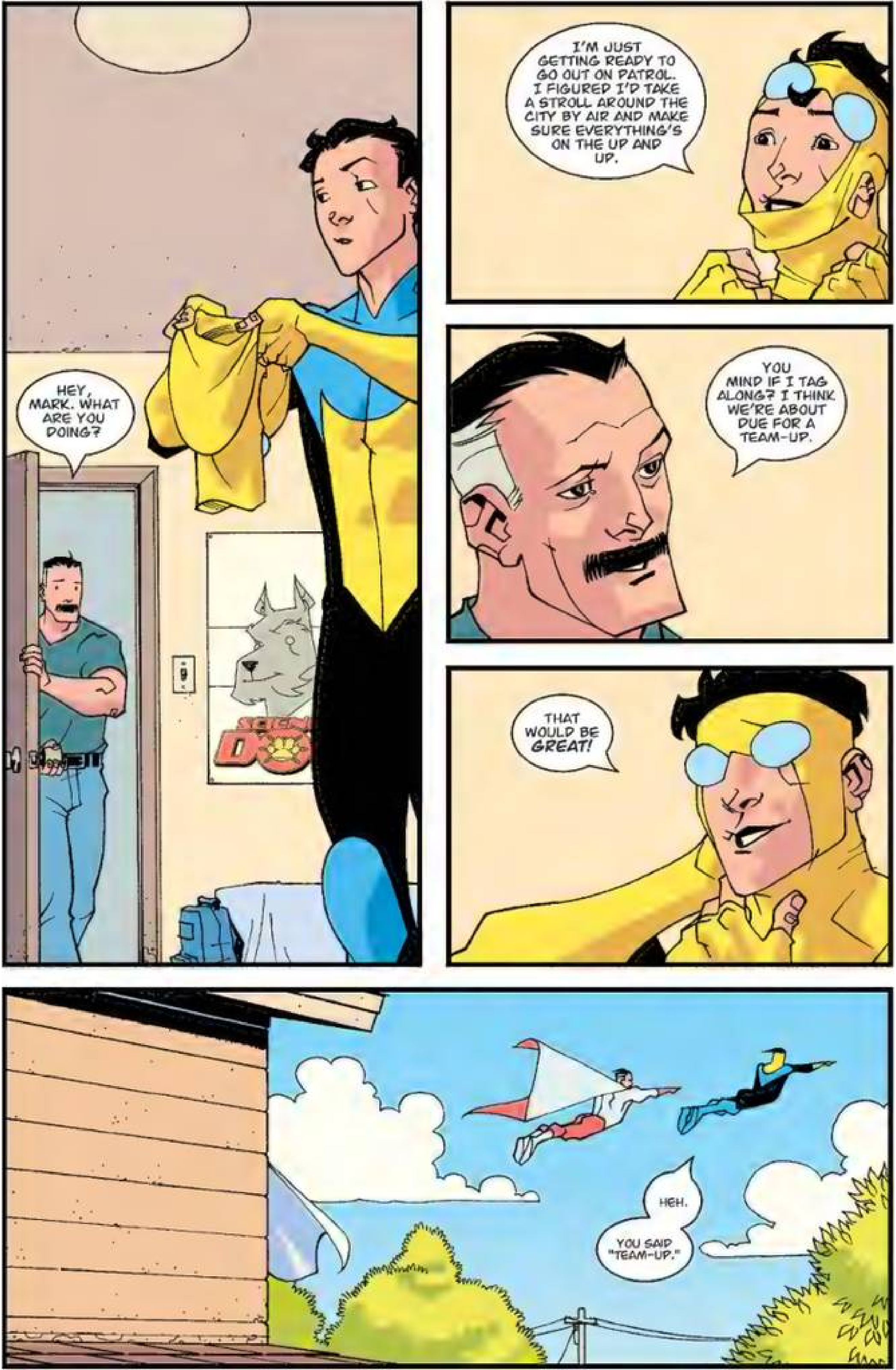

IS THIS SEAT TAKEN?
NOT AT ALL. HAVE AT IT.
SORRY IF I MADE IT WEIRD BACK THERE. I JUST WANTED TO MAKE SURE YOU DIDN'T THINK--
DON'T EVEN THINK ABOUT IT. IT DOESN'T NEED TO BE BROUGHT UP AGAIN.
SO... SURE IS FUN BEING A SUPER-HERO, ISN'T IT?
DID YOU HEAR THERE WAS ANOTHER MALL BOMBING?
ROBOT IS TRYING IS FIGURE OUT WHO'S BEHIND THEM, BUT THE BOMBS ARE SO POWERFUL THEY ARE DISINTEGRATING ALL THE EVIDENCE AT THE SCENE.
ANOTHER BOMBING? THAT'S TWO IN LESS THAN THREE WEEKS.

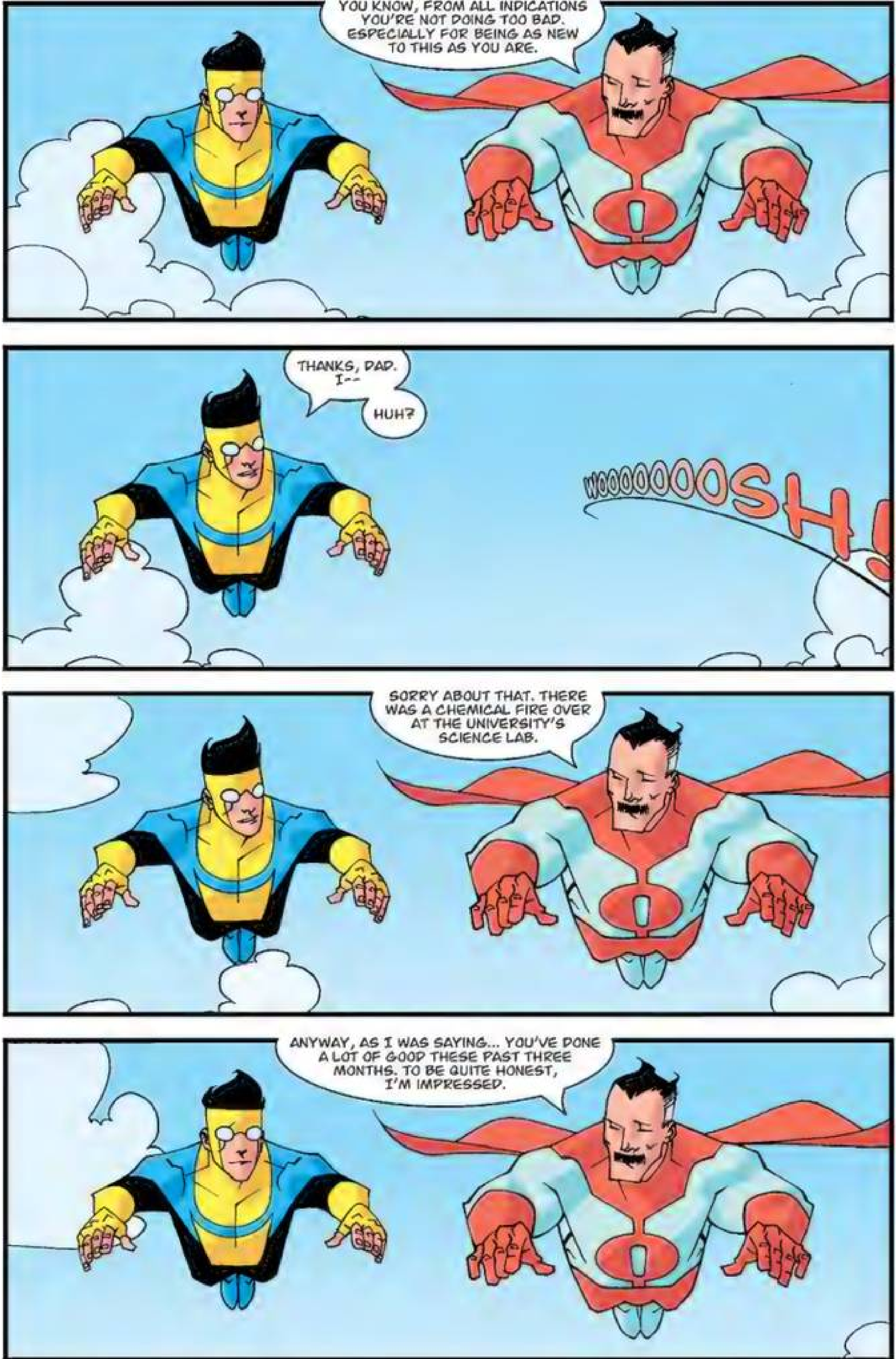

IF YOU WANT TO SWING BY THE... "SECRET LAIR" (OR WHATEVER THE BOYS CALL IT) AFTER SCHOOL TODAY, I'M SURE ROBOT WOULD BE GLAD TO SEE YOU. YOU NEVER DID GET BACK TO HIM ON WHETHER OR NOT YOU WERE GOING TO JOIN THE TEAM.
I DON'T KNOW IF I CAN MAKE IT. I'VE GOT TO WORK TONIGHT.
YOU STILL WORK AT THE BURGER MART? ISN'T YOUR DAD A SEMI-FAMOUS NOVELIST?!
WELL.. YEAH, I MEAN... IT'S NOT LIKE I NEED THE MONEY, HE MAKES ME WORK THERE BECAUSE HE THINKS IT BUILDS CHARACTER.
WYLD STALLYNS
WEIRD.
WELL, I'VE GOT TO GET TO CLASS.
SEE YOU AROUND.
LATER.
SO, THE RUMORS ARE TRUE. YOU GUYS ARE GOING OUT.
OH. HEY, WILLIAM... GOING OUT WHERE?
DON'T PLAY DUMB WITH ME. YOU TWO ARE AN ITEM, BOYFRIEND AND GIRLFRIEND, AND ALL THE PERKS THAT COME WITH IT.
TRUST ME. SHE'S NOT MY GIRLFRIEND.

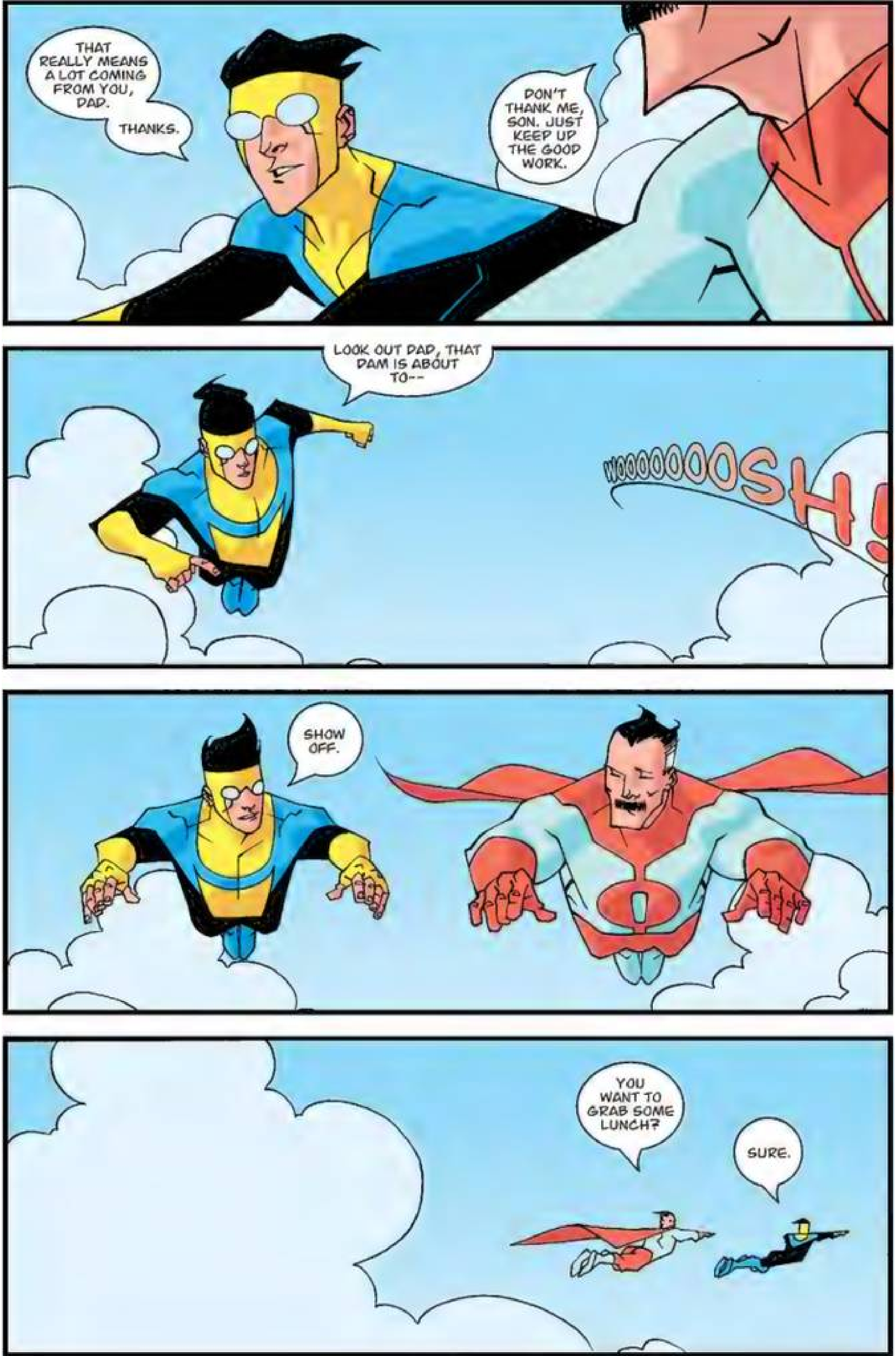

BM
BURGER MART
GRAYSON!
FRIES!
WE GOT CUSTOMERS WAITING!
BM
COMING RIGHT UP, SIR!
COMING RIGHT UP?! DO YOU *REALIZE* HOW LONG OUR COSTUMERS HAVE BEEN WAITING?!
DON'T YOU KNOW THAT *WAITING* CUSTOMERS AREN'T *HAPPY* CUSTOMERS?
NO... I GUESS NOT.

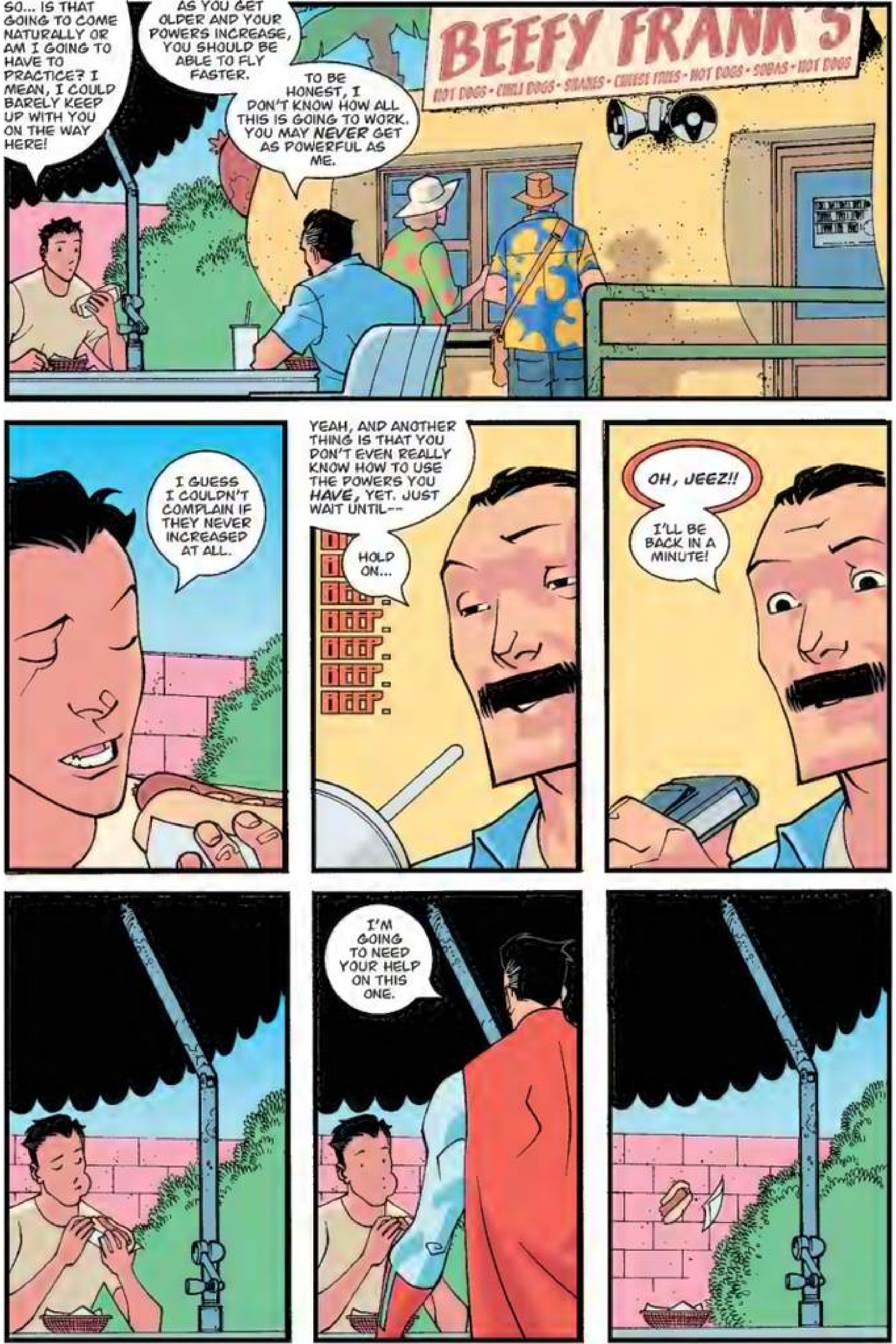

YOU GUESS?!??! WELL, YOU BETTER HOPE COME FRIDAY THAT I GUESS THAT YOU SHOULD GET PAID!
NOW, GO TAKE OUT THE TRASH. I'LL FINISH THE FRIES!
YOU KNOW WHAT?
I THINK I'LL JUST QUIT INSTEAD!
WASH YOUR HANDS.
DON'T BE A LOSER!
JERK!
DAD'S GOING TO KILL ME.

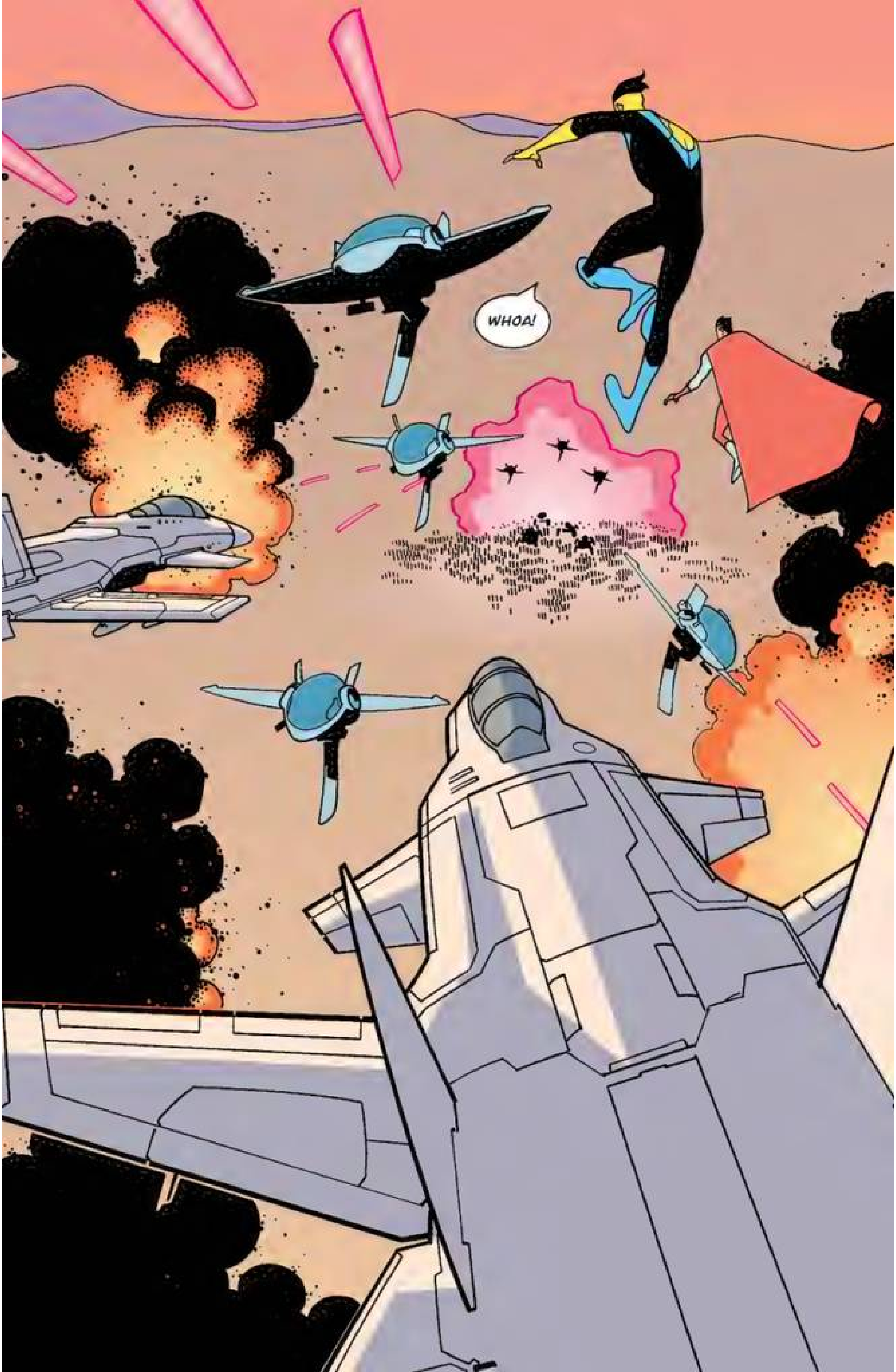

BOY, THAT CASSEROLE SURE WAS GOOD, MOM.
ABSOLUTELY, HON'. YOU REALLY OUTDID YOURSELF, TONIGHT.
THANKS, BUT YOU'RE **BOTH** STILL GOING TO HAVE TO DO THE DISHES.
CURSES... FOILED AGAIN.
SO, HOW WAS WORK TODAY?
OH! FINE! DO YOU WANT TO WASH OR RINSE?
OH, *I'LL* BE WASHING, TONIGHT. HOW MANY DISHES DID I HAVE TO HAND BACK TO YOU LAST NIGHT?
I WAS THINKING... NOW THAT YOU'RE AN ACTIVE SUPER-HERO, YOU'VE GOT MORE IMPORTANT THINGS TO DO THAN FLIP BURGERS. I DON'T SEE ANY REASON WHY YOU CAN'T JUST QUIT. IT'S NOT LIKE YOU EVER REALLY **NEEDED** THE MONEY.
I THINK I COULD MANAGE THAT.

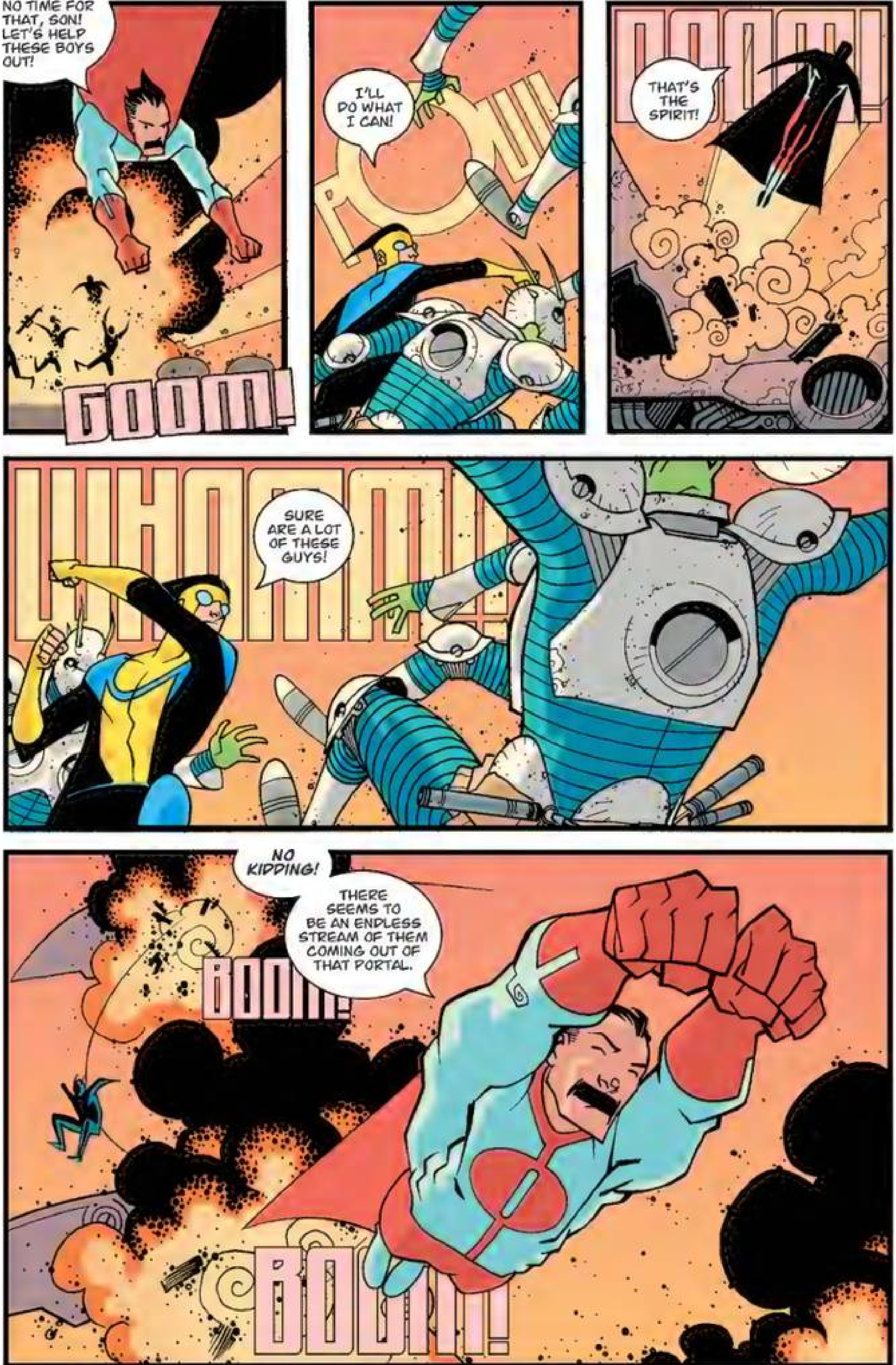

HEY, MARK. WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
I'M JUST GETTING READY TO GO OUT ON PATROL. I FIGURED I'D TAKE A STROLL AROUND THE CITY BY AIR AND MAKE SURE EVERYTHING'S ON THE UP AND UP.
YOU MIND IF I TAG ALONG? I THINK WE'RE ABOUT DUE FOR A TEAM-UP.
THAT WOULD BE *GREAT!*
HEH.
YOU SAID "TEAM-UP."

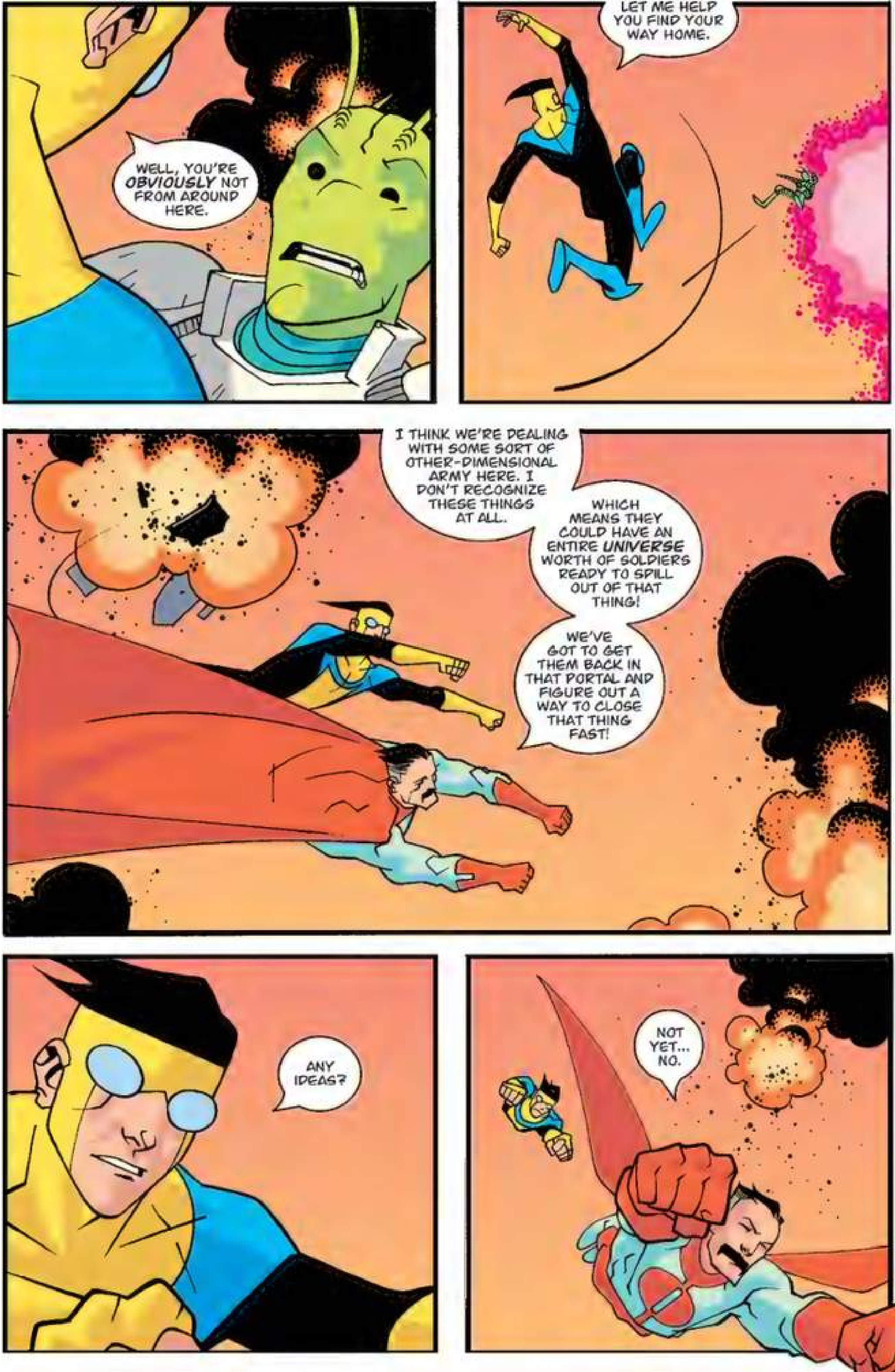

YOU KNOW, FROM ALL INDICATIONS YOU'RE NOT DOING TOO BAD. ESPECIALLY FOR BEING AS NEW TO THIS AS YOU ARE.
THANKS, DAD. I--
HUH?
WOOOOOOOSH
SORRY ABOUT THAT. THERE WAS A CHEMICAL FIRE OVER AT THE UNIVERSITY'S SCIENCE LAB.
ANYWAY, AS I WAS SAYING... YOU'VE DONE A LOT OF GOOD THESE PAST THREE MONTHS. TO BE QUITE HONEST, I'M IMPRESSED.

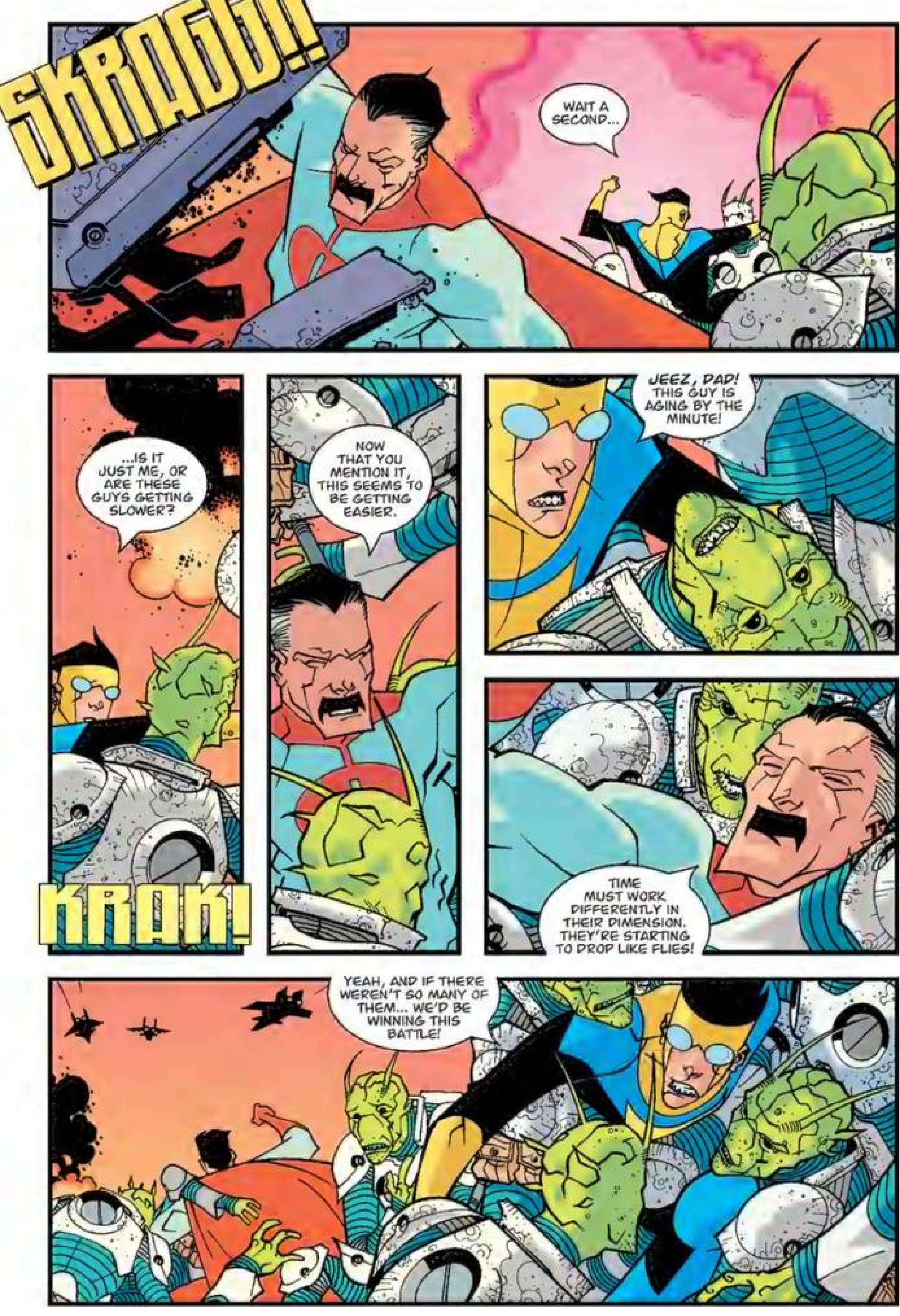

THAT REALLY MEANS A LOT COMING FROM YOU, DAD.
THANKS.
DON'T THANK ME, SON. JUST KEEP UP THE GOOD WORK.
LOOK OUT DAD, THAT DAM IS ABOUT TO--
WOOOOOOOOSH!
SHOW OFF.
YOU WANT TO GRAB SOME LUNCH?
SURE.

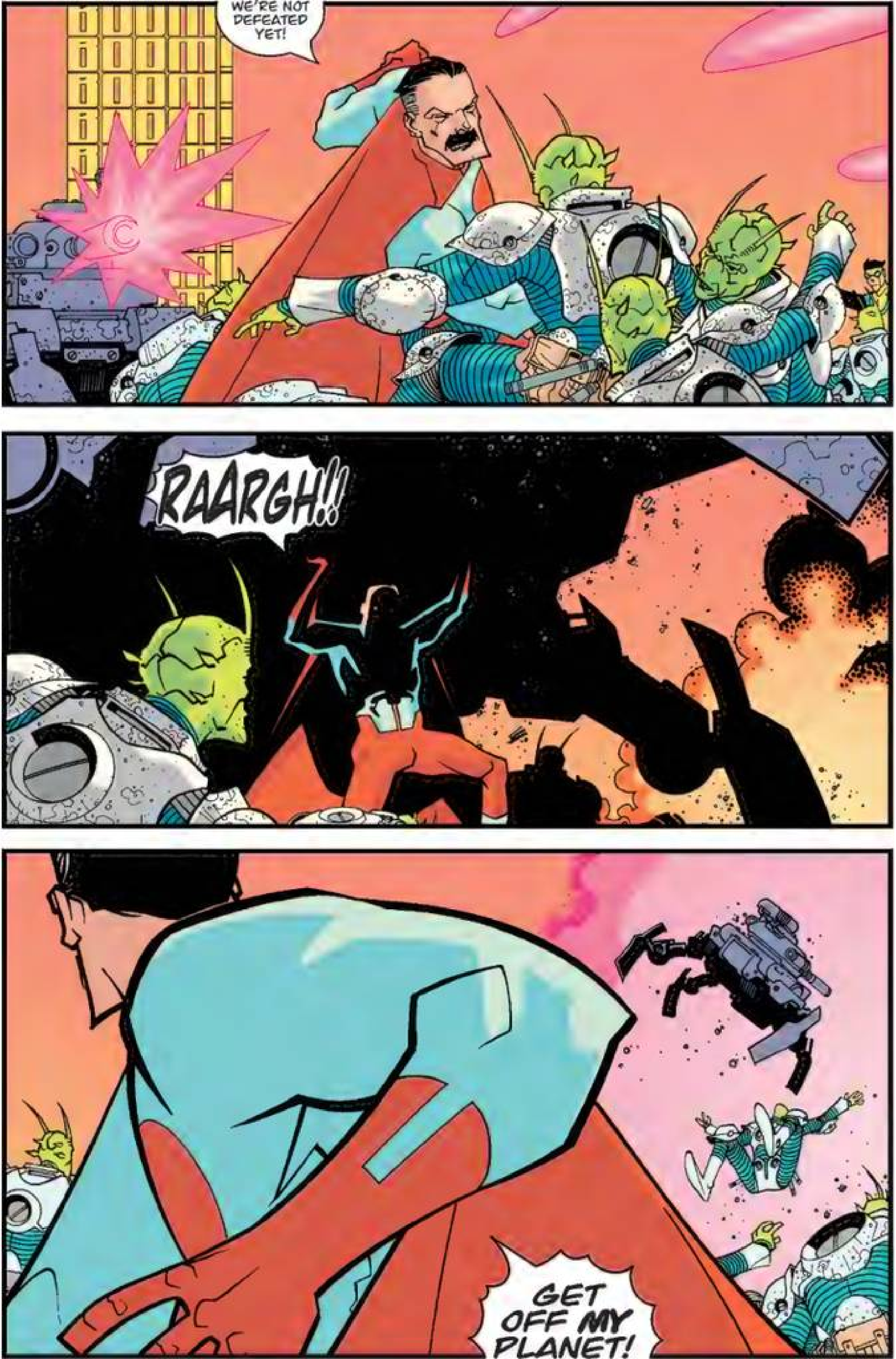

BEEFY FRANK'S
HOT DOGS - CHILI DOGS - SHAKES - CHEESE FRIES - HOT DOGS - SODAS - HOT DOGS
SO... IS THAT GOING TO COME NATURALLY OR AM I GOING TO HAVE TO PRACTICE? I MEAN, I COULD BARELY KEEP UP WITH YOU ON THE WAY HERE!
AS YOU GET OLDER AND YOUR POWERS INCREASE, YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO FLY FASTER.
TO BE HONEST, I DON'T KNOW HOW ALL THIS IS GOING TO WORK. YOU MAY *NEVER* GET AS POWERFUL AS ME.
I GUESS I COULDN'T COMPLAIN IF THEY NEVER INCREASED AT ALL.
YEAH, AND ANOTHER THING IS THAT YOU DON'T EVEN REALLY KNOW HOW TO USE THE POWERS YOU *HAVE*, YET. JUST WAIT UNTIL--
BEEP. BEEP. BEEP. BEEP. BEEP. BEEP. BEEP.
HOLD ON...
OH, JEEZ!!
I'LL BE BACK IN A MINUTE!
I'M GOING TO NEED YOUR HELP ON THIS ONE.

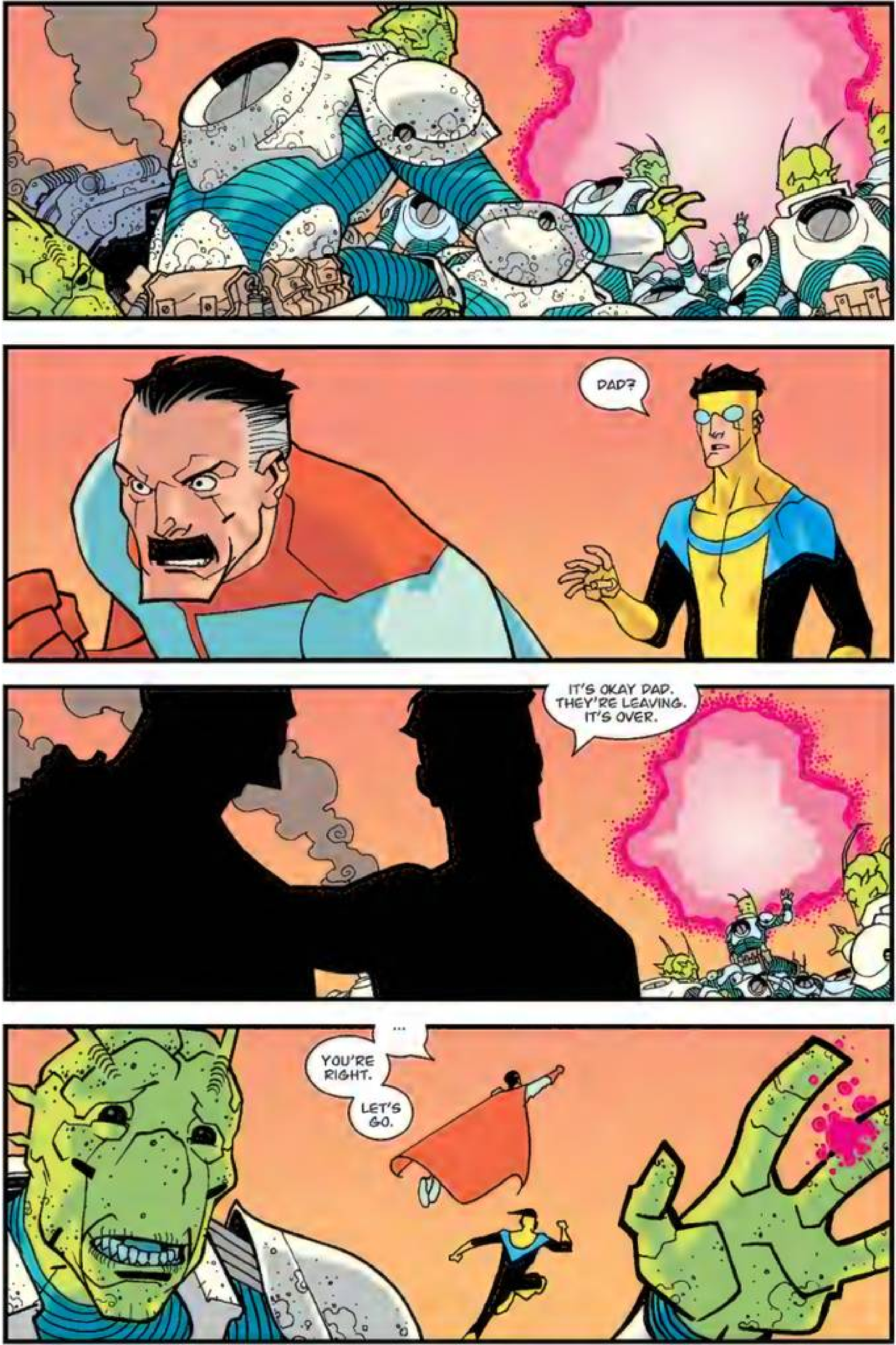

WHOA!

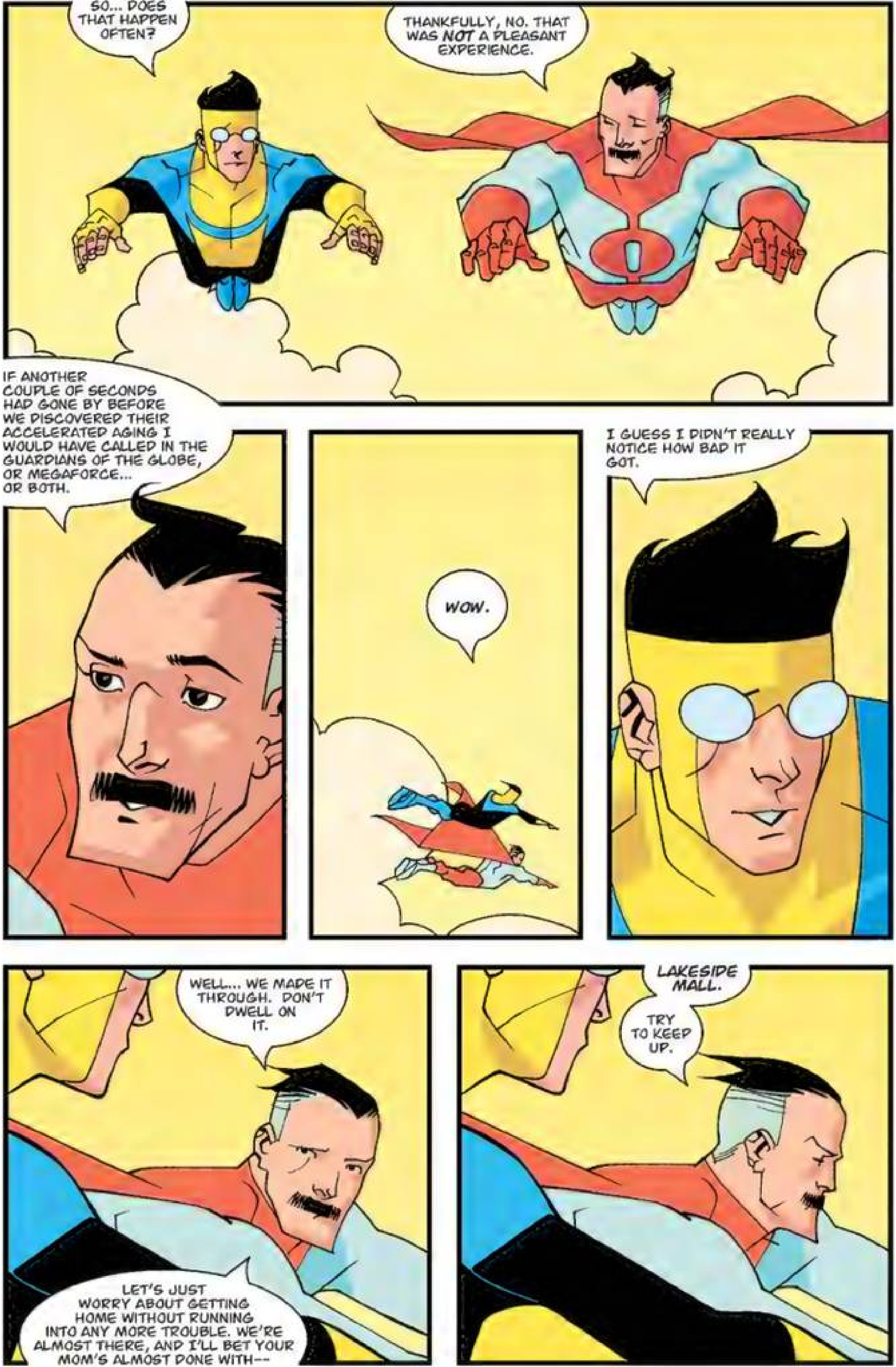

NO TIME FOR THAT, SON! LET'S HELP THESE BOYS OUT!
GOOM!
I'LL DO WHAT I CAN!
POOM!
THAT'S THE SPIRIT!
DOOM!
WHOOM!
SURE ARE A LOT OF THESE GUYS!
NO KIDDING!
THERE SEEMS TO BE AN ENDLESS STREAM OF THEM COMING OUT OF THAT PORTAL.
BOOM!
BOOM!

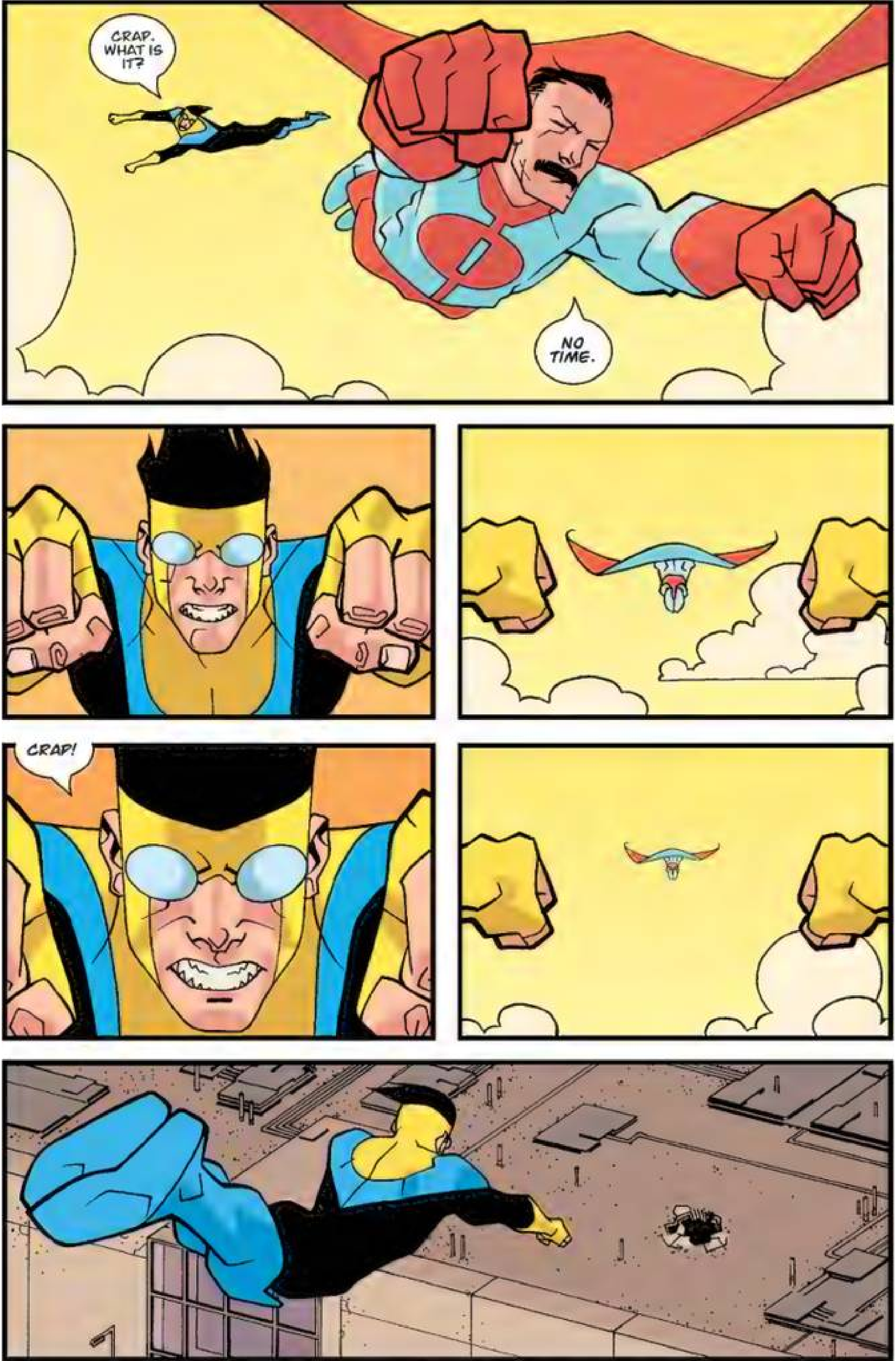

WELL, YOU'RE *OBVIOUSLY* NOT FROM AROUND HERE.
LET ME HELP YOU FIND YOUR WAY HOME.
I THINK WE'RE DEALING WITH SOME SORT OF OTHER-DIMENSIONAL ARMY HERE. I DON'T RECOGNIZE THESE THINGS AT ALL.
WHICH MEANS THEY COULD HAVE AN ENTIRE *UNIVERSE* WORTH OF SOLDIERS READY TO SPILL OUT OF THAT THING!
WE'VE GOT TO GET THEM BACK IN THAT PORTAL AND FIGURE OUT A WAY TO CLOSE THAT THING FAST!
ANY IDEAS?
NOT YET... NO.

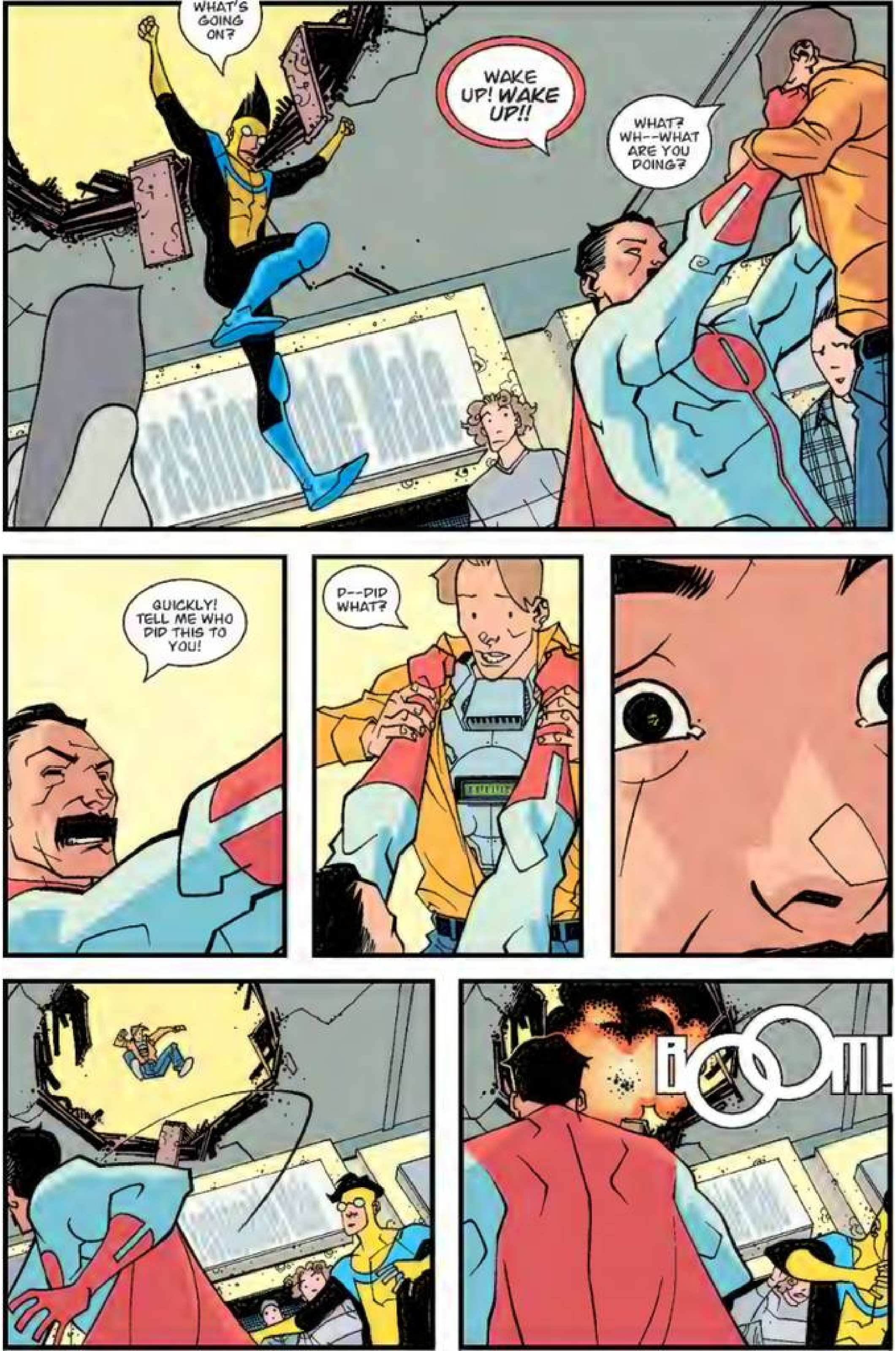

SKRAGG!!
WAIT A SECOND...
...IS IT JUST ME, OR ARE THESE GUYS GETTING SLOWER?
KRAK!
NOW THAT YOU MENTION IT, THIS SEEMS TO BE GETTING EASIER.
JEEZ, DAD! THIS GUY IS AGING BY THE MINUTE!
TIME MUST WORK DIFFERENTLY IN THEIR DIMENSION. THEY'RE STARTING TO DROP LIKE FLIES!
YEAH, AND IF THERE WEREN'T SO MANY OF THEM... WE'D BE WINNING THIS BATTLE!

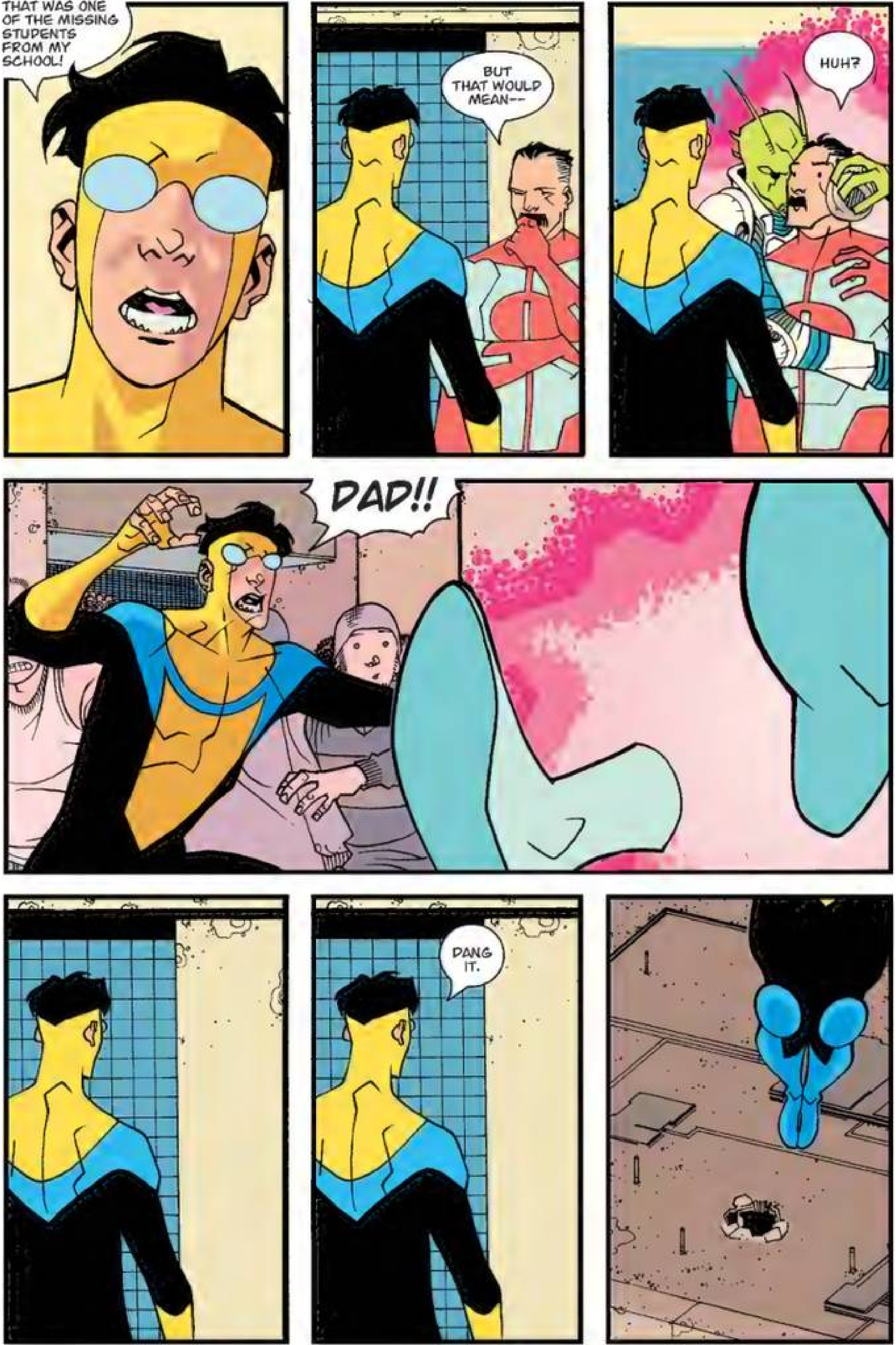

WE'RE NOT DEFEATED YET!
RAARGH!!
GET OFF MY PLANET!

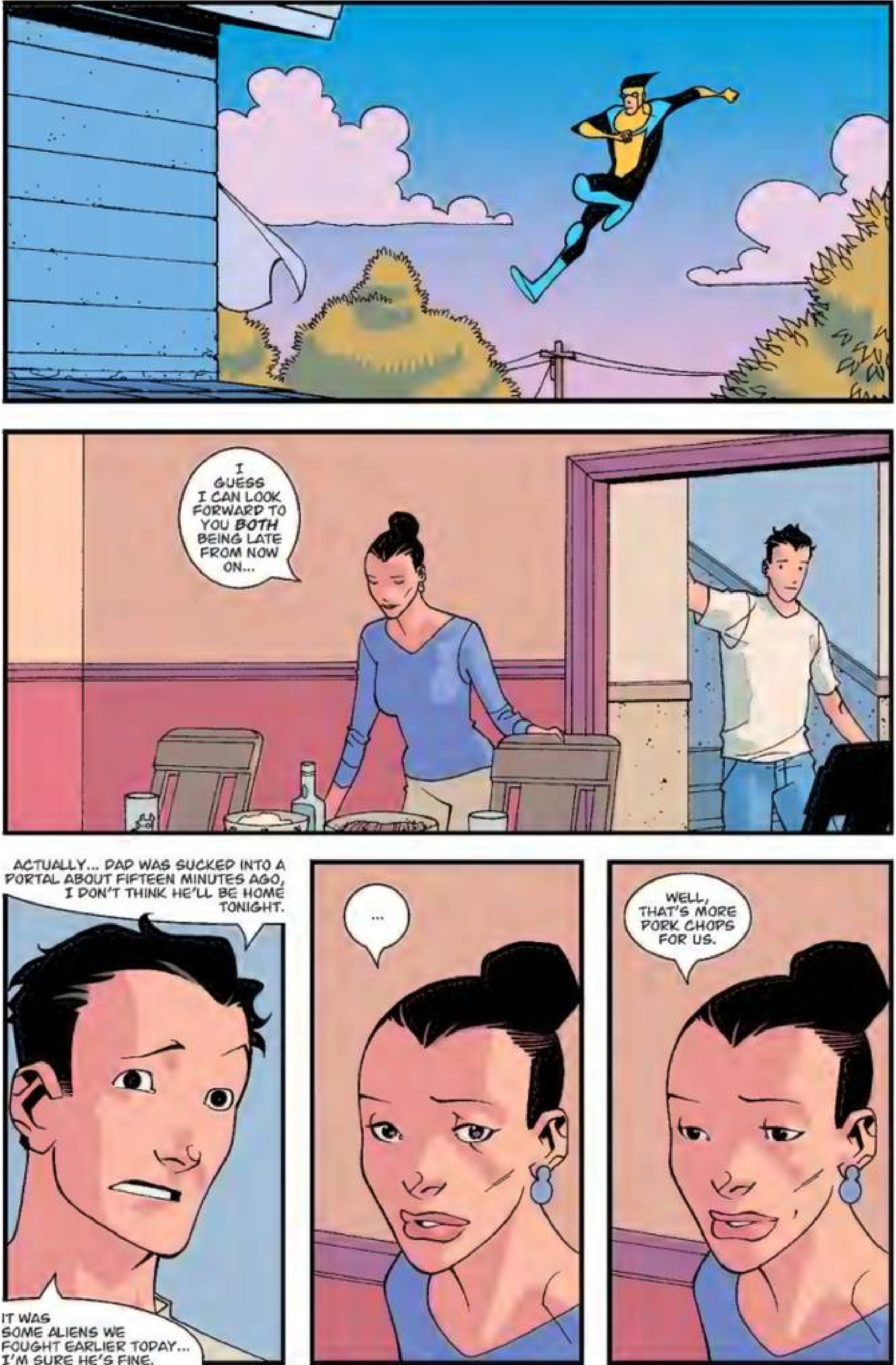

DAD?
IT'S OKAY DAD. THEY'RE LEAVING. IT'S OVER.
...
YOU'RE RIGHT.
LET'S GO.


SO... DOES THAT HAPPEN OFTEN?
THANKFULLY, NO. THAT WAS *NOT* A PLEASANT EXPERIENCE.
IF ANOTHER COUPLE OF SECONDS HAD GONE BY BEFORE WE DISCOVERED THEIR ACCELERATED AGING I WOULD HAVE CALLED IN THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE, OR MEGAFORCE... OR BOTH.
WOW.
I GUESS I DIDN'T REALLY NOTICE HOW BAD IT GOT.
WELL... WE MADE IT THROUGH. DON'T DWELL ON IT.
LET'S JUST WORRY ABOUT GETTING HOME WITHOUT RUNNING INTO ANY MORE TROUBLE. WE'RE ALMOST THERE, AND I'LL BET YOUR MOM'S ALMOST DONE WITH--
LAKESIDE MALL.
TRY TO KEEP UP.

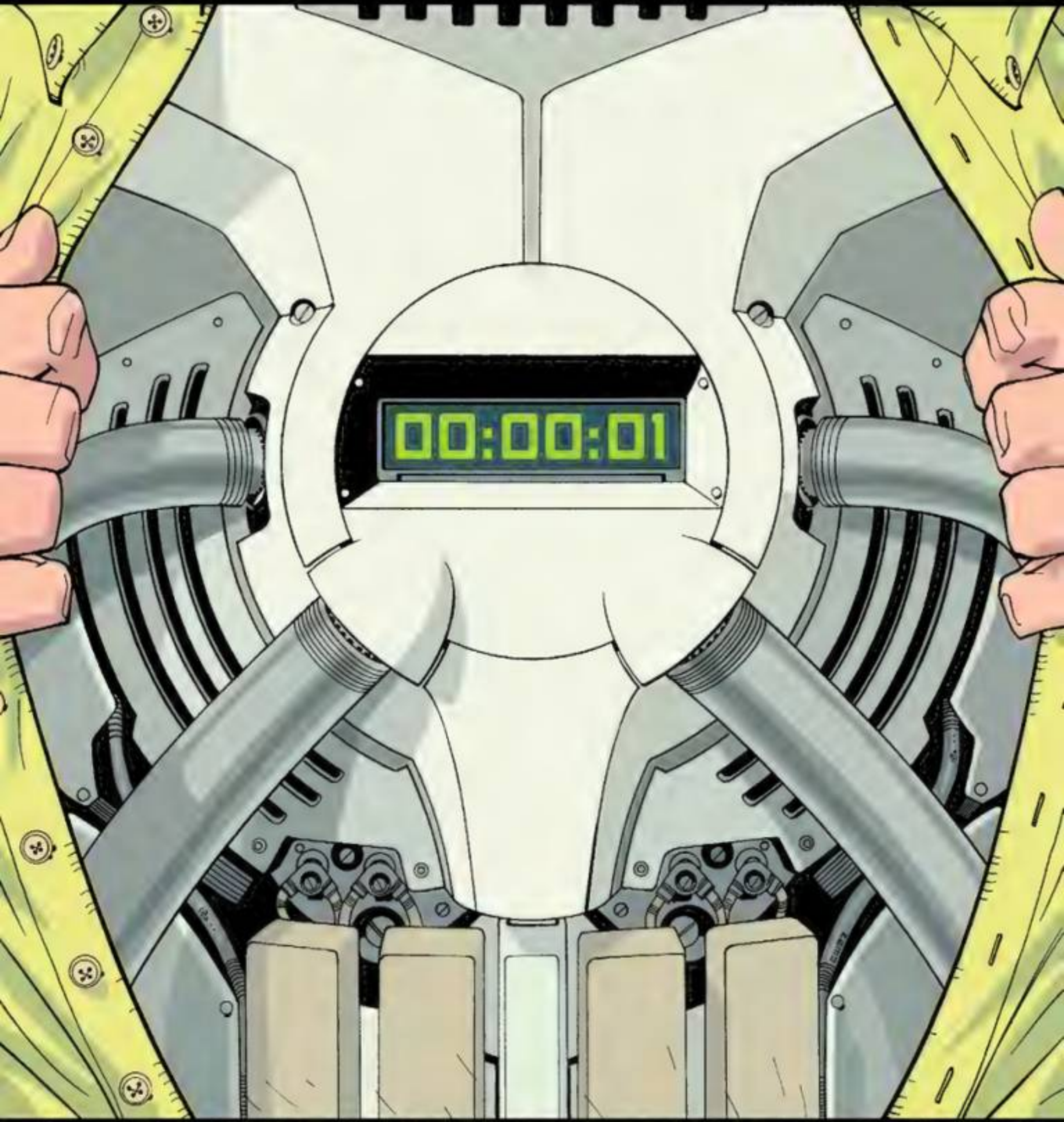

CRAP. WHAT IS IT?
NO TIME.
CRAP!

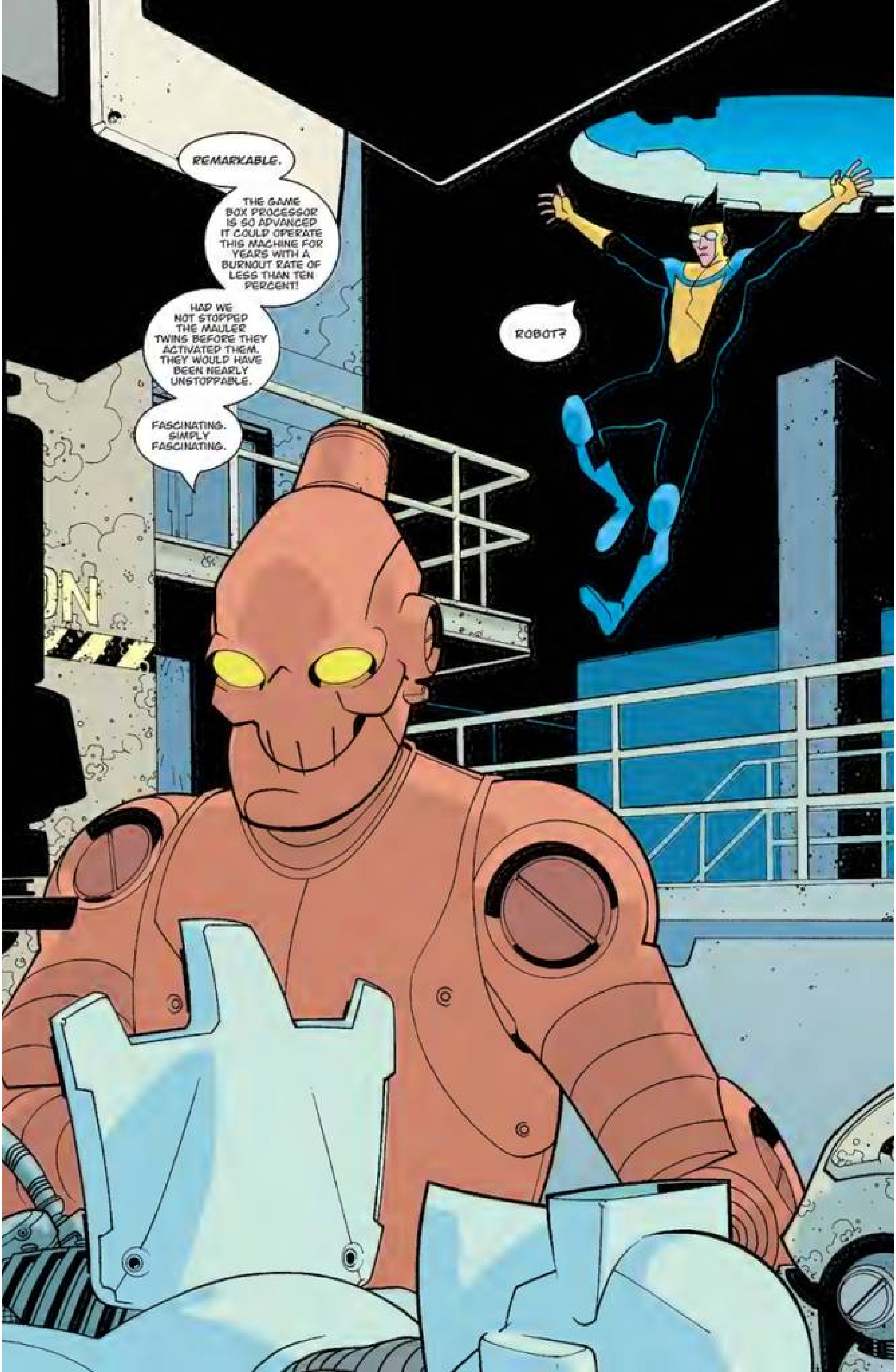

WHAT'S GOING ON?
WAKE UP! WAKE UP!!
WHAT? WH--WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
QUICKLY! TELL ME WHO DID THIS TO YOU!
D--DID WHAT?
BOOM

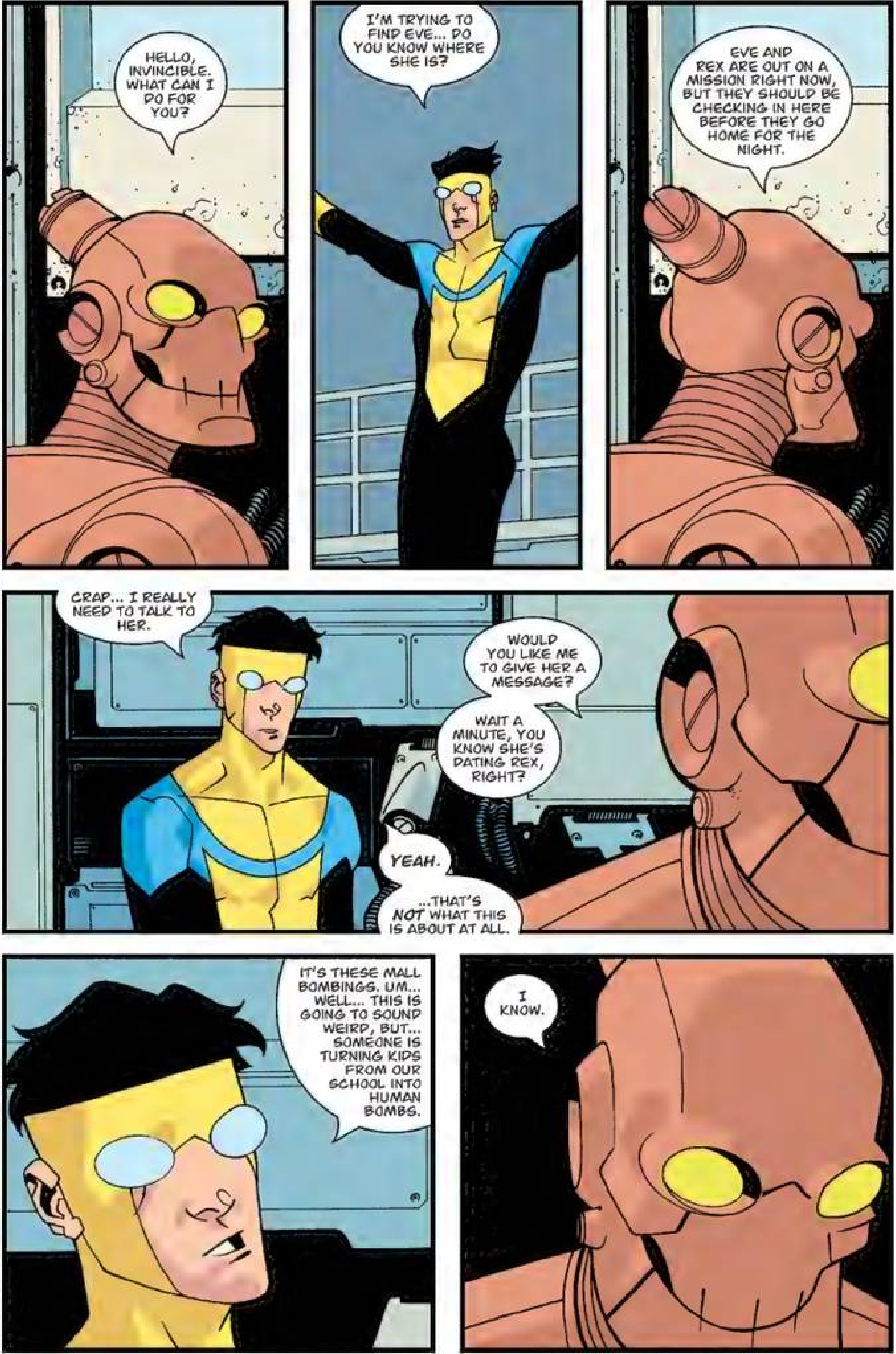

THAT WAS ONE OF THE MISSING STUDENTS FROM MY SCHOOL!
BUT THAT WOULD MEAN--
HUH?
DAD!!
DANG IT.

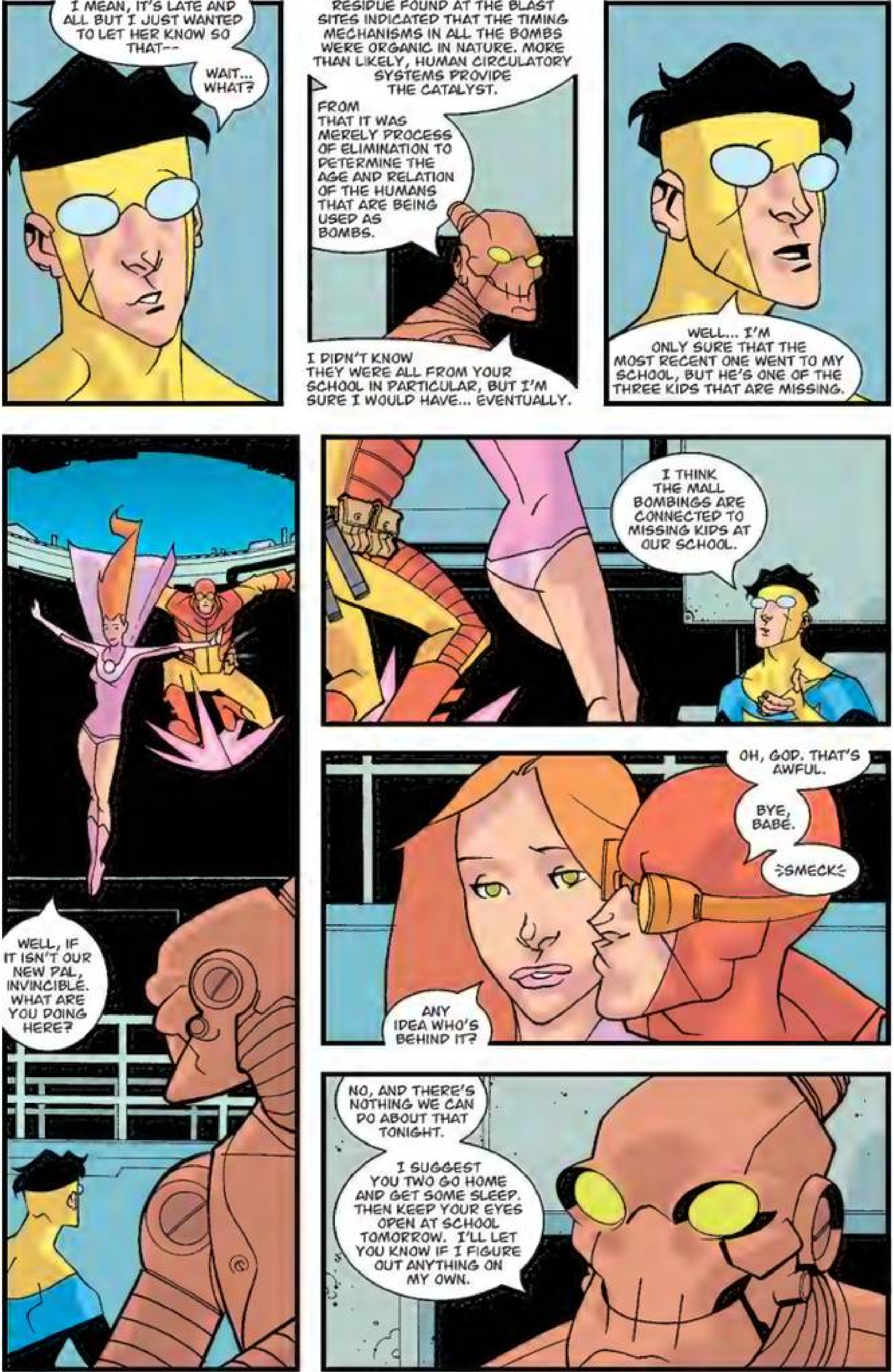

I GUESS I CAN LOOK FORWARD TO YOU **BOTH** BEING LATE FROM NOW ON...
ACTUALLY... DAD WAS SUCKED INTO A PORTAL ABOUT FIFTEEN MINUTES AGO, I DON'T THINK HE'LL BE HOME TONIGHT.
IT WAS SOME ALIENS WE FOUGHT EARLIER TODAY... I'M SURE HE'S FINE.
...
WELL, THAT'S MORE PORK CHOPS FOR US.

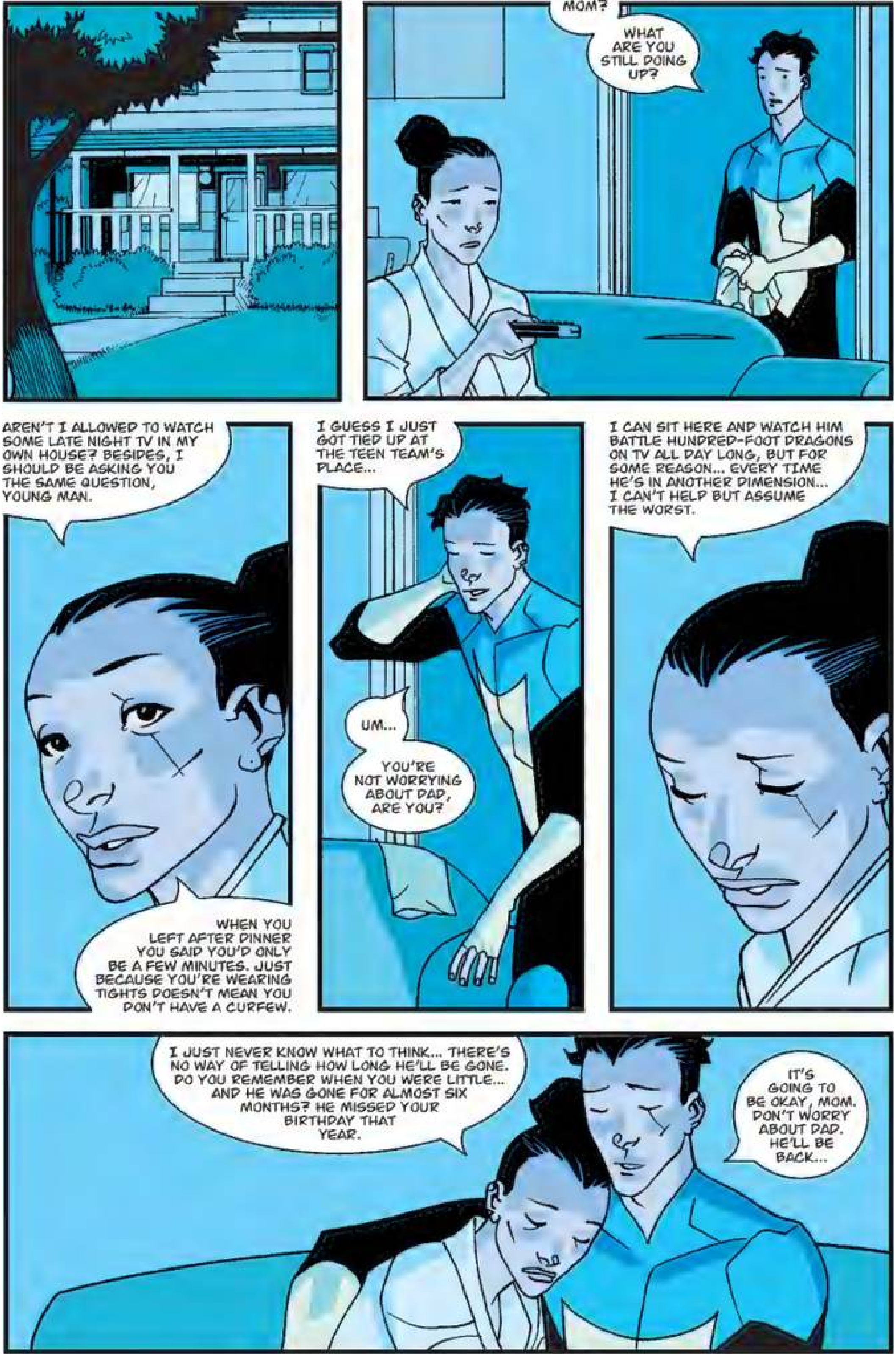
ISSUE FOUR

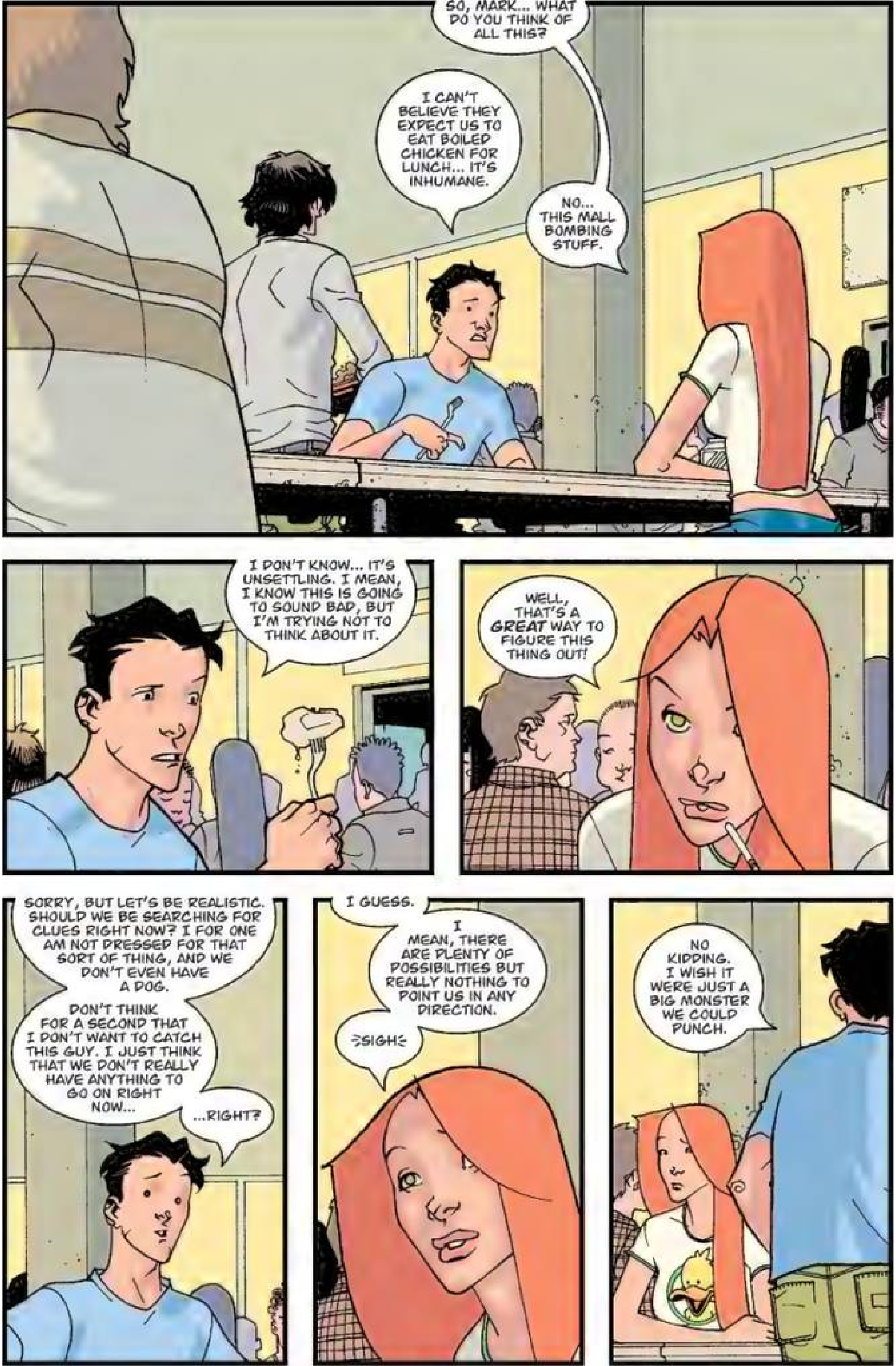


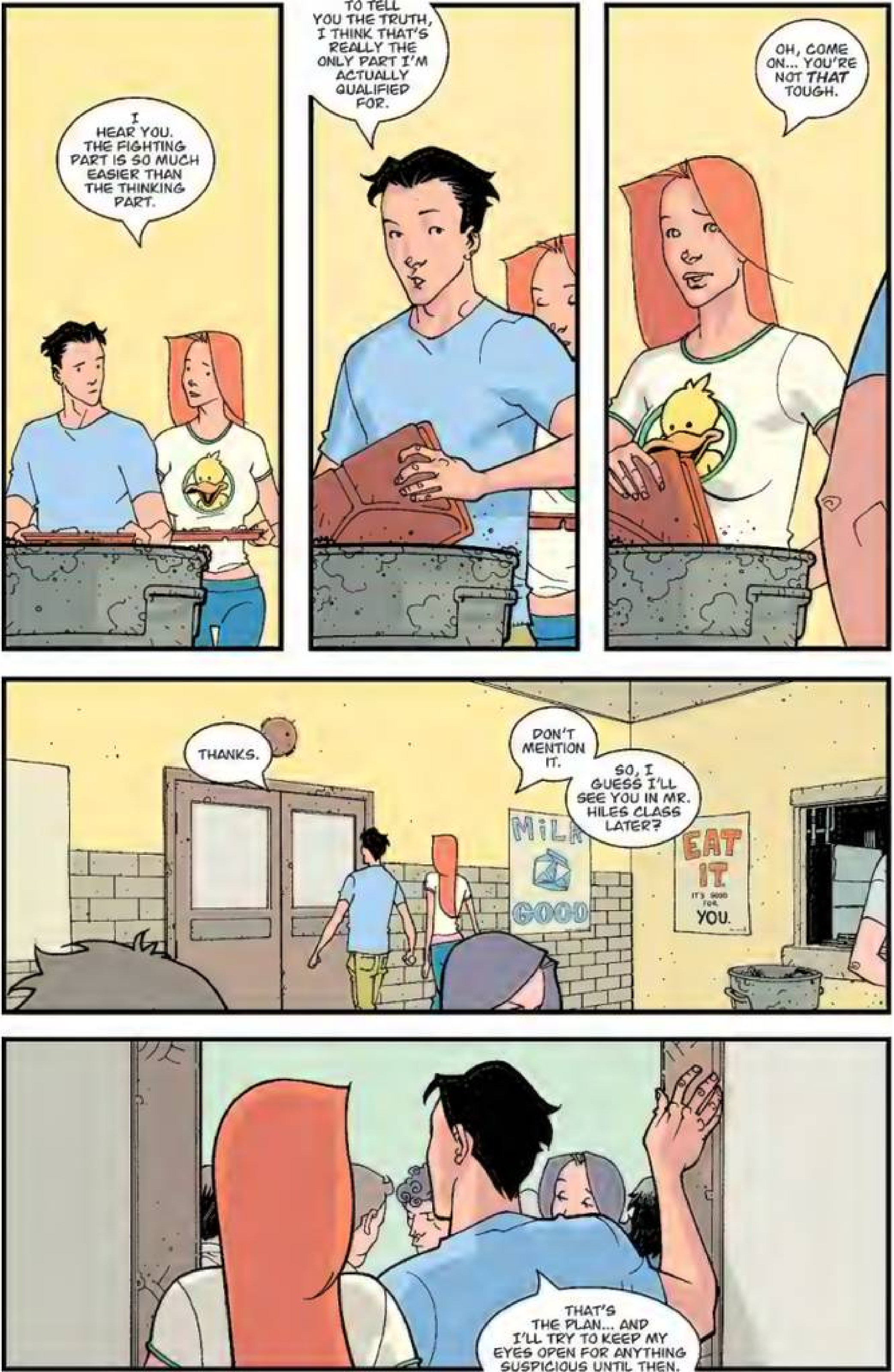

REMARKABLE.
THE GAME BOX PROCESSOR IS SO ADVANCED IT COULD OPERATE THIS MACHINE FOR YEARS WITH A BURNOUT RATE OF LESS THAN TEN PERCENT!
HAD WE NOT STOPPED THE MAULER TWINS BEFORE THEY ACTIVATED THEM, THEY WOULD HAVE BEEN NEARLY UNSTOPPABLE.
FASCINATING. SIMPLY FASCINATING.
ROBOT?
ON

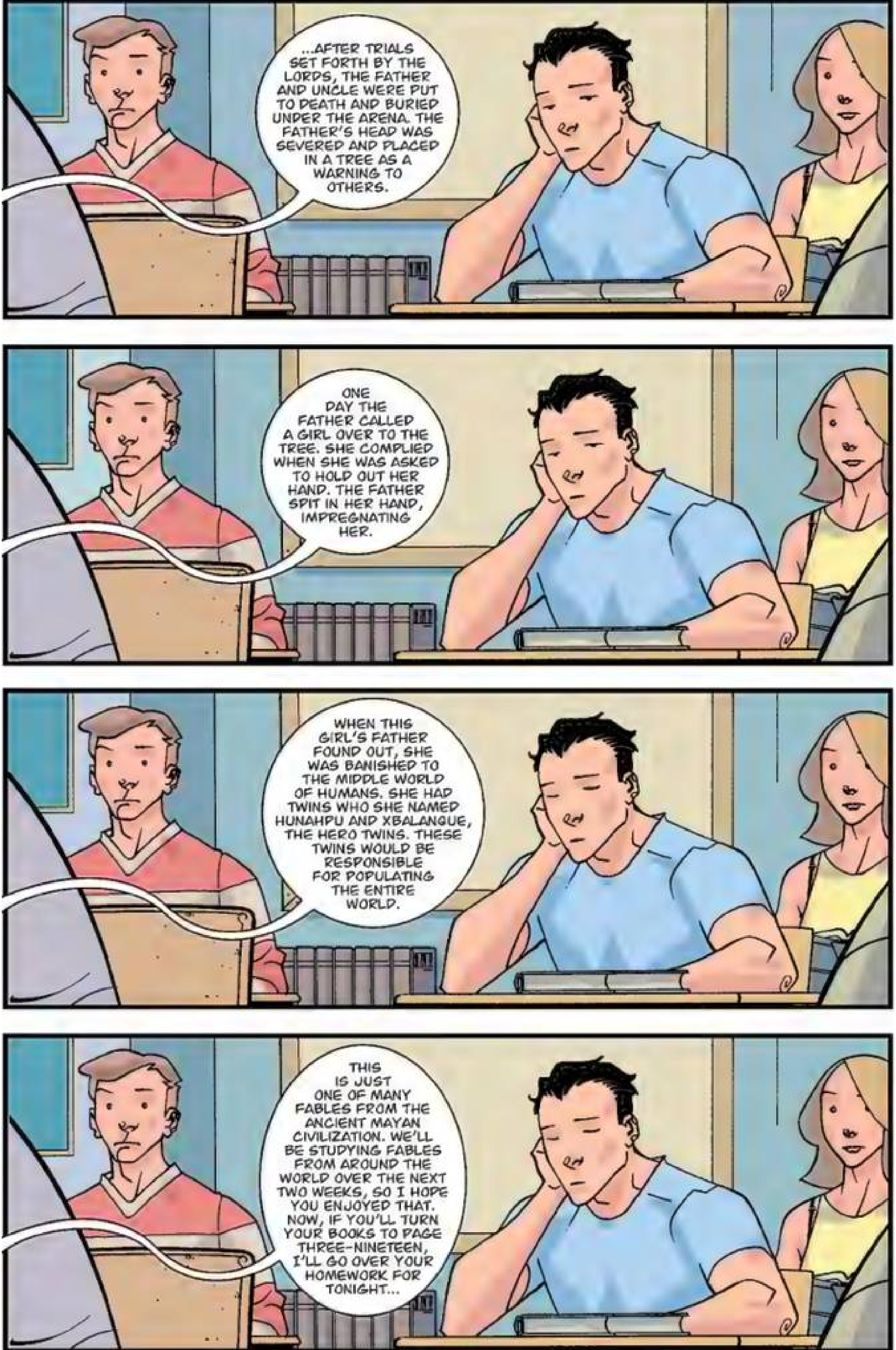

HELLO, INVINCIBLE. WHAT CAN I DO FOR YOU?
I'M TRYING TO FIND EVE... DO YOU KNOW WHERE SHE IS?
EVE AND REX ARE OUT ON A MISSION RIGHT NOW, BUT THEY SHOULD BE CHECKING IN HERE BEFORE THEY GO HOME FOR THE NIGHT.
CRAP... I REALLY NEED TO TALK TO HER.
WOULD YOU LIKE ME TO GIVE HER A MESSAGE?
WAIT A MINUTE, YOU KNOW SHE'S DATING REX, RIGHT?
YEAH.
...THAT'S *NOT* WHAT THIS IS ABOUT AT ALL.
IT'S THESE MALL BOMBINGS. UM... WELL... THIS IS GOING TO SOUND WEIRD, BUT... SOMEONE IS TURNING KIDS FROM OUR SCHOOL INTO HUMAN BOMBS.
I KNOW.

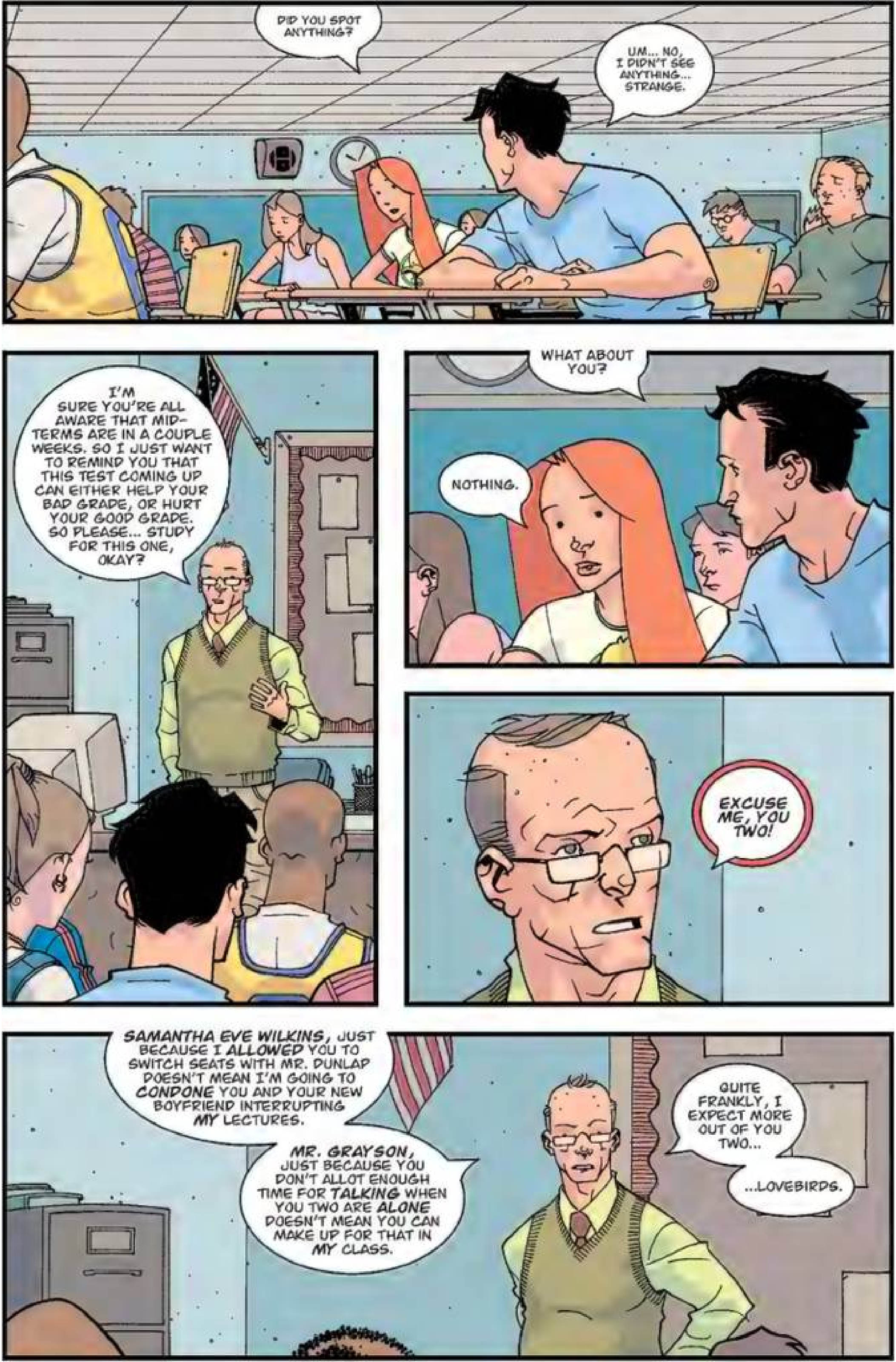

I MEAN, IT'S LATE AND ALL BUT I JUST WANTED TO LET HER KNOW SO THAT--
WAIT... WHAT?
RESIDUE FOUND AT THE BLAST SITES INDICATED THAT THE TIMING MECHANISMS IN ALL THE BOMBS WERE ORGANIC IN NATURE. MORE THAN LIKELY, HUMAN CIRCULATORY SYSTEMS PROVIDE THE CATALYST.
FROM THAT IT WAS MERELY PROCESS OF ELIMINATION TO DETERMINE THE AGE AND RELATION OF THE HUMANS THAT ARE BEING USED AS BOMBS.
I DIDN'T KNOW THEY WERE ALL FROM YOUR SCHOOL IN PARTICULAR, BUT I'M SURE I WOULD HAVE... EVENTUALLY.
WELL... I'M ONLY SURE THAT THE MOST RECENT ONE WENT TO MY SCHOOL, BUT HE'S ONE OF THE THREE KIDS THAT ARE MISSING.
WELL, IF IT ISN'T OUR NEW PAL, INVINCIBLE. WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
I THINK THE MALL BOMBINGS ARE CONNECTED TO MISSING KIDS AT OUR SCHOOL.
OH, GOD. THAT'S AWFUL.
BYE, BABE.
SMECK
ANY IDEA WHO'S BEHIND IT?
NO, AND THERE'S NOTHING WE CAN DO ABOUT THAT TONIGHT.
I SUGGEST YOU TWO GO HOME AND GET SOME SLEEP. THEN KEEP YOUR EYES OPEN AT SCHOOL TOMORROW. I'LL LET YOU KNOW IF I FIGURE OUT ANYTHING ON MY OWN.

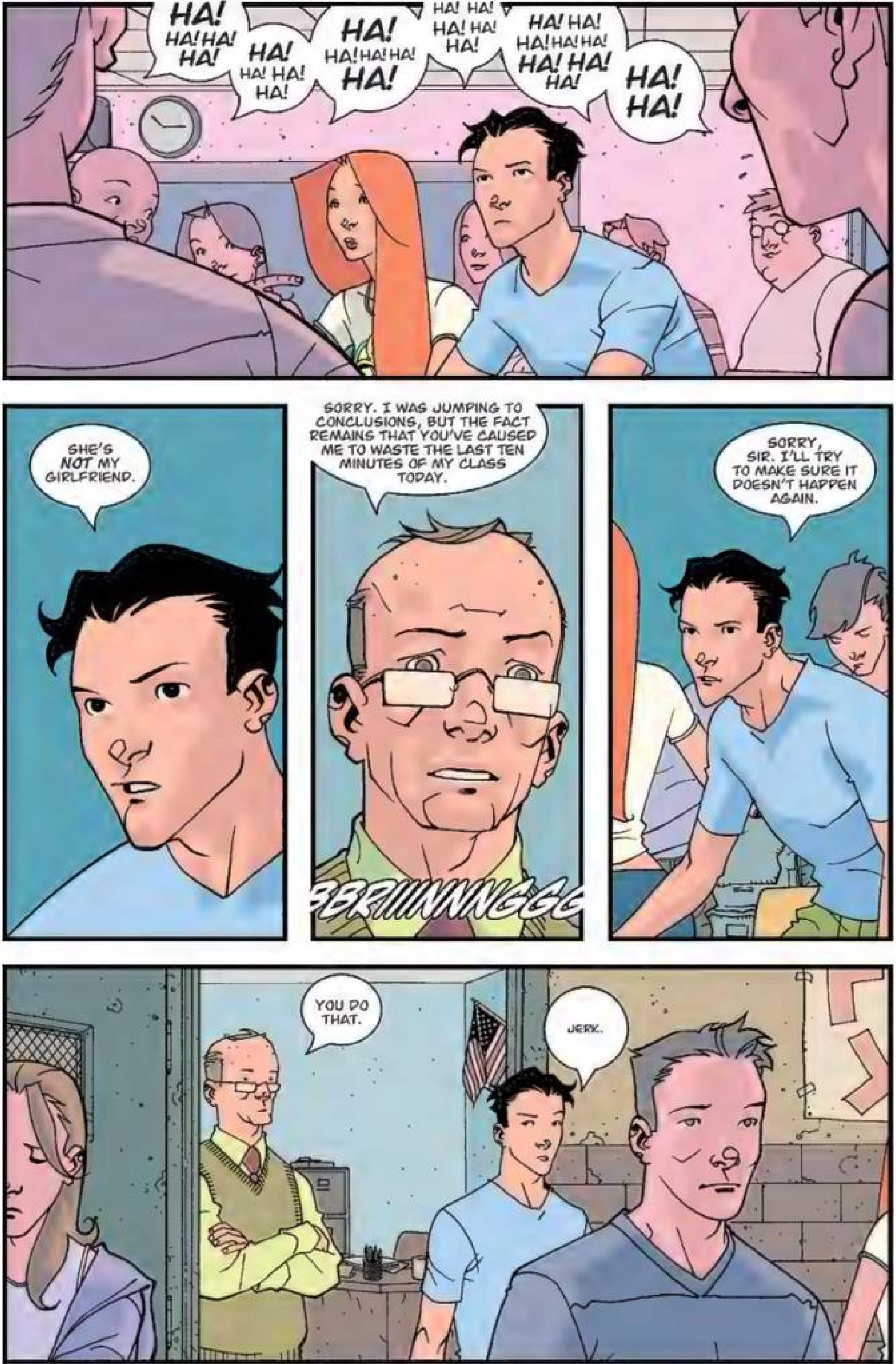

MOM?
WHAT ARE YOU STILL DOING UP?
AREN'T I ALLOWED TO WATCH SOME LATE NIGHT TV IN MY OWN HOUSE? BESIDES, I SHOULD BE ASKING YOU THE SAME QUESTION, YOUNG MAN.
WHEN YOU LEFT AFTER DINNER YOU SAID YOU'D ONLY BE A FEW MINUTES. JUST BECAUSE YOU'RE WEARING TIGHTS DOESN'T MEAN YOU DON'T HAVE A CURFEW.
I GUESS I JUST GOT TIED UP AT THE TEEN TEAM'S PLACE...
UM...
YOU'RE NOT WORRYING ABOUT DAD, ARE YOU?
I CAN SIT HERE AND WATCH HIM BATTLE HUNDRED-FOOT DRAGONS ON TV ALL DAY LONG, BUT FOR SOME REASON... EVERY TIME HE'S IN ANOTHER DIMENSION... I CAN'T HELP BUT ASSUME THE WORST.
I JUST NEVER KNOW WHAT TO THINK... THERE'S NO WAY OF TELLING HOW LONG HE'LL BE GONE. DO YOU REMEMBER WHEN YOU WERE LITTLE... AND HE WAS GONE FOR ALMOST SIX MONTHS? HE MISSED YOUR BIRTHDAY THAT YEAR.
IT'S GOING TO BE OKAY, MOM. DON'T WORRY ABOUT DAD. HE'LL BE BACK...

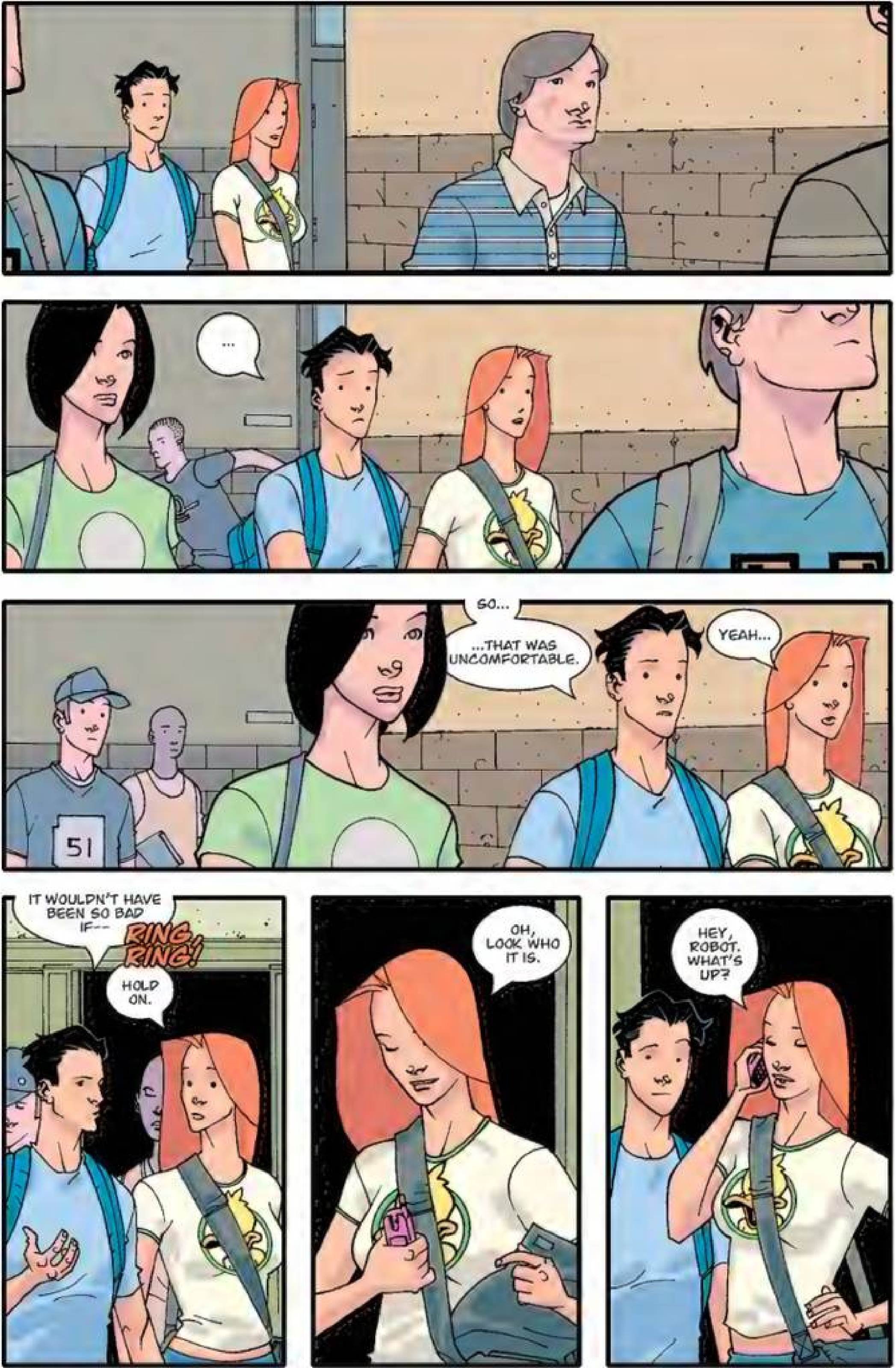

SO, MARK... WHAT DO YOU THINK OF ALL THIS?
I CAN'T BELIEVE THEY EXPECT US TO EAT BOILED CHICKEN FOR LUNCH... IT'S INHUMANE.
NO... THIS MALL BOMBING STUFF.
I DON'T KNOW... IT'S UNSETTLING. I MEAN, I KNOW THIS IS GOING TO SOUND BAD, BUT I'M TRYING NOT TO THINK ABOUT IT.
WELL, THAT'S A **GREAT** WAY TO FIGURE THIS THING OUT!
SORRY, BUT LET'S BE REALISTIC. SHOULD WE BE SEARCHING FOR CLUES RIGHT NOW? I FOR ONE AM NOT DRESSED FOR THAT SORT OF THING, AND WE DON'T EVEN HAVE A DOG.
DON'T THINK FOR A SECOND THAT I DON'T WANT TO CATCH THIS GUY. I JUST THINK THAT WE DON'T REALLY HAVE ANYTHING TO GO ON RIGHT NOW...
...RIGHT?
I GUESS.
I MEAN, THERE ARE PLENTY OF POSSIBILITIES BUT REALLY NOTHING TO POINT US IN ANY DIRECTION.
≷SIGH≶
NO KIDDING. I WISH IT WERE JUST A BIG MONSTER WE COULD PUNCH.

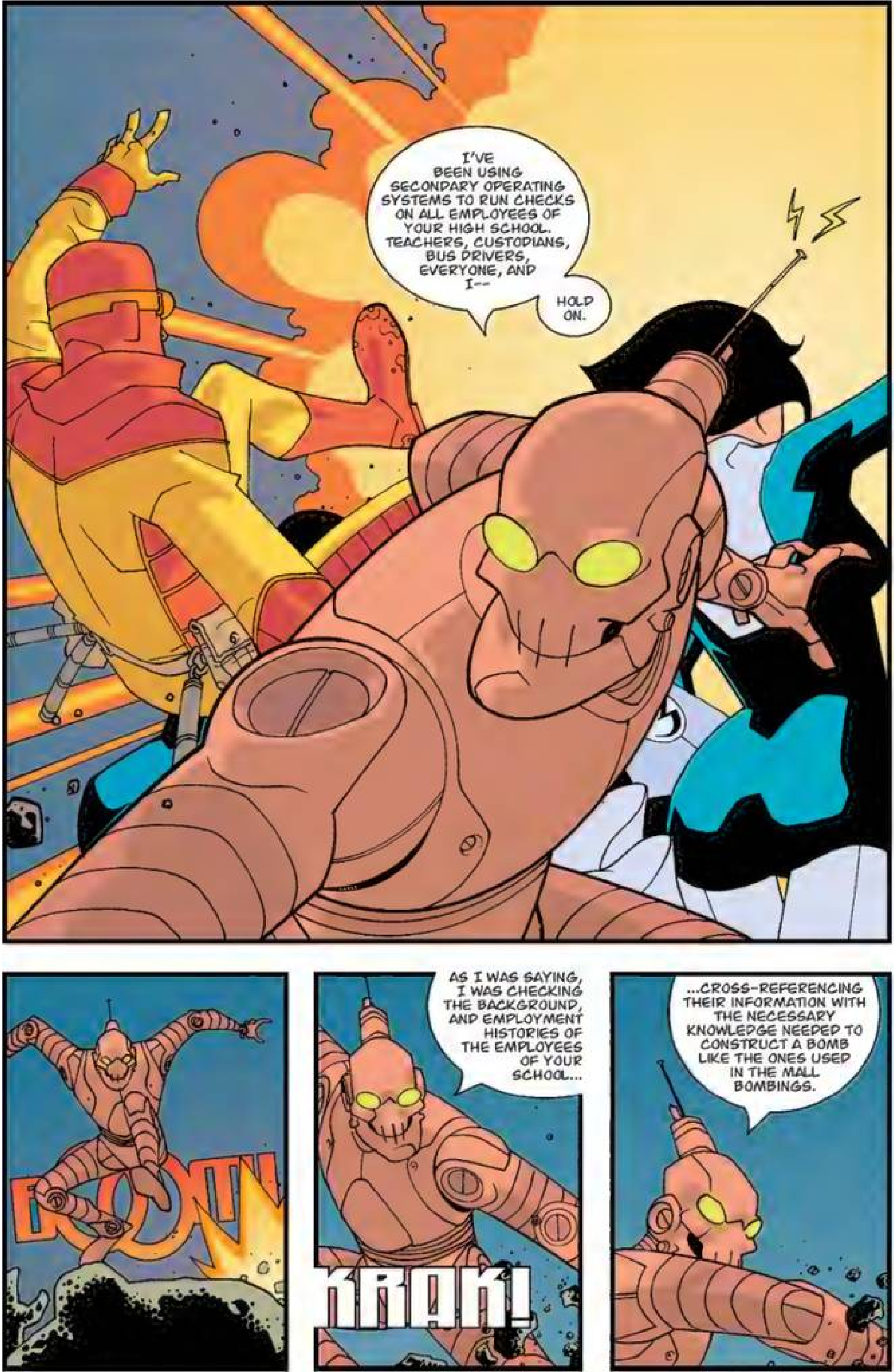

I HEAR YOU. THE FIGHTING PART IS SO MUCH EASIER THAN THE THINKING PART.
TO TELL YOU THE TRUTH, I THINK THAT'S REALLY THE ONLY PART I'M ACTUALLY QUALIFIED FOR.
OH, COME ON... YOU'RE NOT *THAT* TOUGH.
THANKS.
DON'T MENTION IT.
SO, I GUESS I'LL SEE YOU IN MR. HILES CLASS LATER?
MILK
GOOD
EAT IT
IT'S GOOD FOR YOU.
THAT'S THE PLAN... AND I'LL TRY TO KEEP MY EYES OPEN FOR ANYTHING SUSPICIOUS UNTIL THEN.

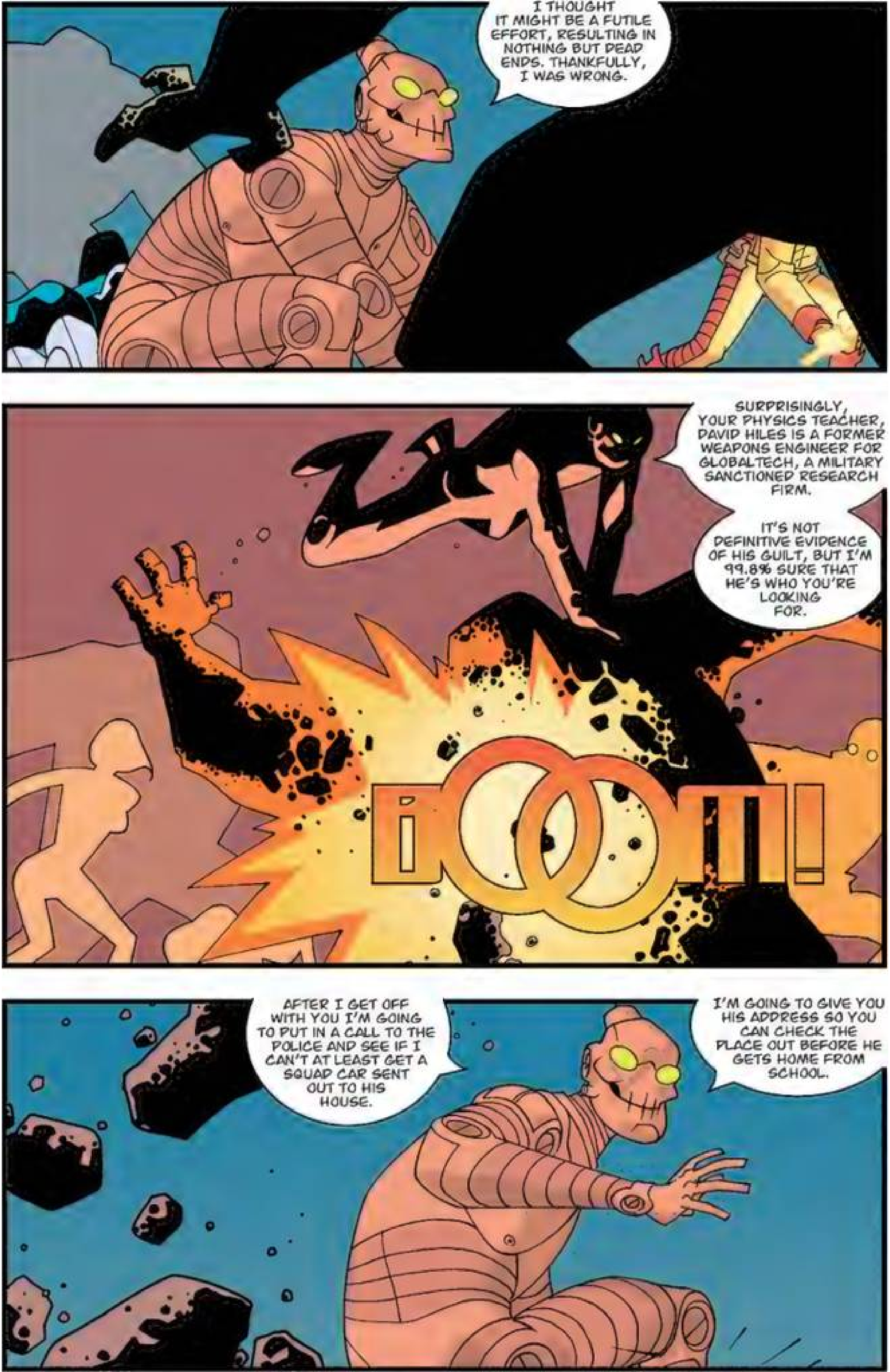

...AFTER TRIALS SET FORTH BY THE LORDS, THE FATHER AND UNCLE WERE PUT TO DEATH AND BURIED UNDER THE ARENA. THE FATHER'S HEAD WAS SEVERED AND PLACED IN A TREE AS A WARNING TO OTHERS.
ONE DAY THE FATHER CALLED A GIRL OVER TO THE TREE. SHE COMPLIED WHEN SHE WAS ASKED TO HOLD OUT HER HAND. THE FATHER SPIT IN HER HAND, IMPREGNATING HER.
WHEN THIS GIRL'S FATHER FOUND OUT, SHE WAS BANISHED TO THE MIDDLE WORLD OF HUMANS. SHE HAD TWINS WHO SHE NAMED HUNAHPU AND XBALANQUE, THE HERO TWINS. THESE TWINS WOULD BE RESPONSIBLE FOR POPULATING THE ENTIRE WORLD.
THIS IS JUST ONE OF MANY FABLES FROM THE ANCIENT MAYAN CIVILIZATION. WE'LL BE STUDYING FABLES FROM AROUND THE WORLD OVER THE NEXT TWO WEEKS, SO I HOPE YOU ENJOYED THAT. NOW, IF YOU'LL TURN YOUR BOOKS TO PAGE THREE-NINETEEN, I'LL GO OVER YOUR HOMEWORK FOR TONIGHT...

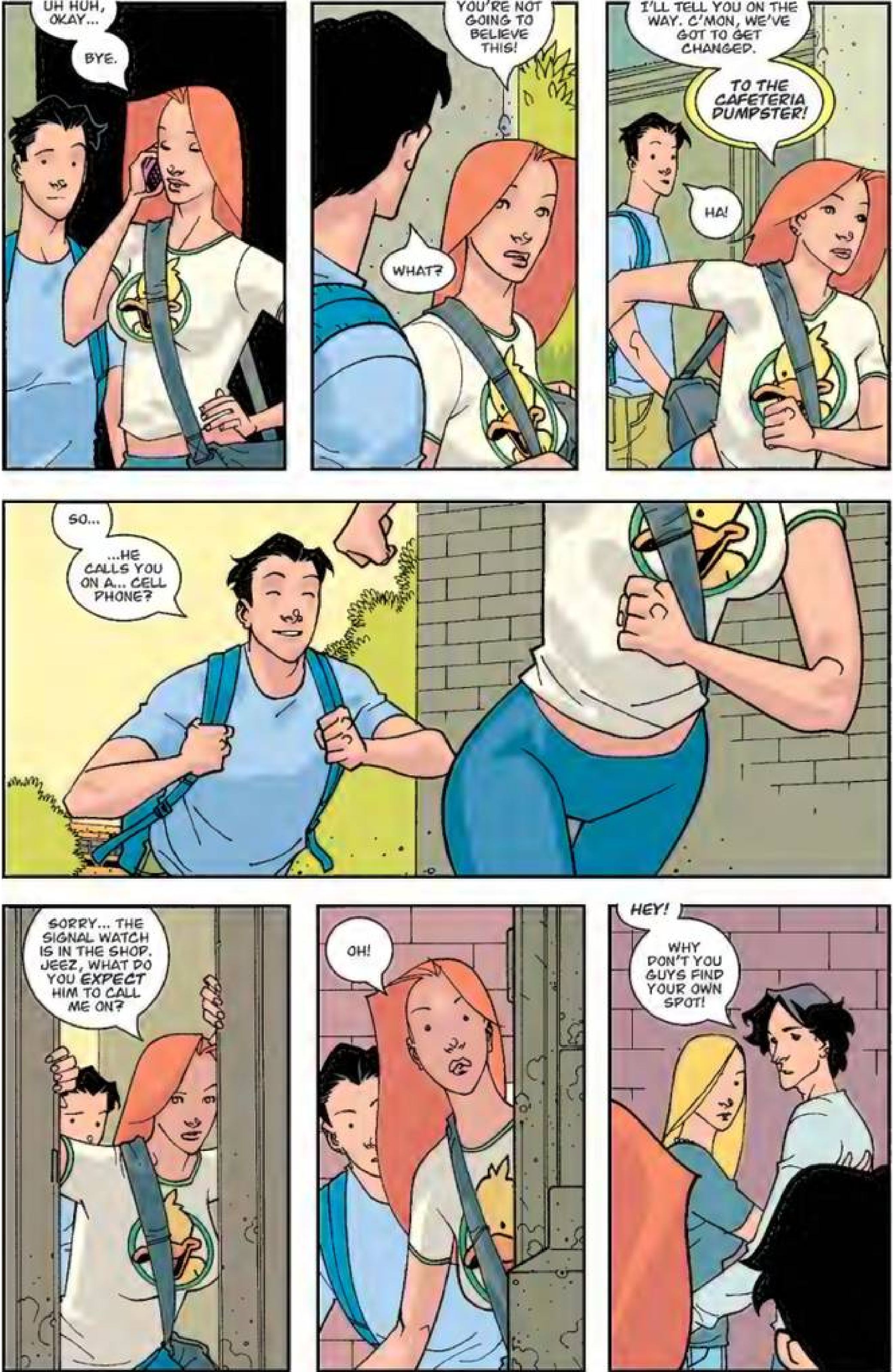

DID YOU SPOT ANYTHING?
UM... NO, I DIDN'T SEE ANYTHING... STRANGE.
I'M SURE YOU'RE ALL AWARE THAT MID-TERMS ARE IN A COUPLE WEEKS. SO I JUST WANT TO REMIND YOU THAT THIS TEST COMING UP CAN EITHER HELP YOUR BAD GRADE, OR HURT YOUR GOOD GRADE. SO PLEASE... STUDY FOR THIS ONE, OKAY?
WHAT ABOUT YOU?
NOTHING.
EXCUSE ME, YOU TWO!
SAMANTHA EVE WILKINS, JUST BECAUSE I ALLOWED YOU TO SWITCH SEATS WITH MR. DUNLAP DOESN'T MEAN I'M GOING TO CONDONE YOU AND YOUR NEW BOYFRIEND INTERRUPTING MY LECTURES.
MR. GRAYSON, JUST BECAUSE YOU DON'T ALLOT ENOUGH TIME FOR TALKING WHEN YOU TWO ARE ALONE DOESN'T MEAN YOU CAN MAKE UP FOR THAT IN MY CLASS.
QUITE FRANKLY, I EXPECT MORE OUT OF YOU TWO...
...LOVEBIRDS.

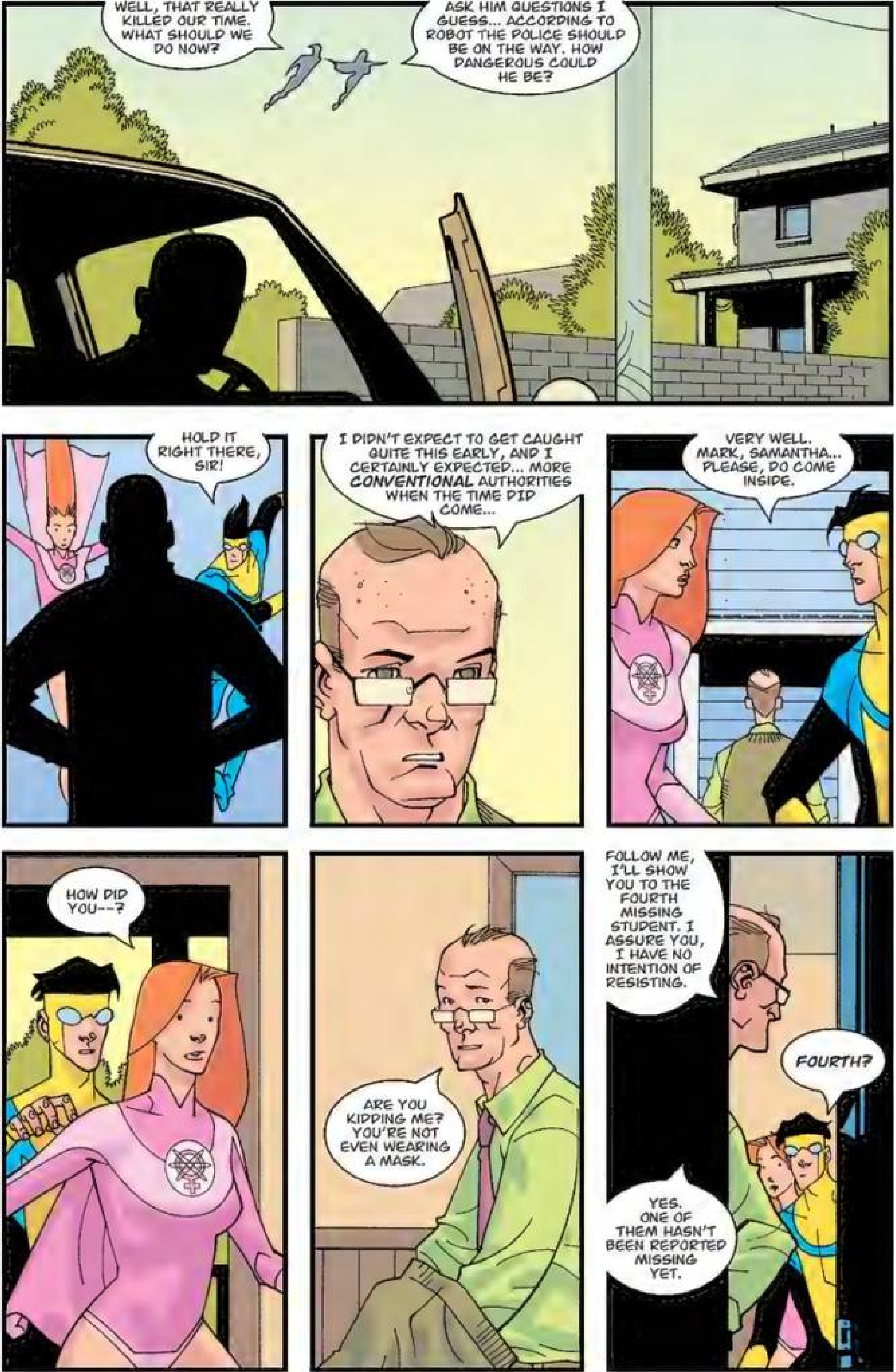

HA! HA! HA! HA!
HA! HA! HA! HA!
HA! HA! HA! HA! HA!
HA! HA! HA! HA! HA!
HA! HA! HA! HA! HA! HA! HA! HA!
HA! HA!
SHE'S *NOT* MY GIRLFRIEND.
SORRY. I WAS JUMPING TO CONCLUSIONS, BUT THE FACT REMAINS THAT YOU'VE CAUSED ME TO WASTE THE LAST TEN MINUTES OF MY CLASS TODAY.
BBRIIINNNGGG
SORRY, SIR. I'LL TRY TO MAKE SURE IT DOESN'T HAPPEN AGAIN.
YOU DO THAT.
JERK.

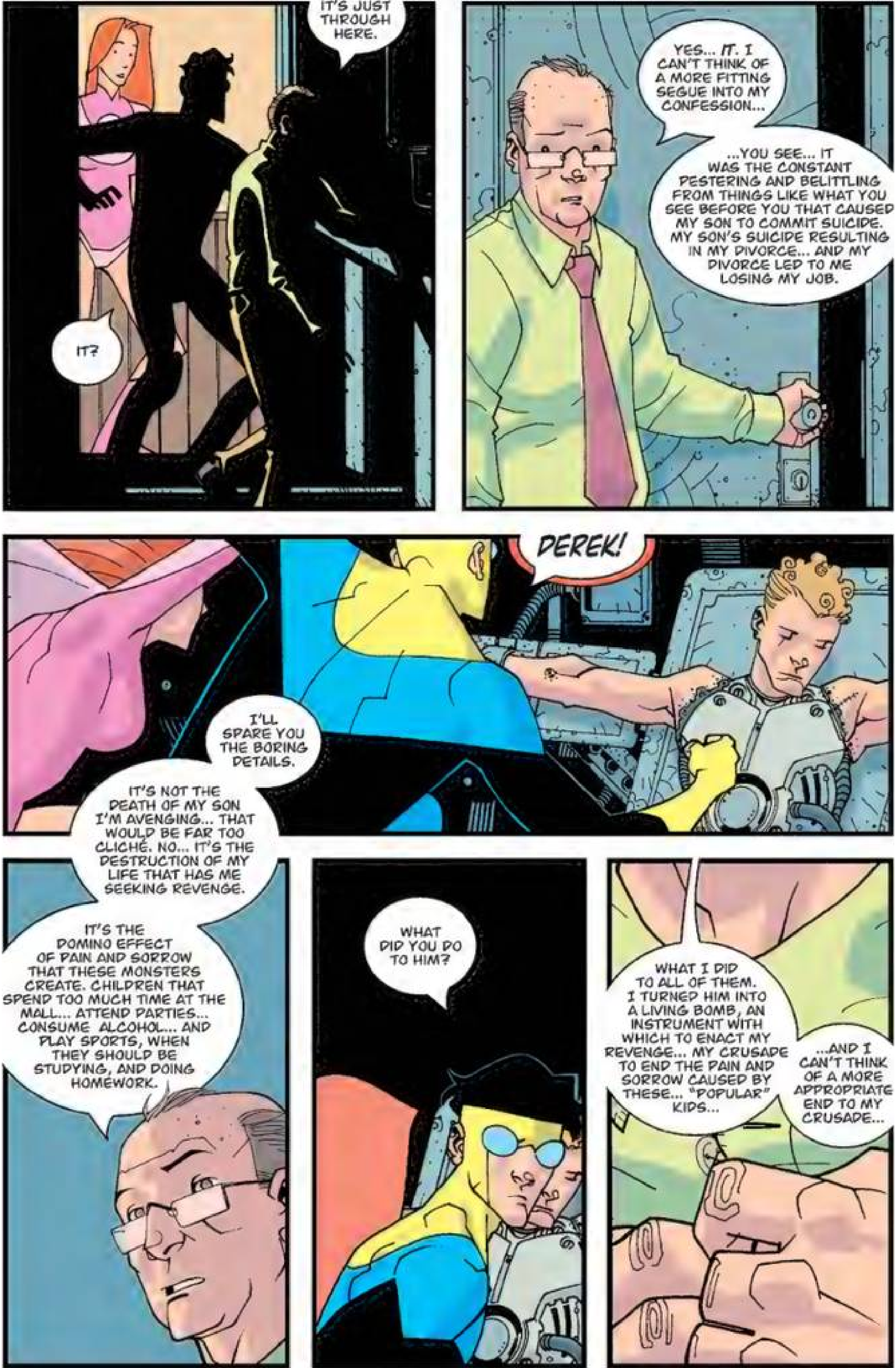

...
SO...
...THAT WAS UNCOMFORTABLE.
YEAH...
51
IT WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN SO BAD IF--
RING RING!
HOLD ON.
OH, LOOK WHO IT IS.
HEY, ROBOT. WHAT'S UP?

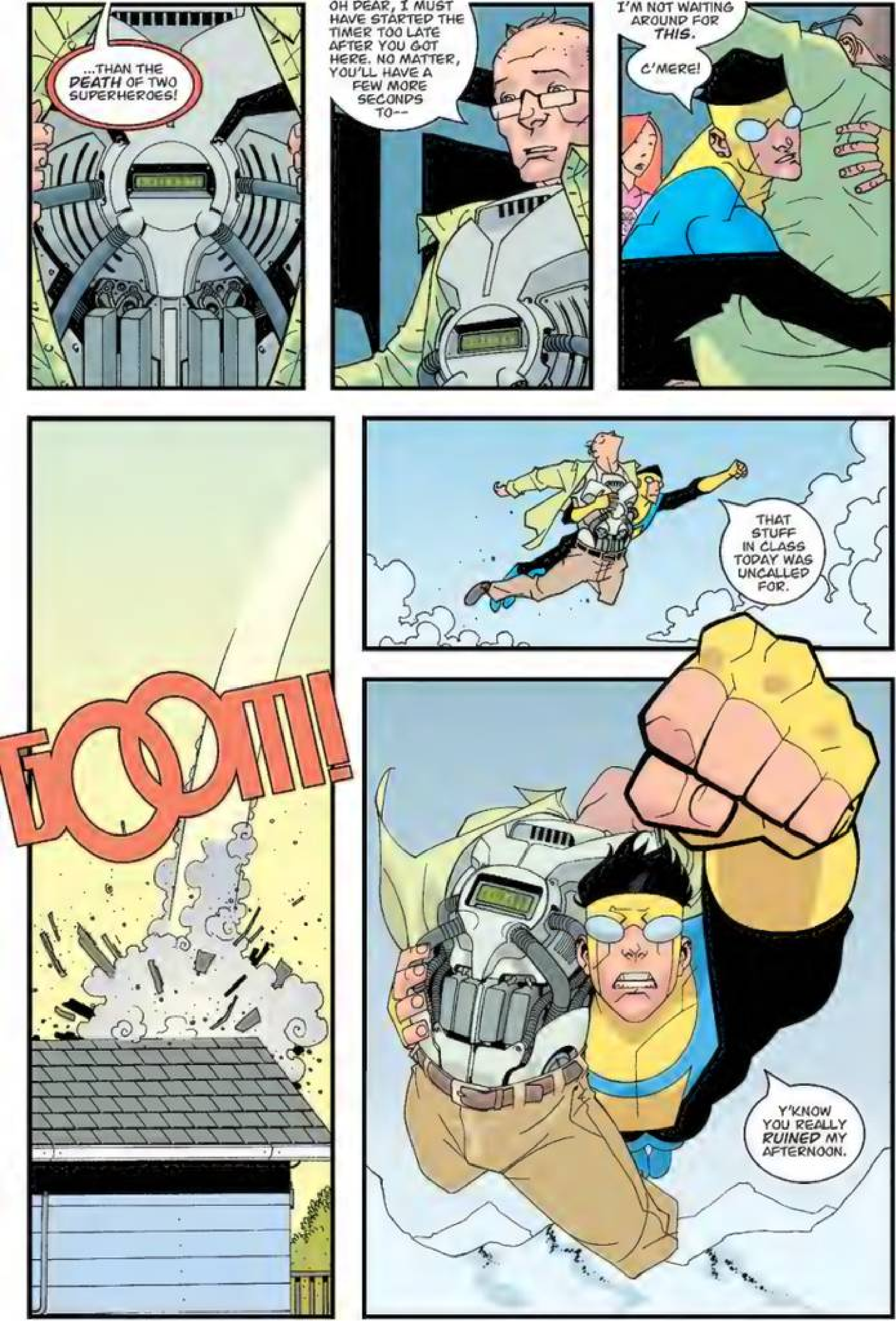

I'VE BEEN USING SECONDARY OPERATING SYSTEMS TO RUN CHECKS ON ALL EMPLOYEES OF YOUR HIGH SCHOOL. TEACHERS, CUSTODIANS, BUS DRIVERS, EVERYONE, AND I--
HOLD ON.
BOOM
AS I WAS SAYING, I WAS CHECKING THE BACKGROUND, AND EMPLOYMENT HISTORIES OF THE EMPLOYEES OF YOUR SCHOOL...
KRAK!
...CROSS-REFERENCING THEIR INFORMATION WITH THE NECESSARY KNOWLEDGE NEEDED TO CONSTRUCT A BOMB LIKE THE ONES USED IN THE MALL BOMBINGS.

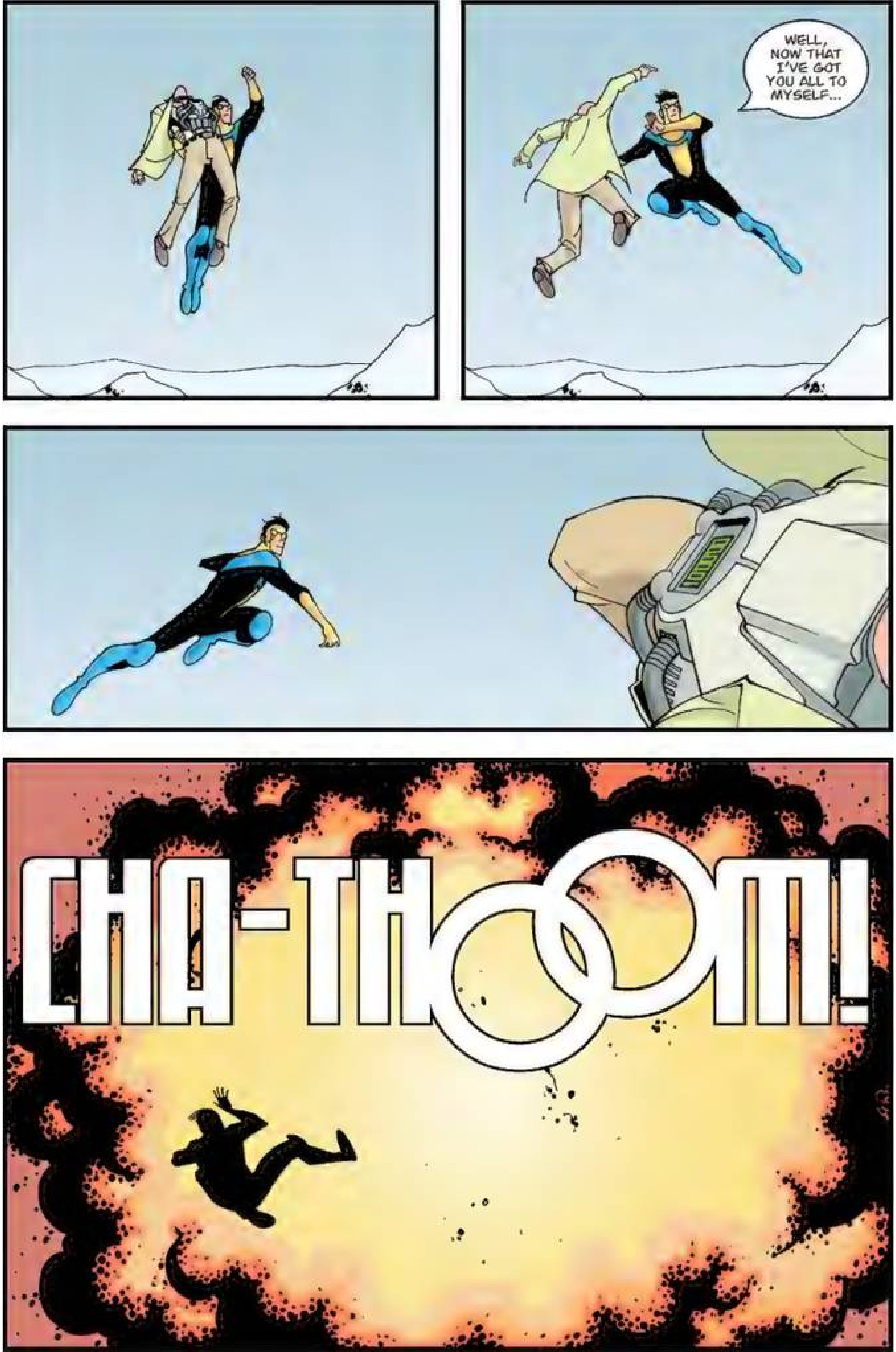

I THOUGHT IT MIGHT BE A FUTILE EFFORT, RESULTING IN NOTHING BUT DEAD ENDS. THANKFULLY, I WAS WRONG.
SURPRISINGLY, YOUR PHYSICS TEACHER, DAVID HILES IS A FORMER WEAPONS ENGINEER FOR GLOBALTECH, A MILITARY SANCTIONED RESEARCH FIRM.
IT'S NOT DEFINITIVE EVIDENCE OF HIS GUILT, BUT I'M 99.8% SURE THAT HE'S WHO YOU'RE LOOKING FOR.
BOOM!
AFTER I GET OFF WITH YOU I'M GOING TO PUT IN A CALL TO THE POLICE AND SEE IF I CAN'T AT LEAST GET A SQUAD CAR SENT OUT TO HIS HOUSE.
I'M GOING TO GIVE YOU HIS ADDRESS SO YOU CAN CHECK THE PLACE OUT BEFORE HE GETS HOME FROM SCHOOL.

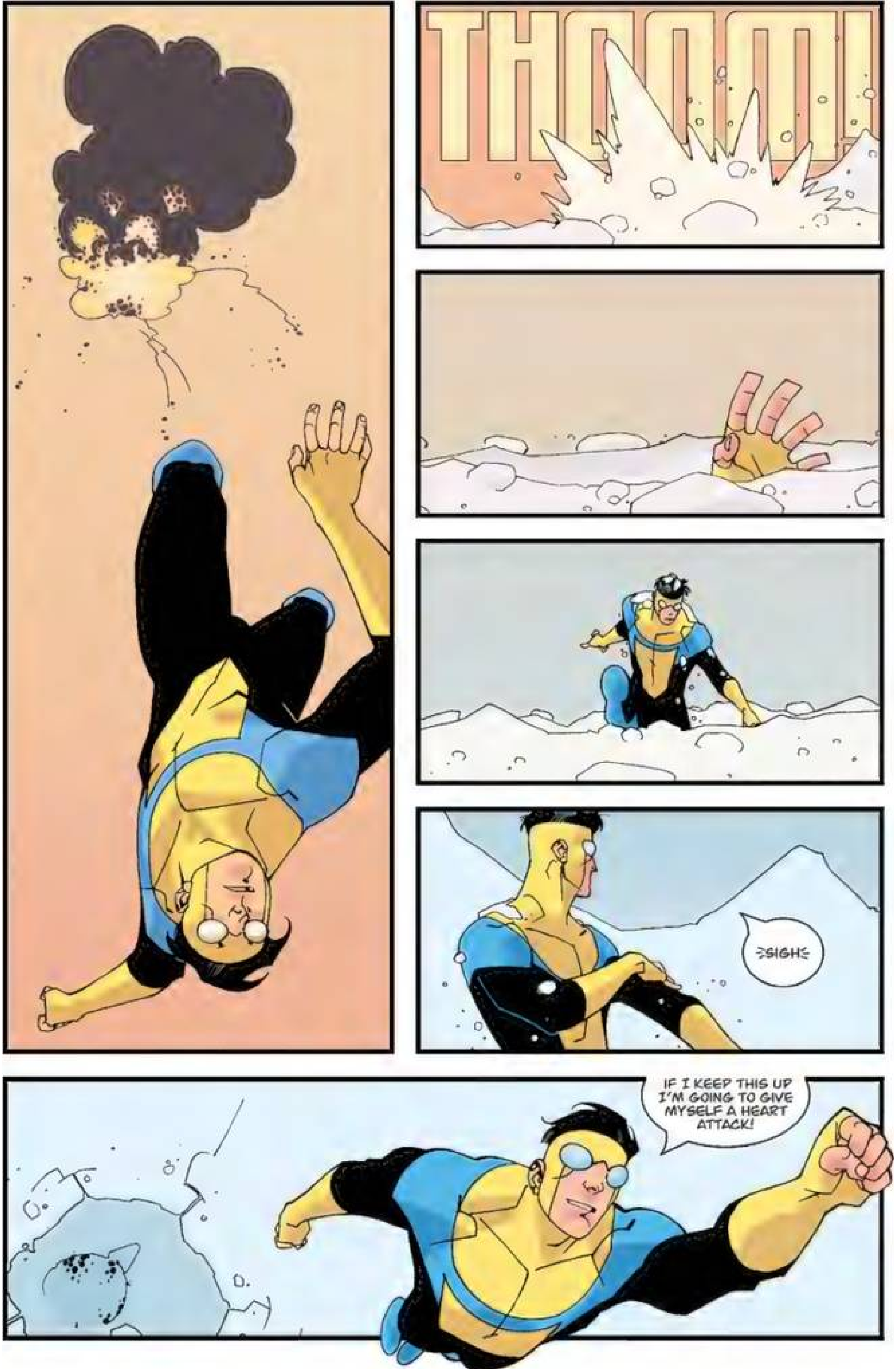

UH HUH, OKAY...
BYE.
YOU'RE NOT GOING TO BELIEVE THIS!
WHAT?
I'LL TELL YOU ON THE WAY. C'MON, WE'VE GOT TO GET CHANGED.
TO THE CAFETERIA DUMPSTER!
HA!
SO...
...HE CALLS YOU ON A... CELL PHONE?
SORRY... THE SIGNAL WATCH IS IN THE SHOP. JEEZ, WHAT DO YOU EXPECT HIM TO CALL ME ON?
OH!
HEY!
WHY DON'T YOU GUYS FIND YOUR OWN SPOT!

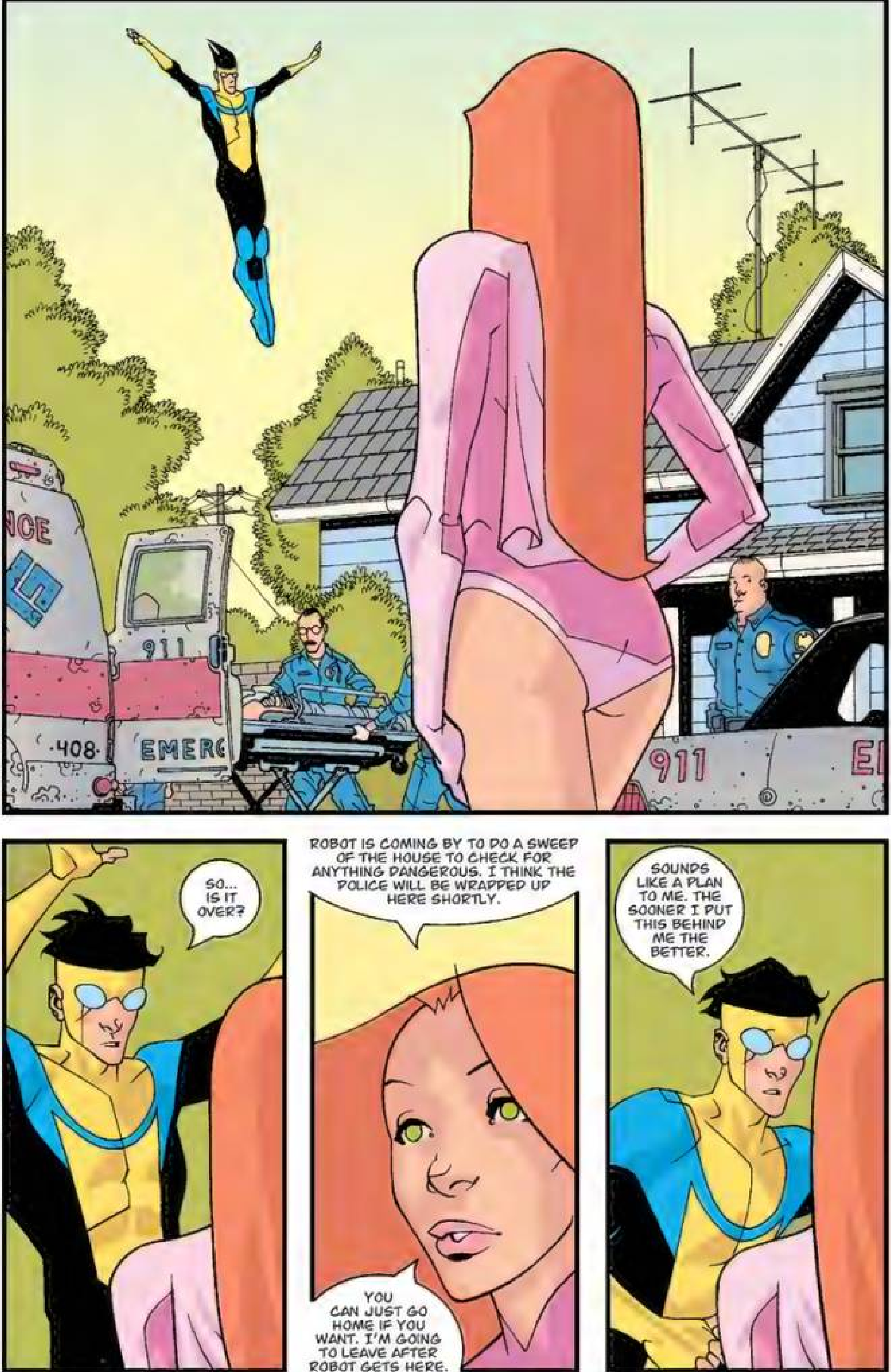

WELL, THAT REALLY KILLED OUR TIME. WHAT SHOULD WE DO NOW?
ASK HIM QUESTIONS I GUESS... ACCORDING TO ROBOT THE POLICE SHOULD BE ON THE WAY. HOW DANGEROUS COULD HE BE?
HOLD IT RIGHT THERE, SIR!
I DIDN'T EXPECT TO GET CAUGHT QUITE THIS EARLY, AND I CERTAINLY EXPECTED... MORE CONVENTIONAL AUTHORITIES WHEN THE TIME DID COME...
VERY WELL. MARK, SAMANTHA... PLEASE, DO COME INSIDE.
HOW DID YOU--?
ARE YOU KIDDING ME? YOU'RE NOT EVEN WEARING A MASK.
FOLLOW ME, I'LL SHOW YOU TO THE FOURTH MISSING STUDENT. I ASSURE YOU, I HAVE NO INTENTION OF RESISTING.
FOURTH?
YES. ONE OF THEM HASN'T BEEN REPORTED MISSING YET.

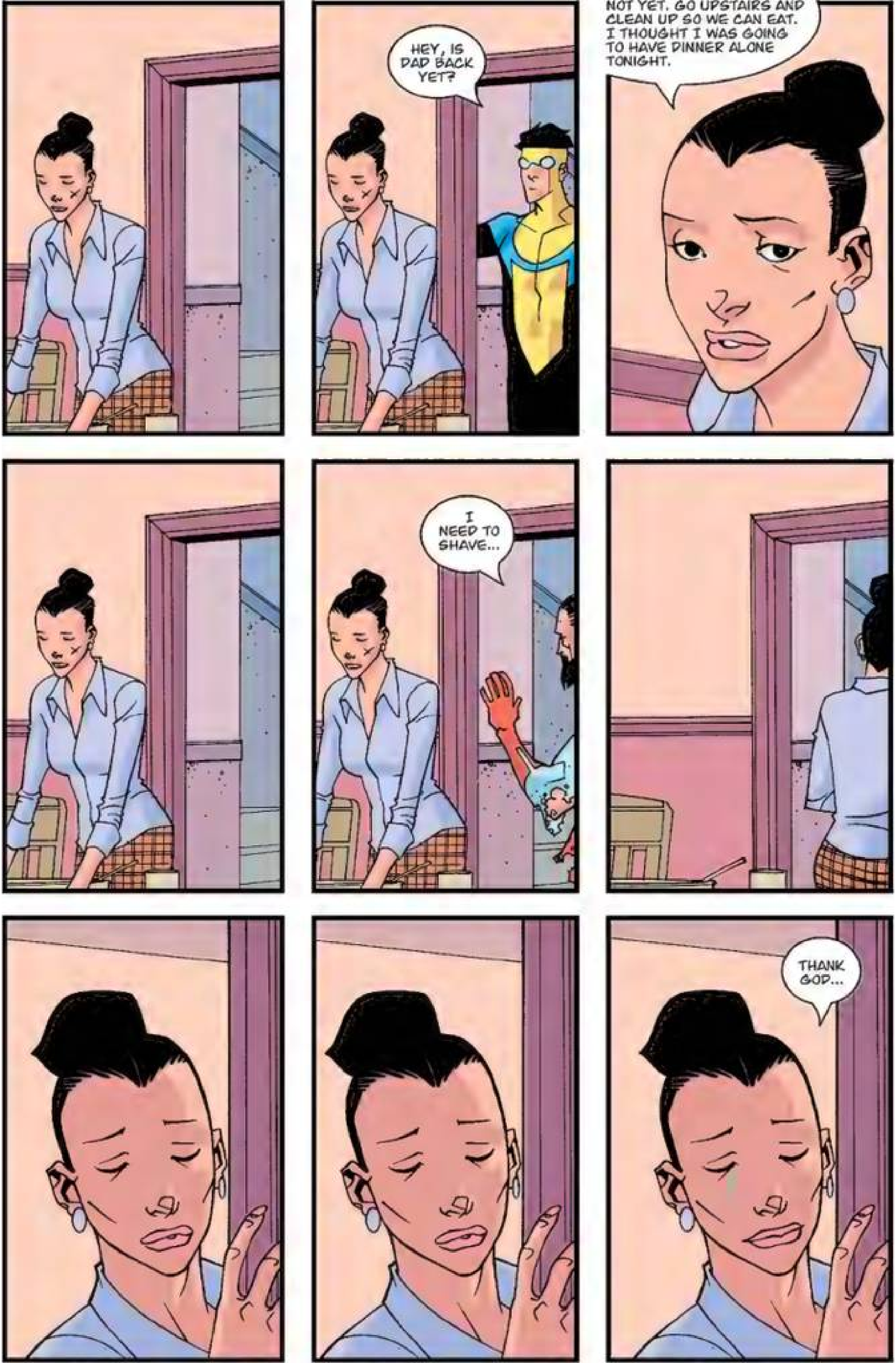

IT'S JUST THROUGH HERE.
IT?
YES... *IT*. I CAN'T THINK OF A MORE FITTING SEGUE INTO MY CONFESSION...
...YOU SEE... IT WAS THE CONSTANT PESTERING AND BELITTLING FROM THINGS LIKE WHAT YOU SEE BEFORE YOU THAT CAUSED MY SON TO COMMIT SUICIDE. MY SON'S SUICIDE RESULTING IN MY DIVORCE... AND MY DIVORCE LED TO ME LOSING MY JOB.
DEREK!
I'LL SPARE YOU THE BORING DETAILS.
IT'S NOT THE DEATH OF MY SON I'M AVENGING... THAT WOULD BE FAR TOO CLICHÉ. NO... IT'S THE DESTRUCTION OF MY LIFE THAT HAS ME SEEKING REVENGE.
IT'S THE DOMINO EFFECT OF PAIN AND SORROW THAT THESE MONSTERS CREATE. CHILDREN THAT SPEND TOO MUCH TIME AT THE MALL... ATTEND PARTIES... CONSUME ALCOHOL... AND PLAY SPORTS, WHEN THEY SHOULD BE STUDYING, AND DOING HOMEWORK.
WHAT DID YOU DO TO HIM?
WHAT I DID TO ALL OF THEM. I TURNED HIM INTO A LIVING BOMB, AN INSTRUMENT WITH WHICH TO ENACT MY REVENGE... MY CRUSADE TO END THE PAIN AND SORROW CAUSED BY THESE... "POPULAR" KIDS...
...AND I CAN'T THINK OF A MORE APPROPRIATE END TO MY CRUSADE...

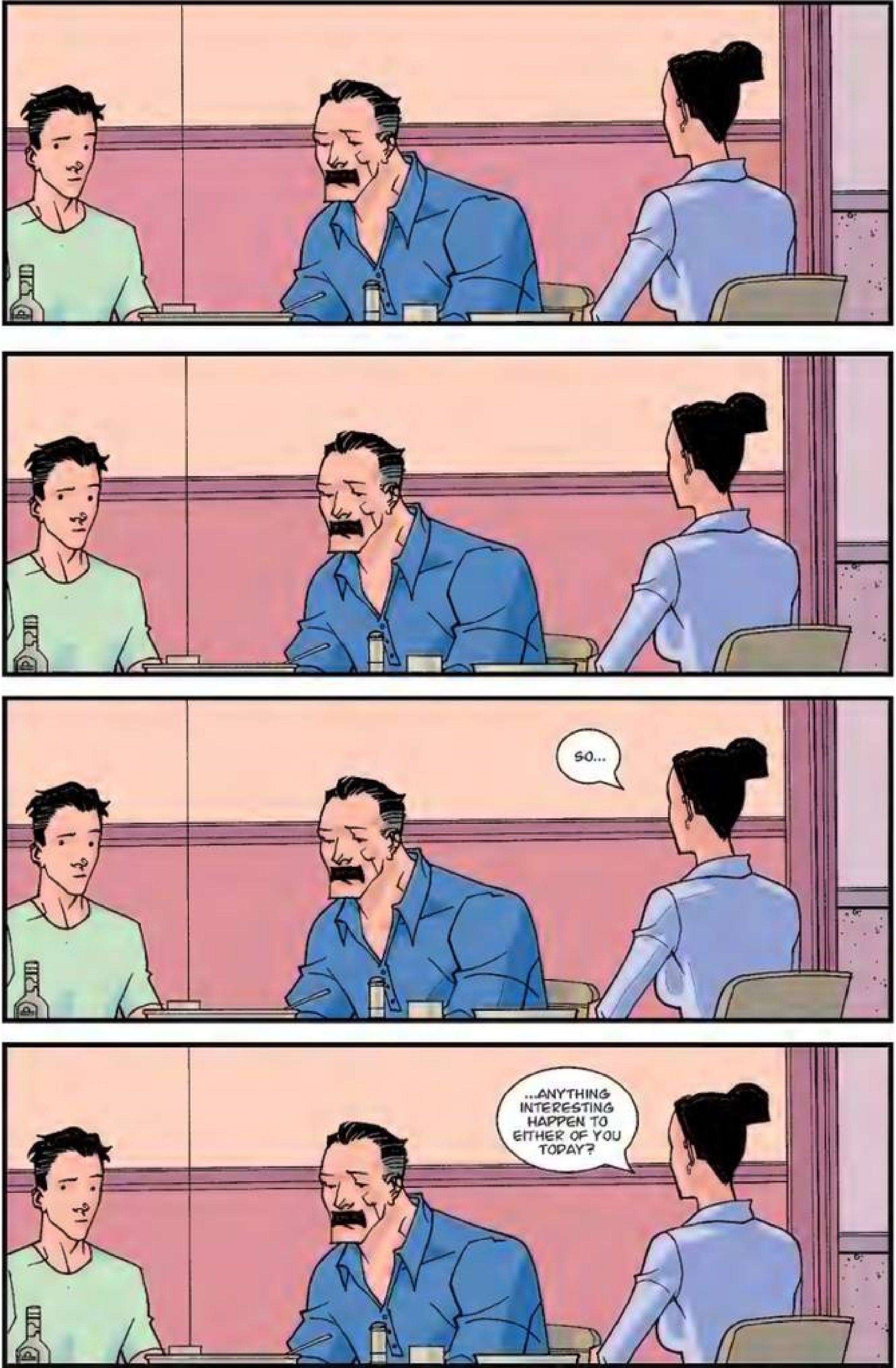

...THAN THE DEATH OF TWO SUPERHEROES!
OH DEAR, I MUST HAVE STARTED THE TIMER TOO LATE AFTER YOU GOT HERE. NO MATTER, YOU'LL HAVE A FEW MORE SECONDS TO--
I'M NOT WAITING AROUND FOR THIS.
C'MERE!
BOOM!
THAT STUFF IN CLASS TODAY WAS UNCALLED FOR.
Y'KNOW YOU REALLY RUINED MY AFTERNOON.

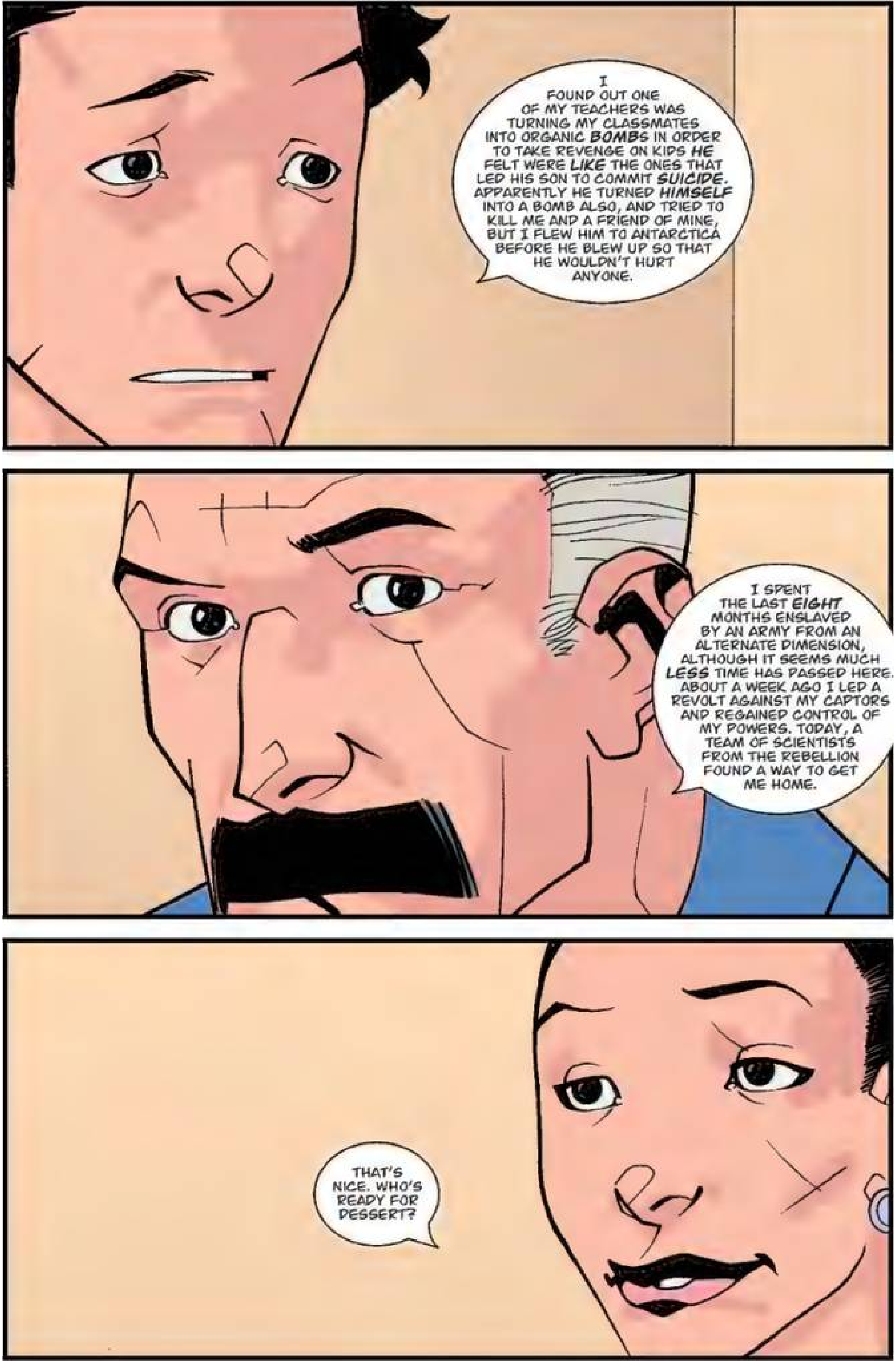

WELL, NOW THAT I'VE GOT YOU ALL TO MYSELF...
CHA-THOOM!


THOOM!
SIGH
IF I KEEP THIS UP I'M GOING TO GIVE MYSELF A HEART ATTACK!

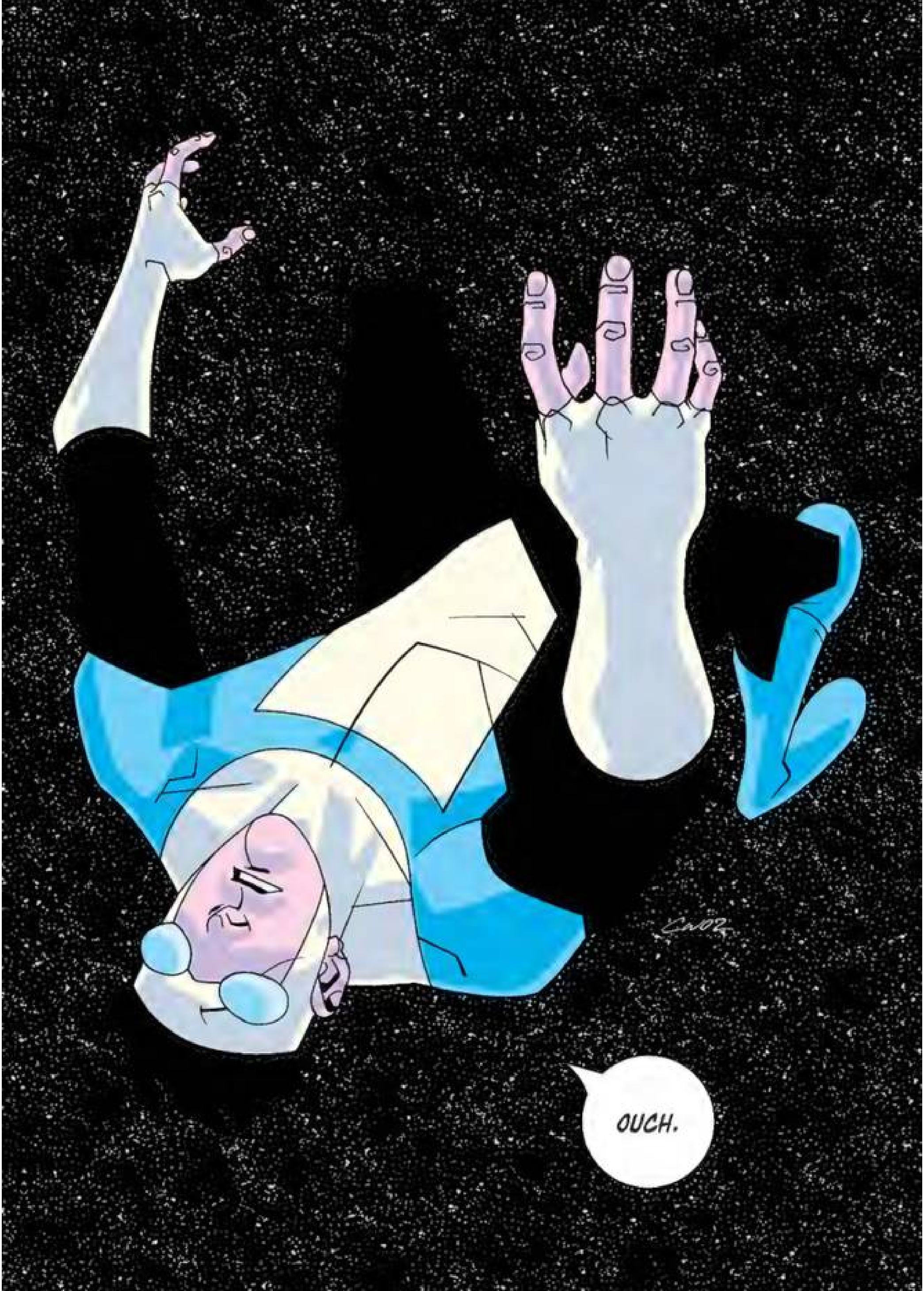

NCE
911
408
EMERG
911
E
SO... IS IT OVER?
ROBOT IS COMING BY TO DO A SWEEP OF THE HOUSE TO CHECK FOR ANYTHING DANGEROUS. I THINK THE POLICE WILL BE WRAPPED UP HERE SHORTLY.
YOU CAN JUST GO HOME IF YOU WANT. I'M GOING TO LEAVE AFTER ROBOT GETS HERE.
SOUNDS LIKE A PLAN TO ME. THE SOONER I PUT THIS BEHIND ME THE BETTER.

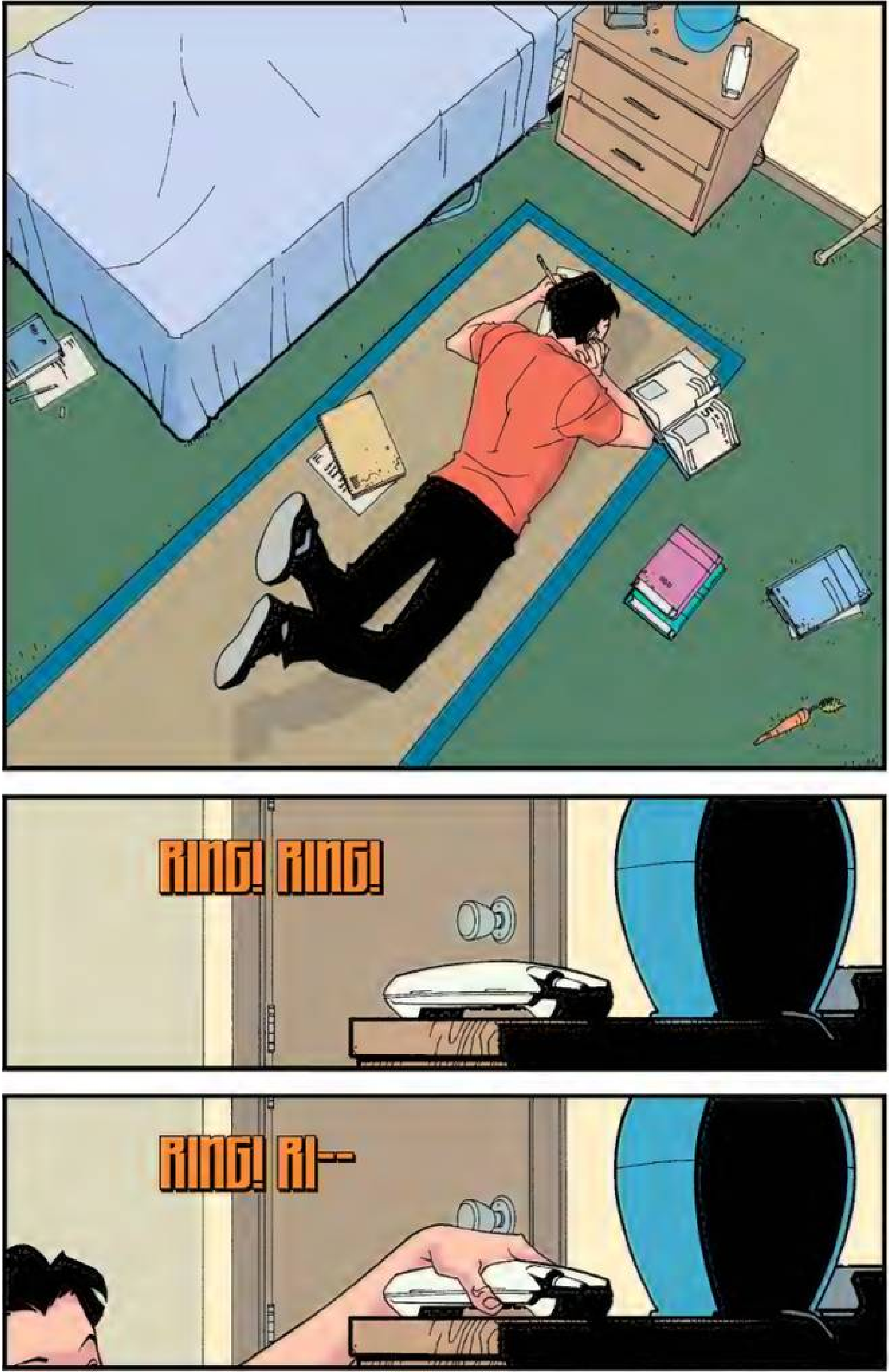

HEY, IS DAD BACK YET?
NOT YET. GO UPSTAIRS AND CLEAN UP SO WE CAN EAT. I THOUGHT I WAS GOING TO HAVE DINNER ALONE TONIGHT.
I NEED TO SHAVE...
THANK GOD...

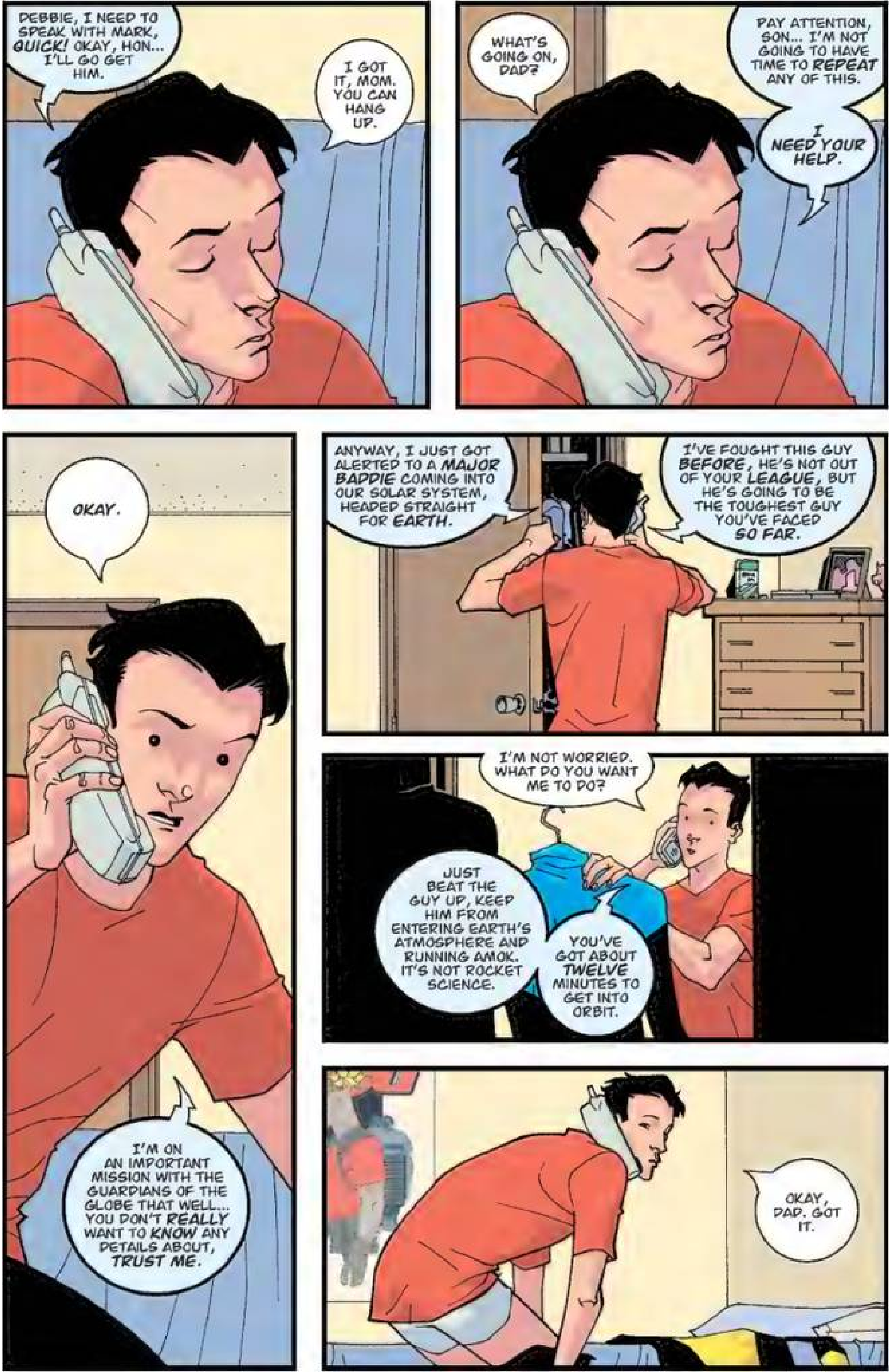

SO...
...ANYTHING INTERESTING HAPPEN TO EITHER OF YOU TODAY?

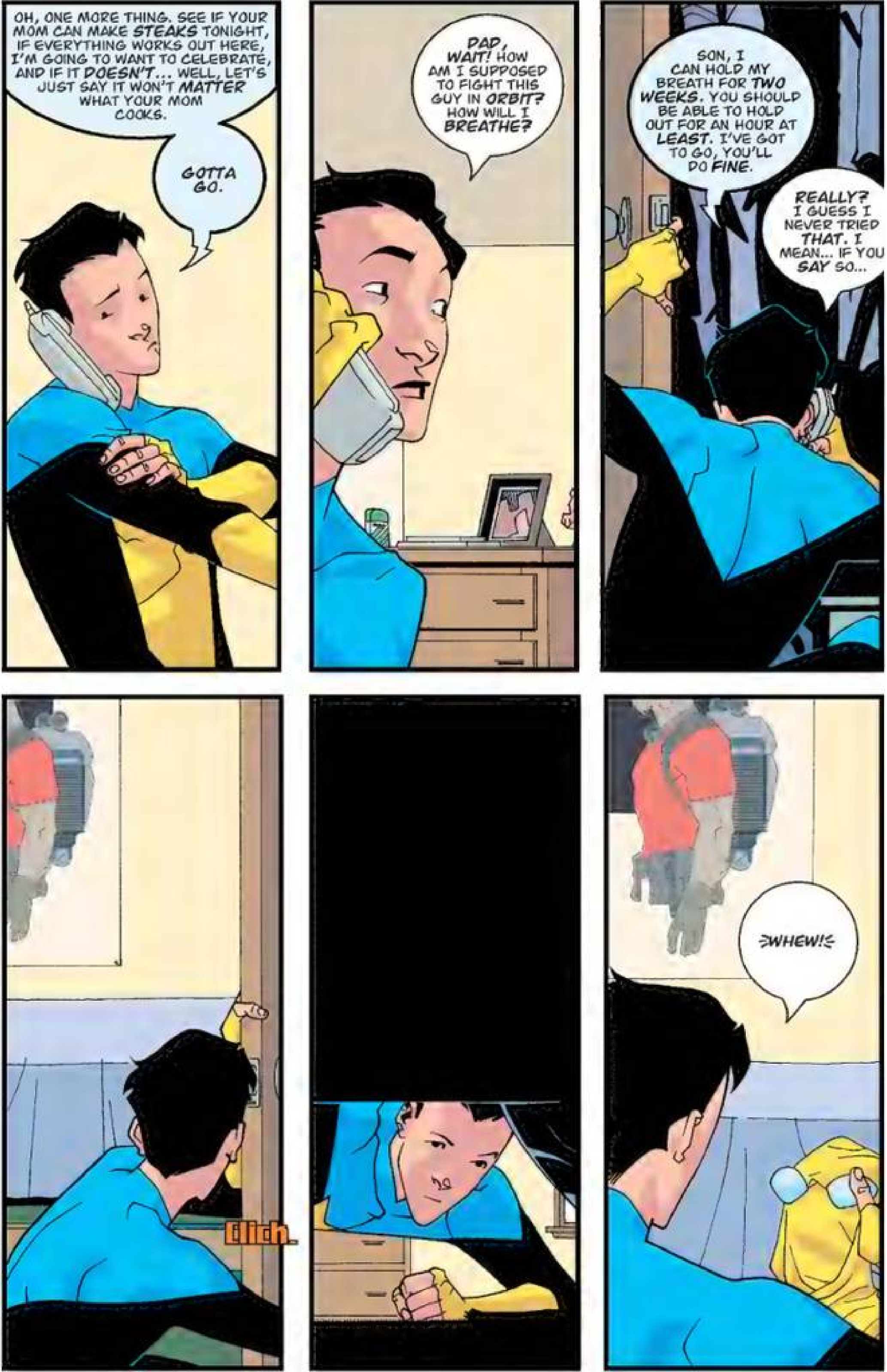

I FOUND OUT ONE OF MY TEACHERS WAS TURNING MY CLASSMATES INTO ORGANIC BOMBS IN ORDER TO TAKE REVENGE ON KIDS HE FELT WERE LIKE THE ONES THAT LED HIS SON TO COMMIT SUICIDE. APPARENTLY HE TURNED HIMSELF INTO A BOMB ALSO, AND TRIED TO KILL ME AND A FRIEND OF MINE, BUT I FLEW HIM TO ANTARCTICA BEFORE HE BLEW UP SO THAT HE WOULDN'T HURT ANYONE.
I SPENT THE LAST EIGHT MONTHS ENSLAVED BY AN ARMY FROM AN ALTERNATE DIMENSION, ALTHOUGH IT SEEMS MUCH LESS TIME HAS PASSED HERE. ABOUT A WEEK AGO I LED A REVOLT AGAINST MY CAPTORS AND REGAINED CONTROL OF MY POWERS. TODAY, A TEAM OF SCIENTISTS FROM THE REBELLION FOUND A WAY TO GET ME HOME.
THAT'S NICE. WHO'S READY FOR DESSERT?

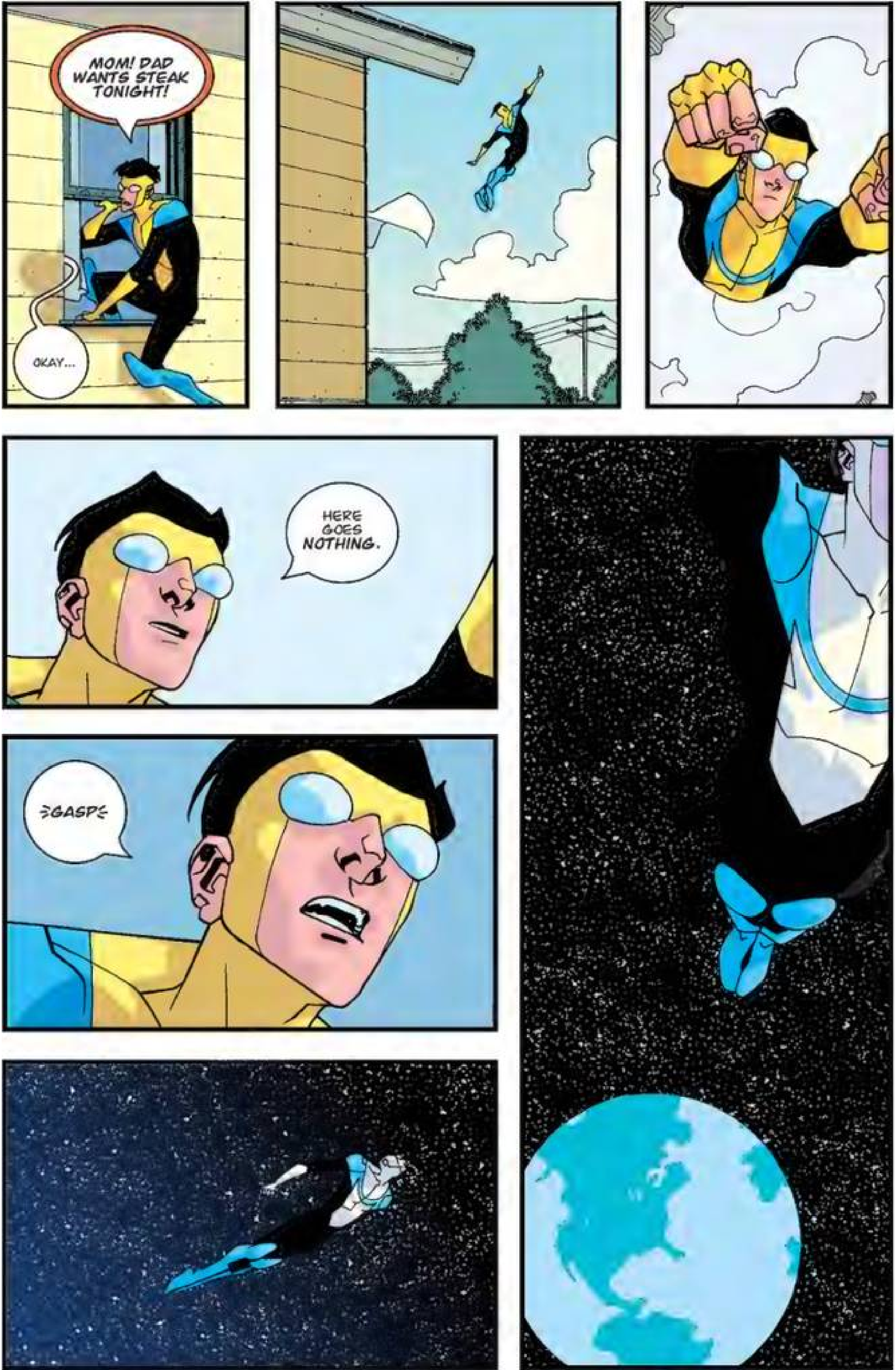
ISSUE FIVE

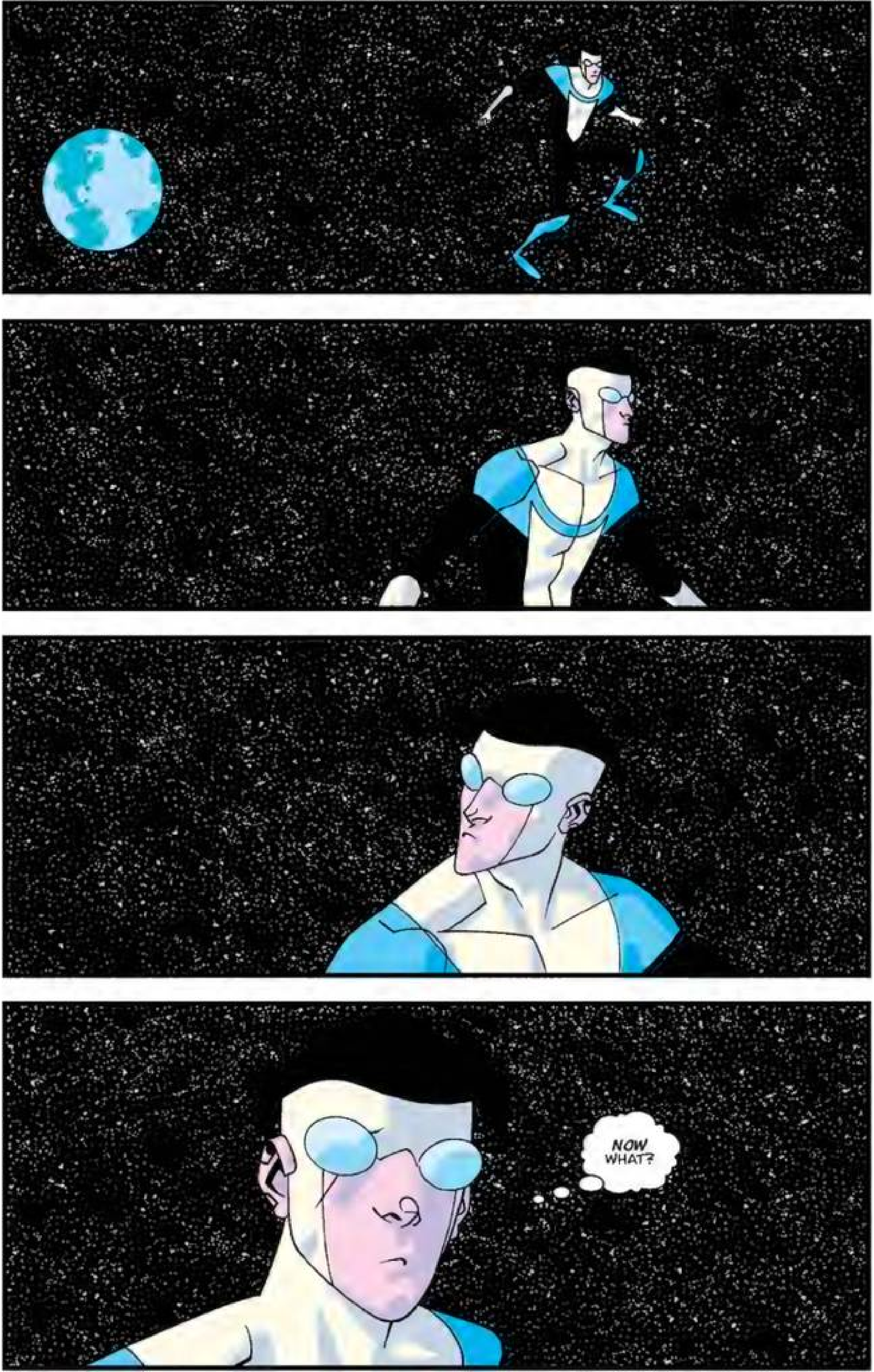


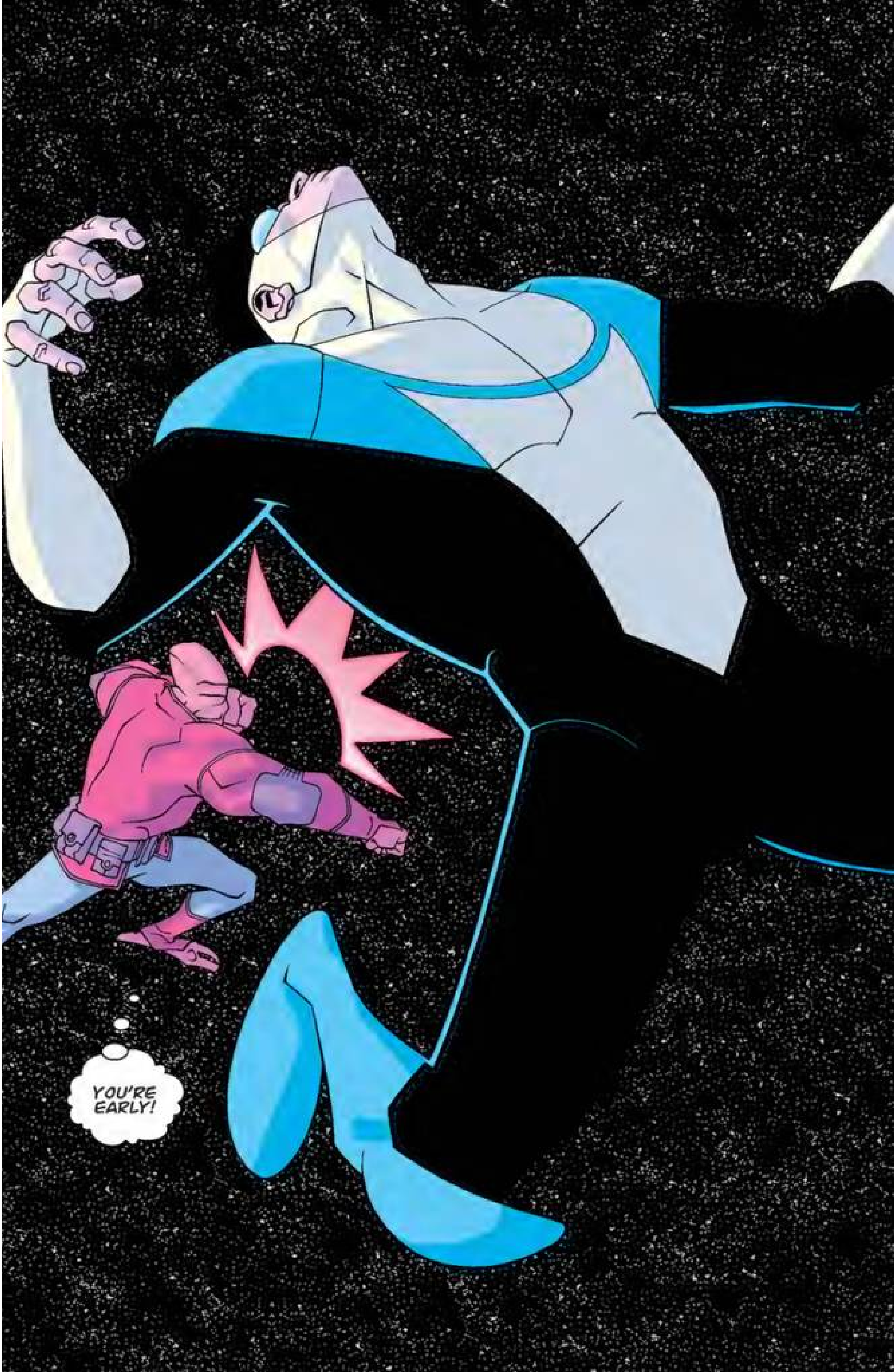

RING! RING!
RING! RI--

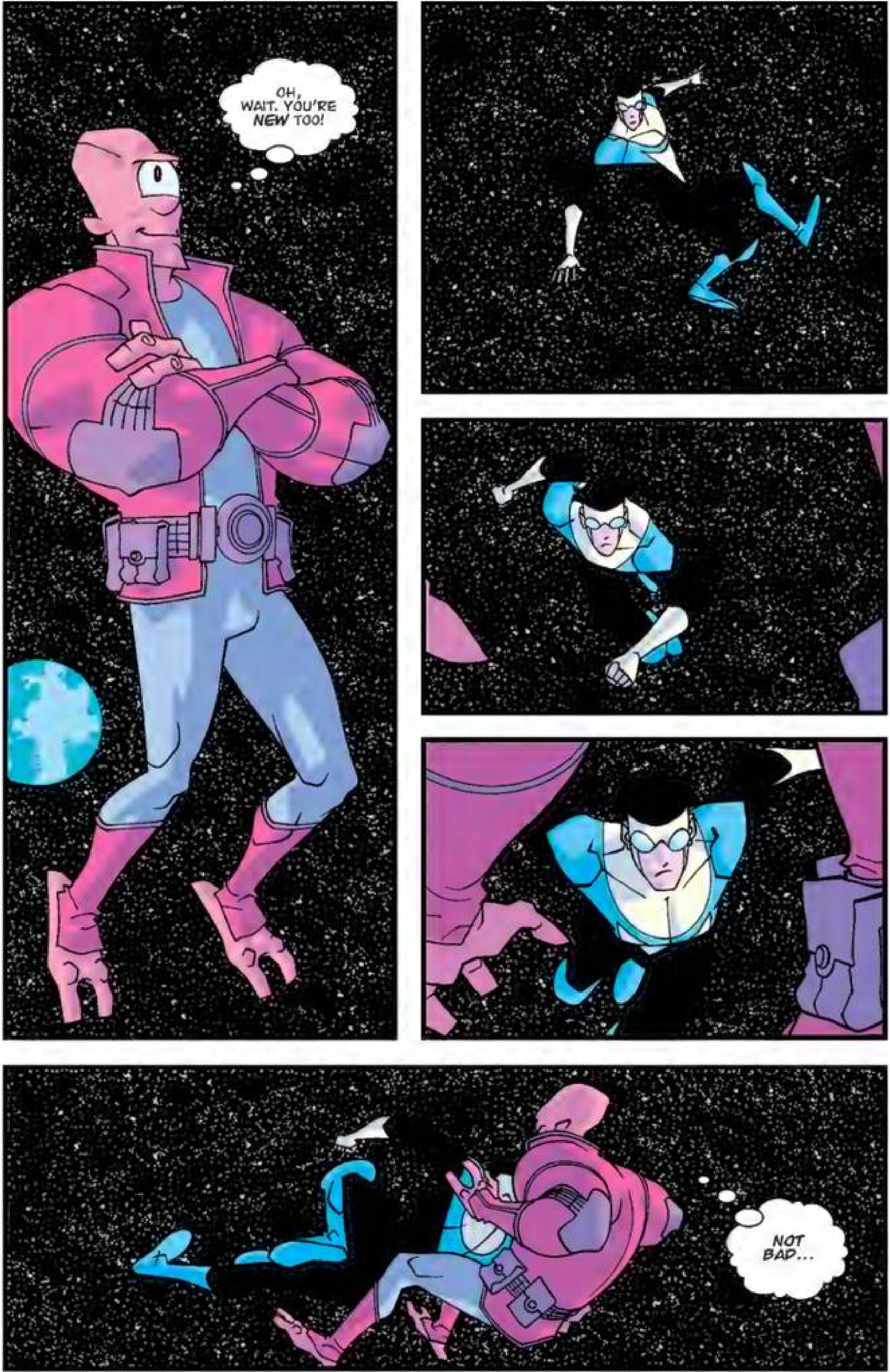

DEBBIE, I NEED TO SPEAK WITH MARK, QUICK! OKAY, HON... I'LL GO GET HIM.
I GOT IT, MOM. YOU CAN HANG UP.
WHAT'S GOING ON, DAD?
PAY ATTENTION, SON... I'M NOT GOING TO HAVE TIME TO REPEAT ANY OF THIS.
I NEED YOUR HELP.
OKAY.
I'M ON AN IMPORTANT MISSION WITH THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE THAT WELL... YOU DON'T REALLY WANT TO KNOW ANY DETAILS ABOUT, TRUST ME.
ANYWAY, I JUST GOT ALERTED TO A MAJOR BADDIE COMING INTO OUR SOLAR SYSTEM, HEADED STRAIGHT FOR EARTH.
I'VE FOUGHT THIS GUY BEFORE, HE'S NOT OUT OF YOUR LEAGUE, BUT HE'S GOING TO BE THE TOUGHEST GUY YOU'VE FACED SO FAR.
I'M NOT WORRIED. WHAT DO YOU WANT ME TO DO?
JUST BEAT THE GUY UP, KEEP HIM FROM ENTERING EARTH'S ATMOSPHERE AND RUNNING AMOK. IT'S NOT ROCKET SCIENCE.
YOU'VE GOT ABOUT TWELVE MINUTES TO GET INTO ORBIT.
OKAY, DAD. GOT IT.

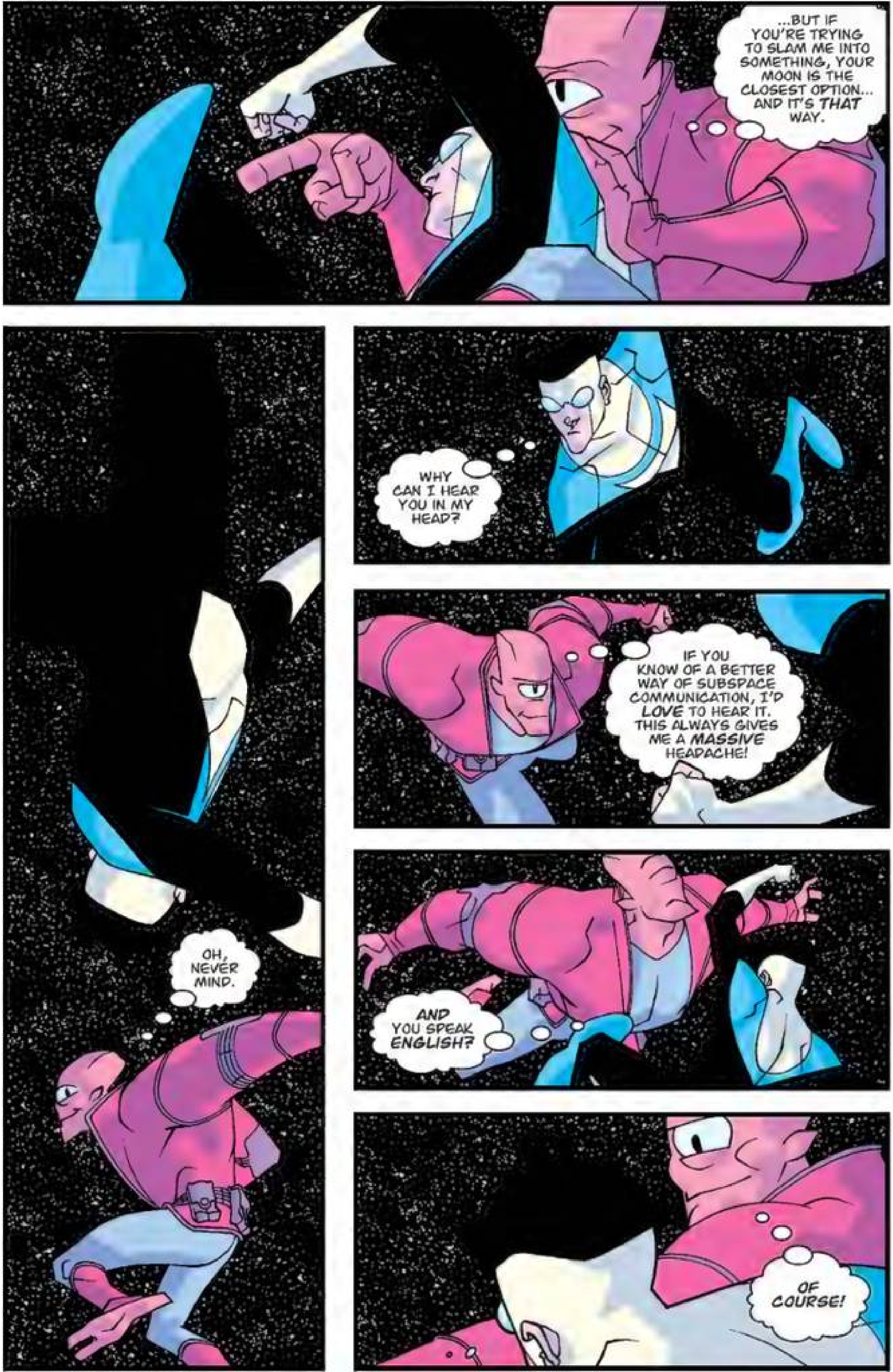

OH, ONE MORE THING. SEE IF YOUR MOM CAN MAKE STEAKS TONIGHT, IF EVERYTHING WORKS OUT HERE, I'M GOING TO WANT TO CELEBRATE, AND IF IT DOESN'T... WELL, LET'S JUST SAY IT WON'T MATTER WHAT YOUR MOM COOKS.
GOTTA GO.
DAD, WAIT! HOW AM I SUPPOSED TO FIGHT THIS GUY IN ORBIT? HOW WILL I BREATHE?
SON, I CAN HOLD MY BREATH FOR TWO WEEKS. YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO HOLD OUT FOR AN HOUR AT LEAST. I'VE GOT TO GO, YOU'LL DO FINE.
REALLY? I GUESS I NEVER TRIED THAT. I MEAN... IF YOU SAY SO...
Click.
WHEW!

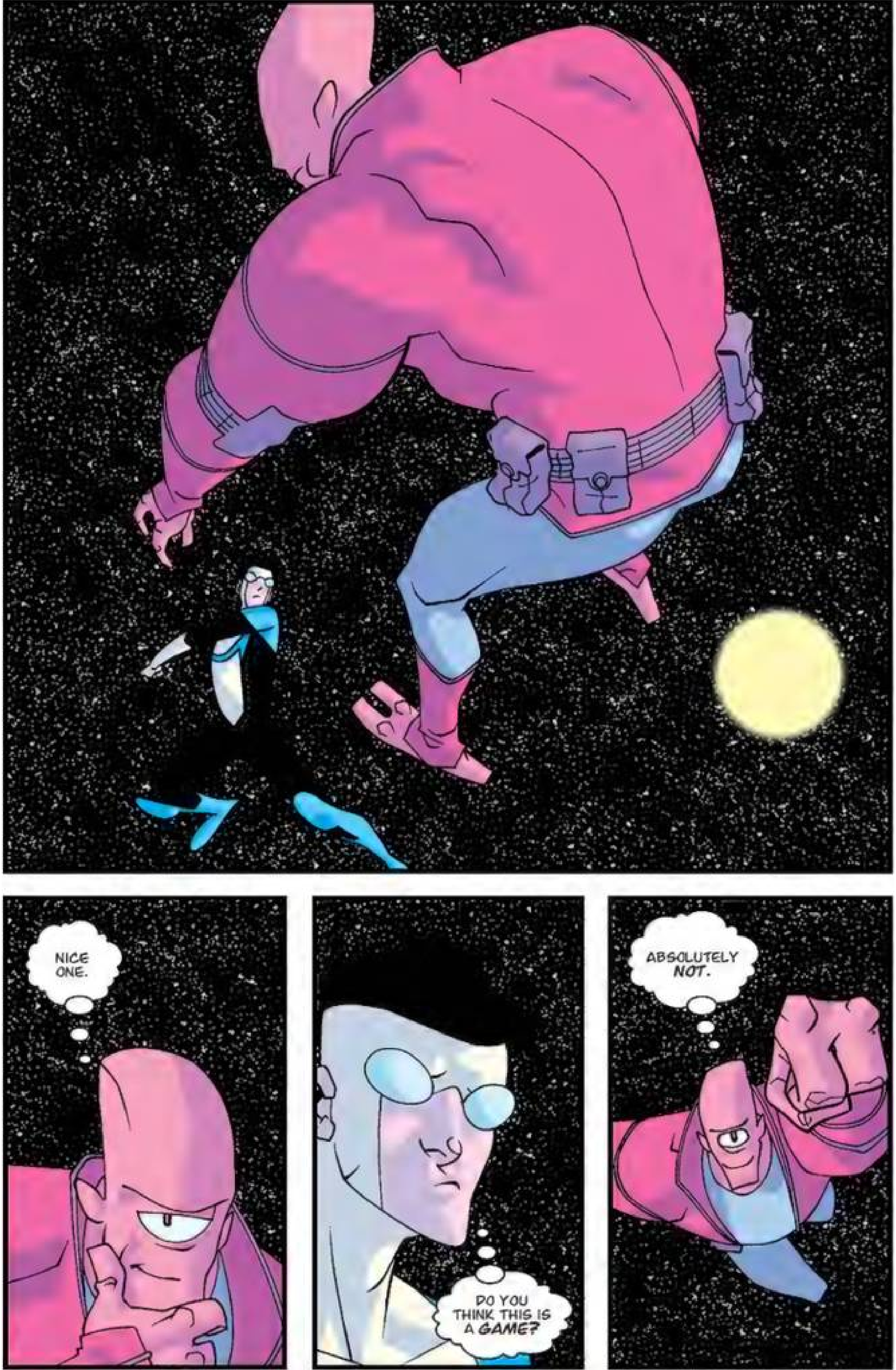

MOM! DAD WANTS STEAK TONIGHT!
OKAY...
HERE GOES NOTHING.
GASP

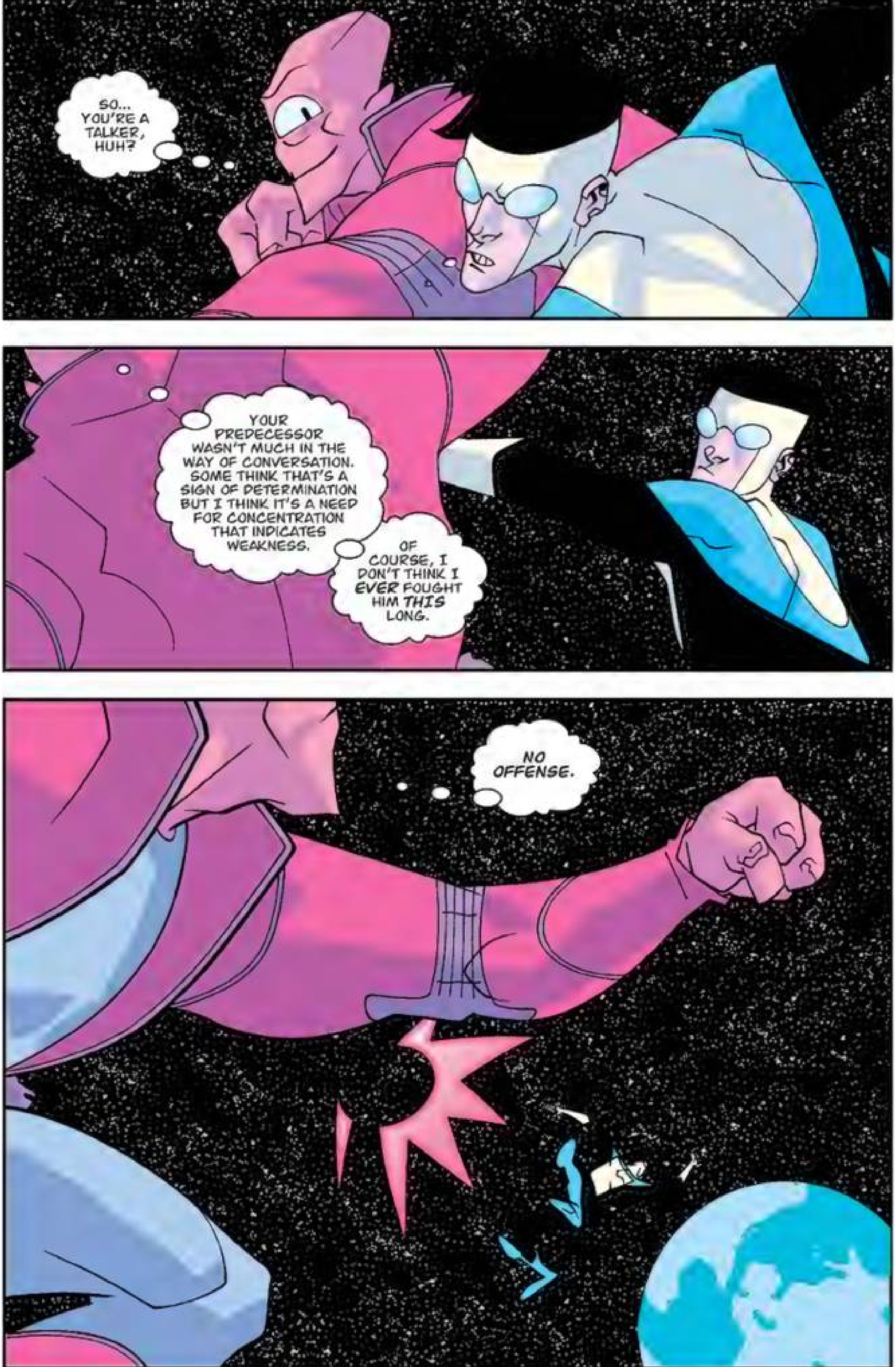

NOW WHAT?

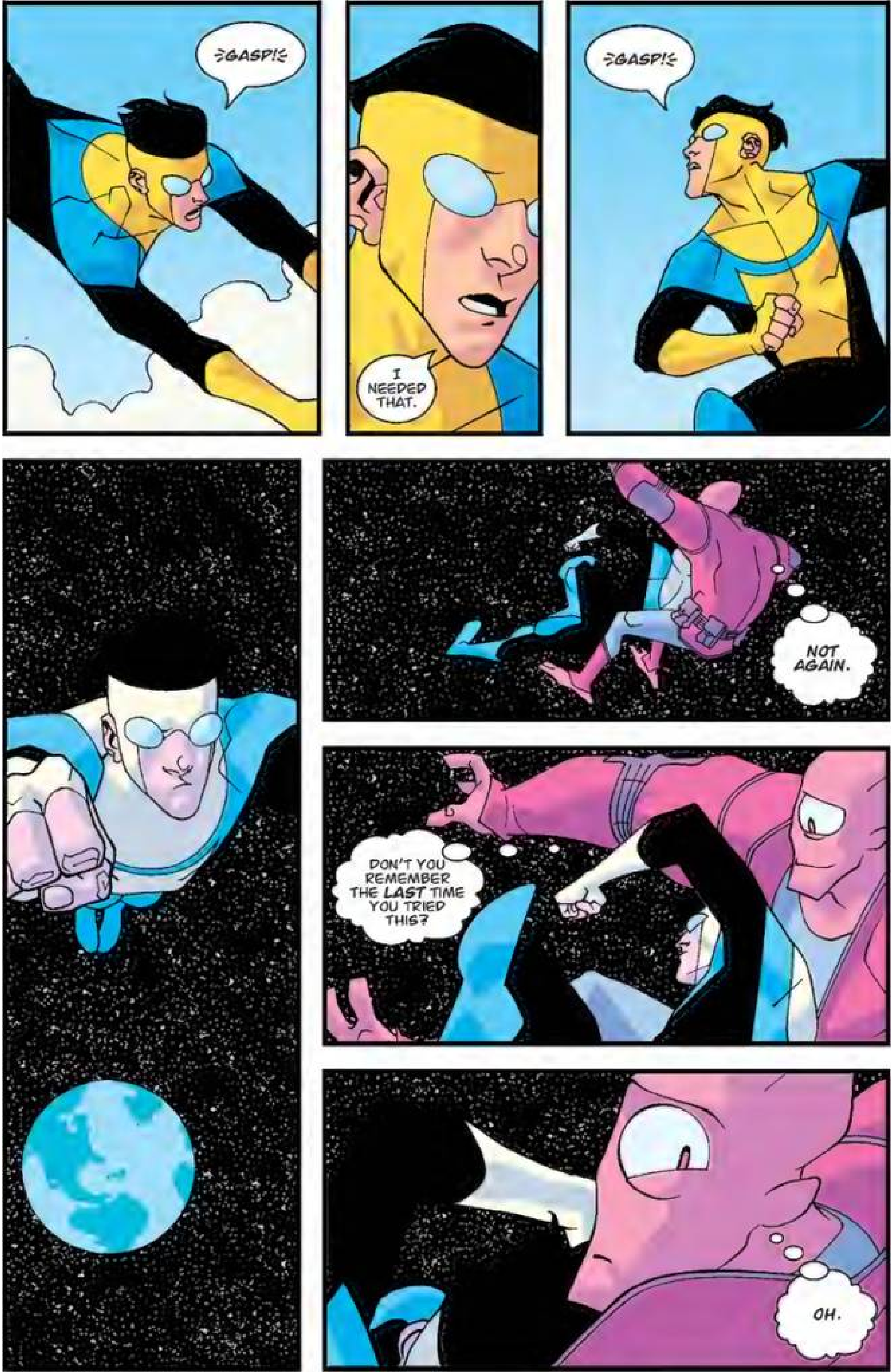

YOU'RE EARLY!


OH, WAIT. YOU'RE *NEW* TOO!
NOT BAD...

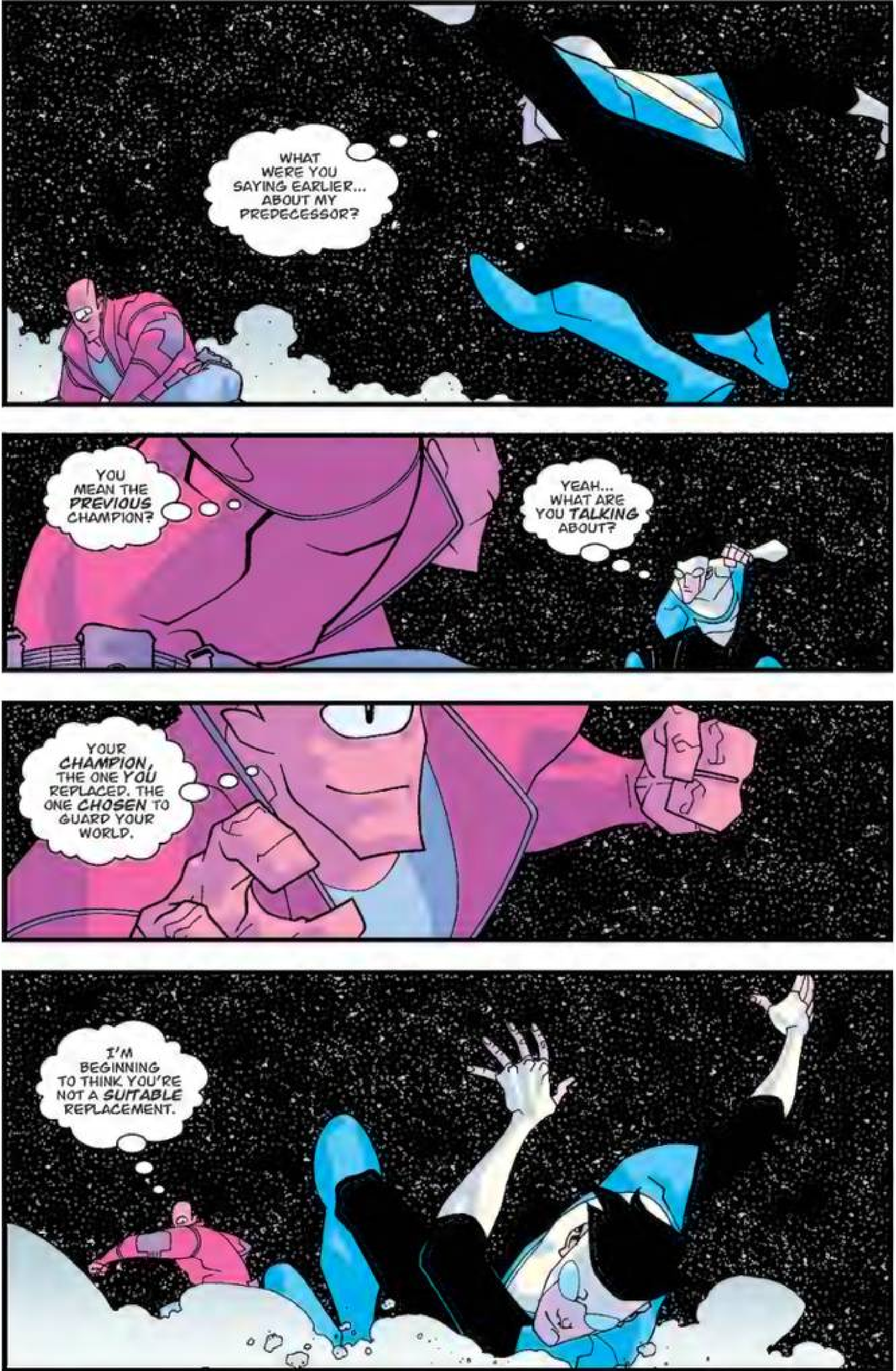

...BUT IF YOU'RE TRYING TO SLAM ME INTO SOMETHING, YOUR MOON IS THE CLOSEST OPTION... AND IT'S *THAT* WAY.
OH, NEVER MIND.
WHY CAN I HEAR YOU IN MY HEAD?
IF YOU KNOW OF A BETTER WAY OF SUBSPACE COMMUNICATION, I'D *LOVE* TO HEAR IT. THIS ALWAYS GIVES ME A *MASSIVE* HEADACHE!
AND YOU SPEAK *ENGLISH?*
OF COURSE!

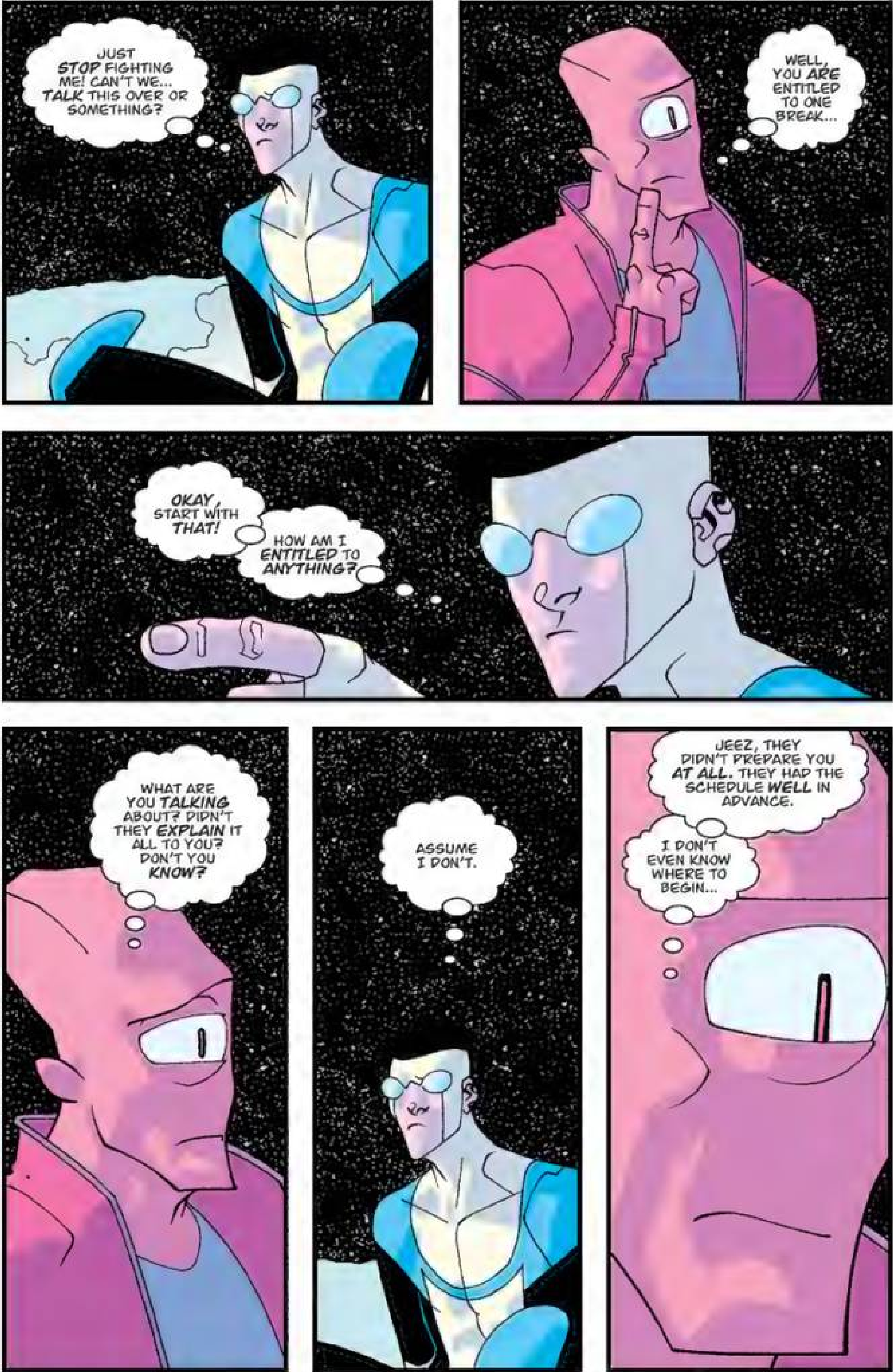

NICE ONE.
DO YOU THINK THIS IS A *GAME?*
ABSOLUTELY *NOT.*

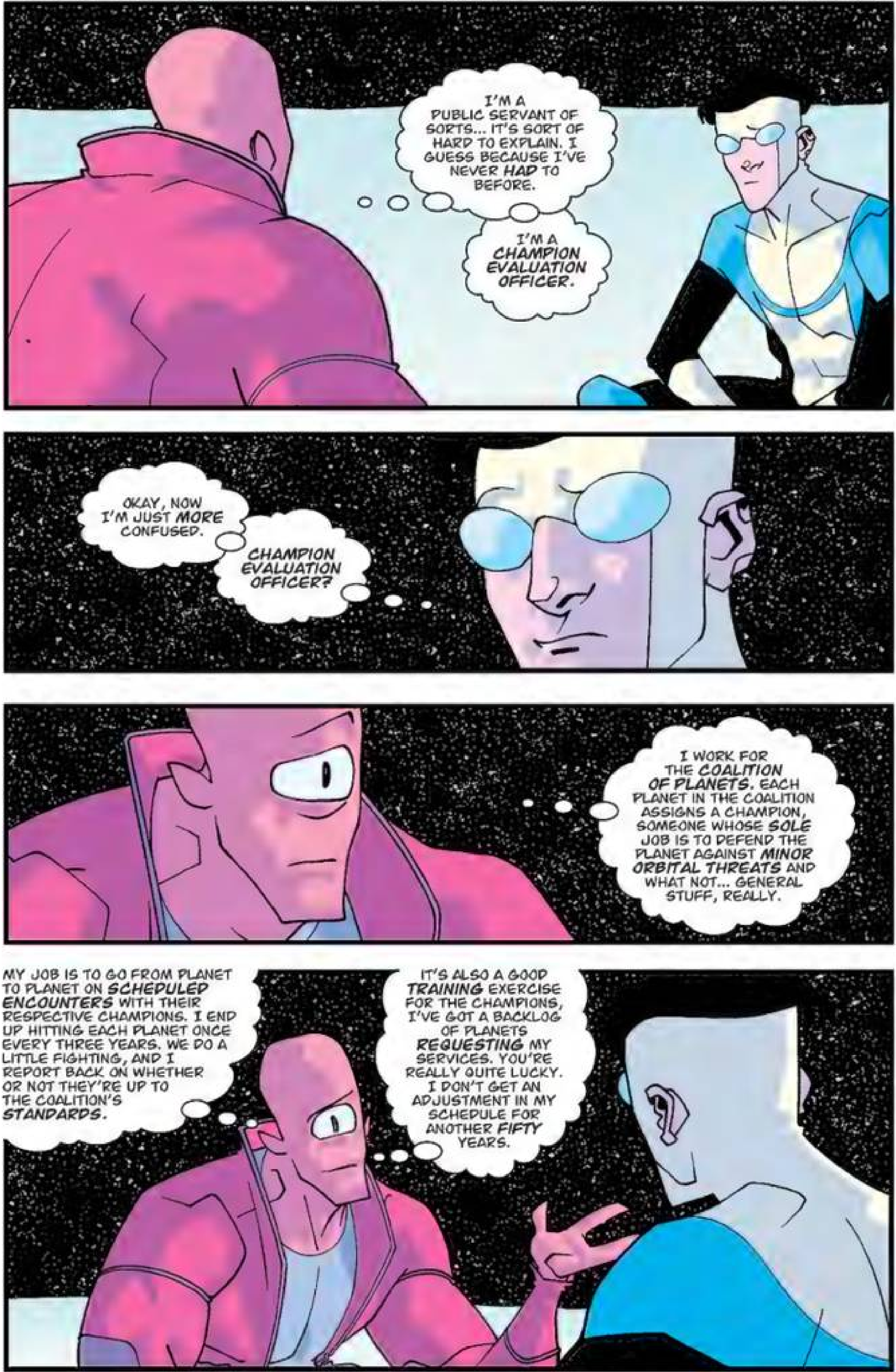

SO... YOU'RE A TALKER, HUH?
YOUR PREDECESSOR WASN'T MUCH IN THE WAY OF CONVERSATION. SOME THINK THAT'S A SIGN OF DETERMINATION BUT I THINK IT'S A NEED FOR CONCENTRATION THAT INDICATES WEAKNESS.
OF COURSE, I DON'T THINK I *EVER* FOUGHT HIM *THIS* LONG.
NO OFFENSE.

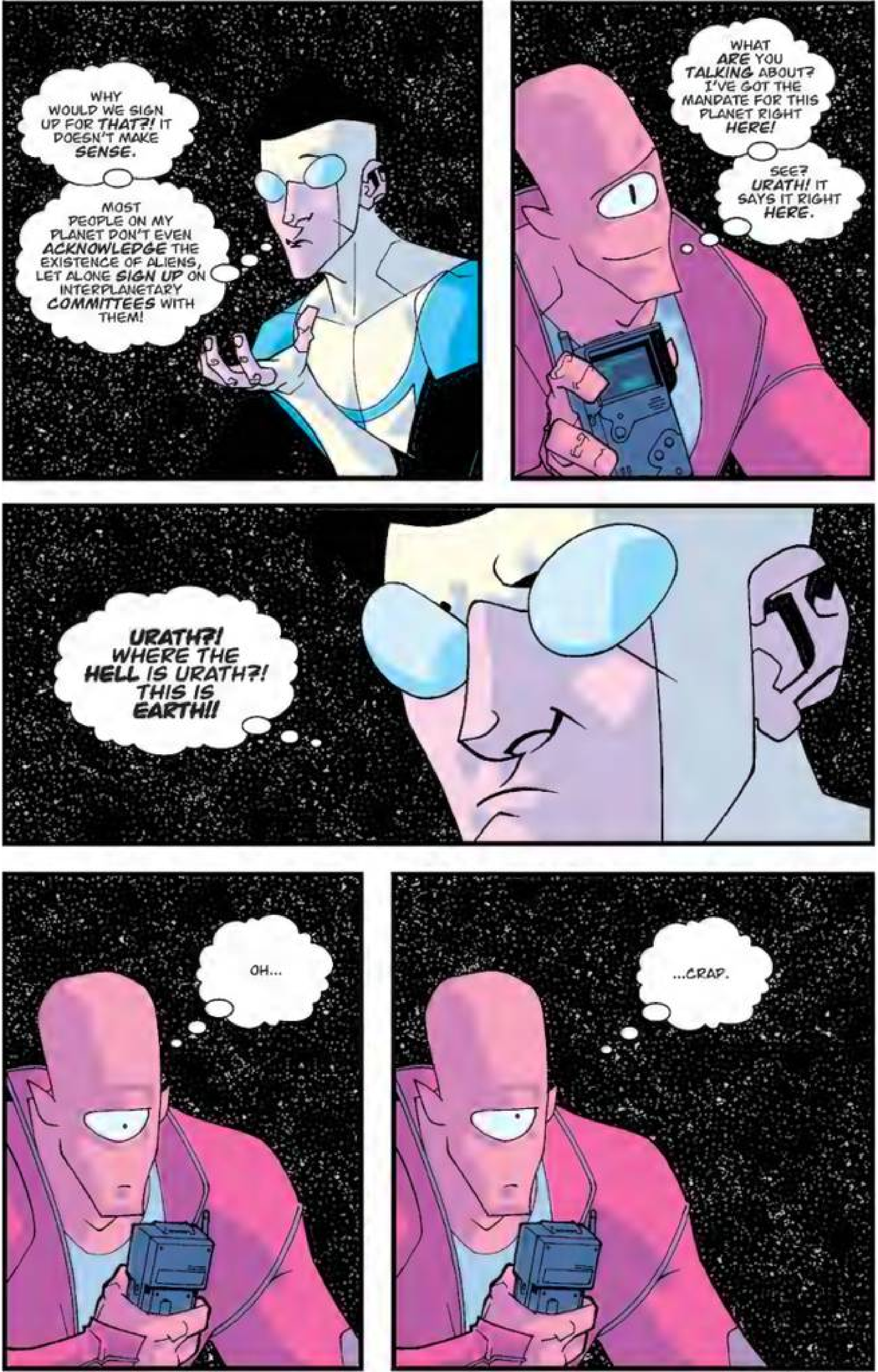


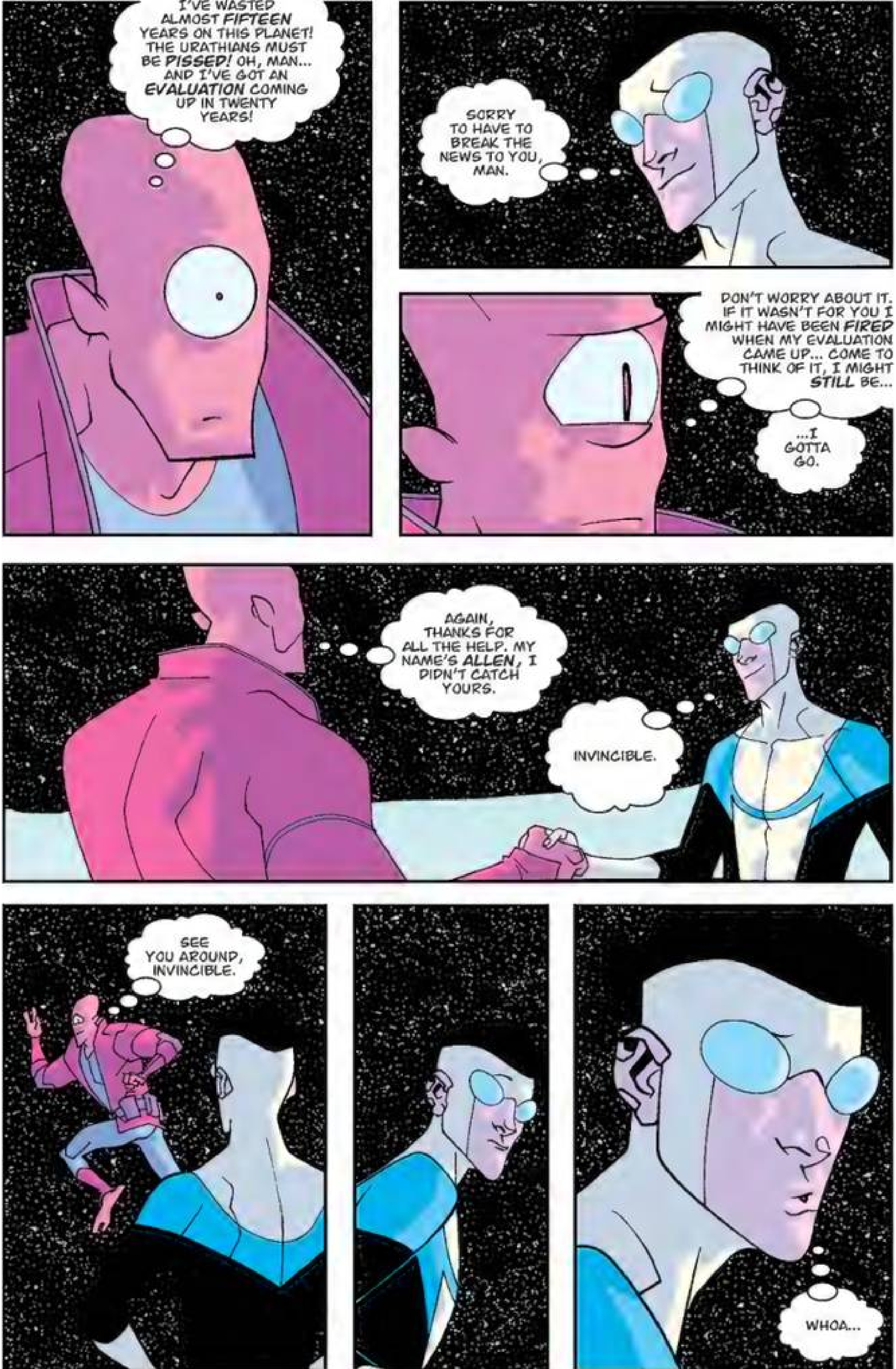
⁼GASP!⁼
I NEEDED THAT.
⁼GASP!⁼
NOT AGAIN.
DON'T YOU REMEMBER THE *LAST* TIME YOU TRIED THIS?
OH.

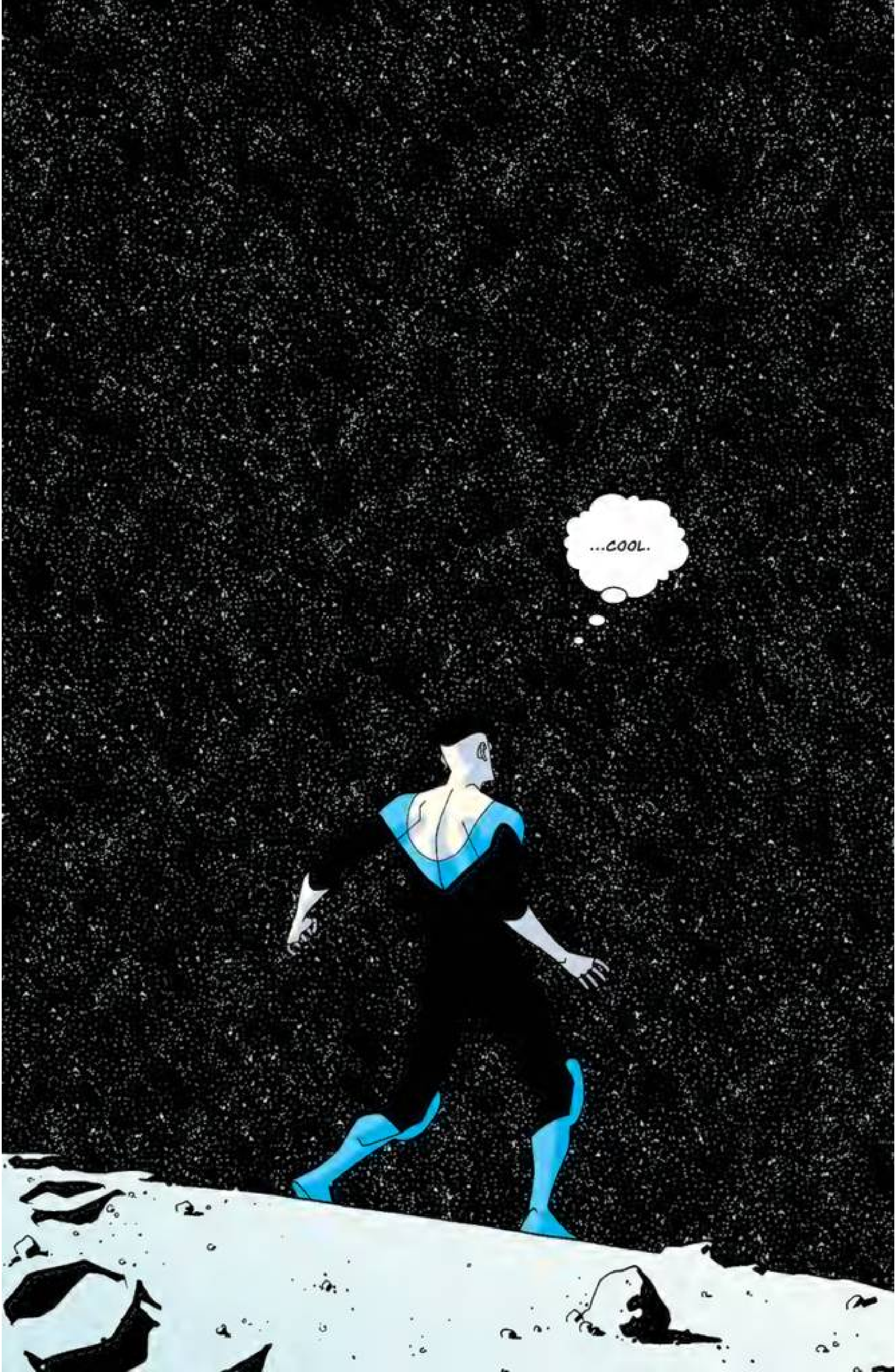

WHAT WERE YOU SAYING EARLIER... ABOUT MY PREDECESSOR?
YOU MEAN THE *PREVIOUS* CHAMPION?
YEAH... WHAT ARE YOU *TALKING* ABOUT?
YOUR *CHAMPION*, THE ONE *YOU* REPLACED. THE ONE *CHOSEN* TO GUARD YOUR WORLD.
I'M BEGINNING TO THINK YOU'RE NOT A *SUITABLE* REPLACEMENT.

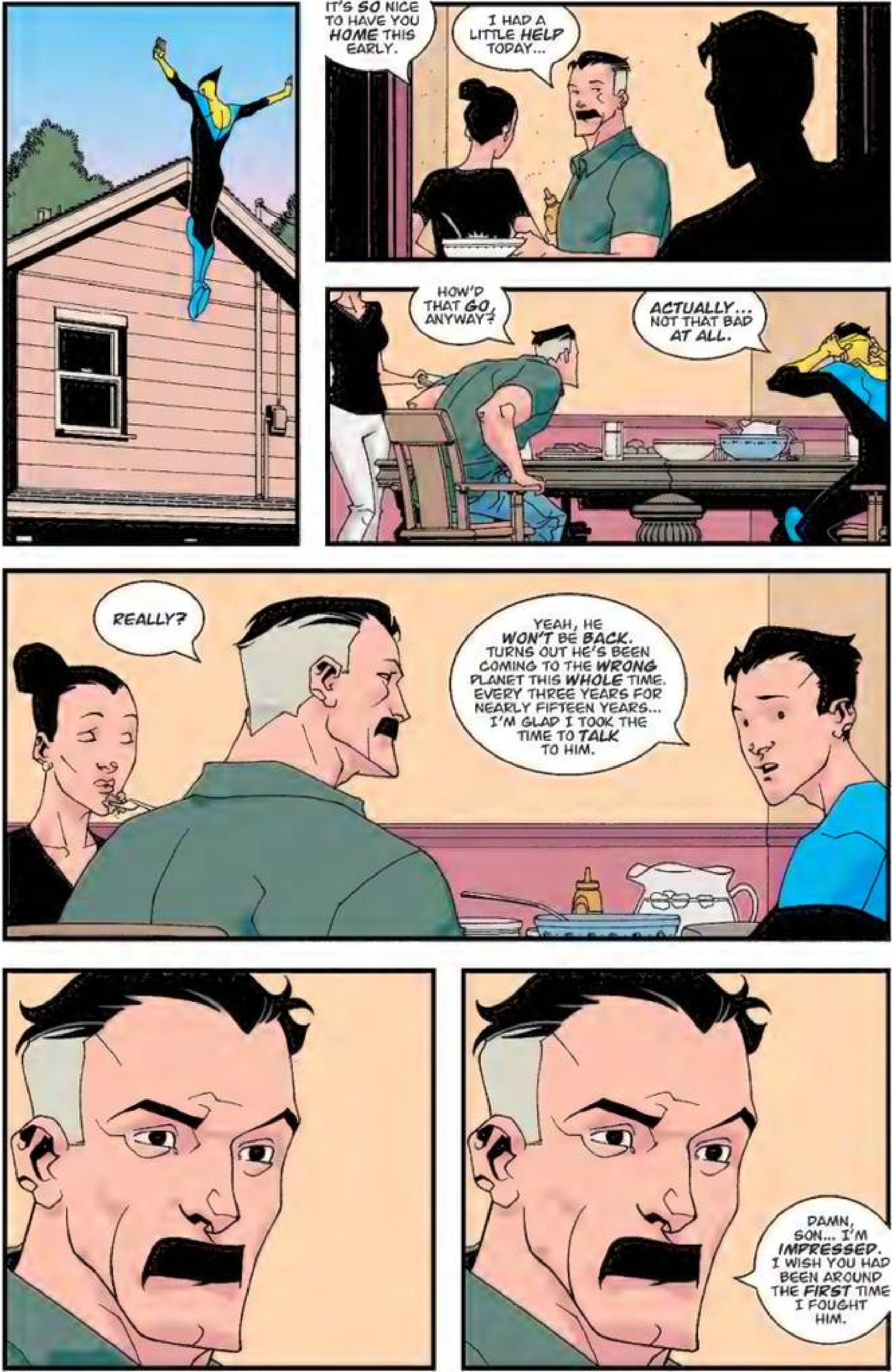

JUST STOP FIGHTING ME! CAN'T WE... TALK THIS OVER OR SOMETHING?
WELL, YOU ARE ENTITLED TO ONE BREAK...
OKAY, START WITH THAT!
HOW AM I ENTITLED TO ANYTHING?
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? DIDN'T THEY EXPLAIN IT ALL TO YOU? DON'T YOU KNOW?
ASSUME I DON'T.
JEEZ, THEY DIDN'T PREPARE YOU AT ALL. THEY HAD THE SCHEDULE WELL IN ADVANCE.
I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHERE TO BEGIN...

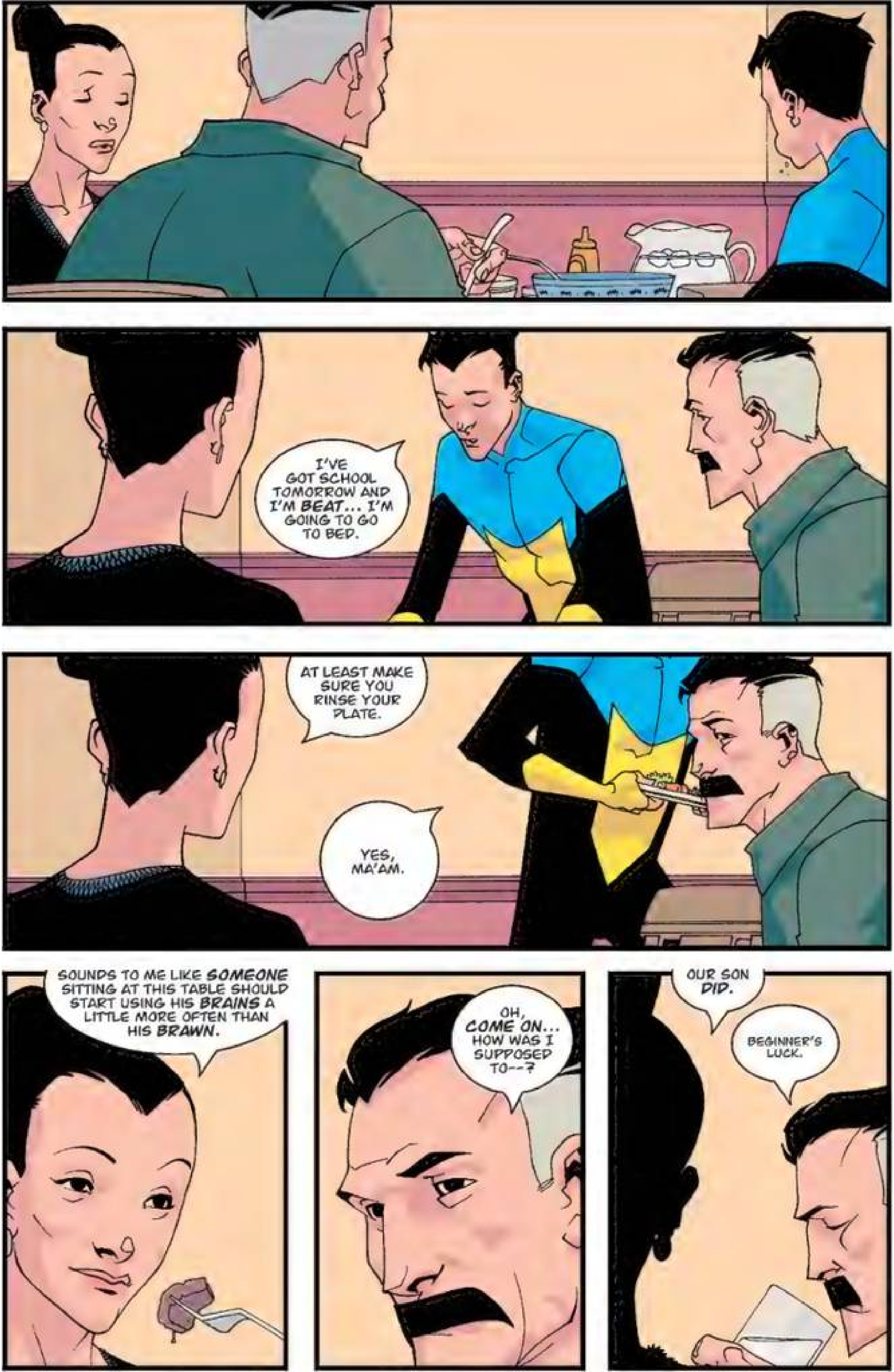

I'M A PUBLIC SERVANT OF SORTS... IT'S SORT OF HARD TO EXPLAIN. I GUESS BECAUSE I'VE NEVER HAD TO BEFORE.
I'M A CHAMPION EVALUATION OFFICER.
OKAY, NOW I'M JUST MORE CONFUSED.
CHAMPION EVALUATION OFFICER?
I WORK FOR THE COALITION OF PLANETS. EACH PLANET IN THE COALITION ASSIGNS A CHAMPION, SOMEONE WHOSE SOLE JOB IS TO DEFEND THE PLANET AGAINST MINOR ORBITAL THREATS AND WHAT NOT... GENERAL STUFF, REALLY.
MY JOB IS TO GO FROM PLANET TO PLANET ON SCHEDULED ENCOUNTERS WITH THEIR RESPECTIVE CHAMPIONS. I END UP HITTING EACH PLANET ONCE EVERY THREE YEARS. WE DO A LITTLE FIGHTING, AND I REPORT BACK ON WHETHER OR NOT THEY'RE UP TO THE COALITION'S STANDARDS.
IT'S ALSO A GOOD TRAINING EXERCISE FOR THE CHAMPIONS, I'VE GOT A BACKLOG OF PLANETS REQUESTING MY SERVICES. YOU'RE REALLY QUITE LUCKY. I DON'T GET AN ADJUSTMENT IN MY SCHEDULE FOR ANOTHER FIFTY YEARS.

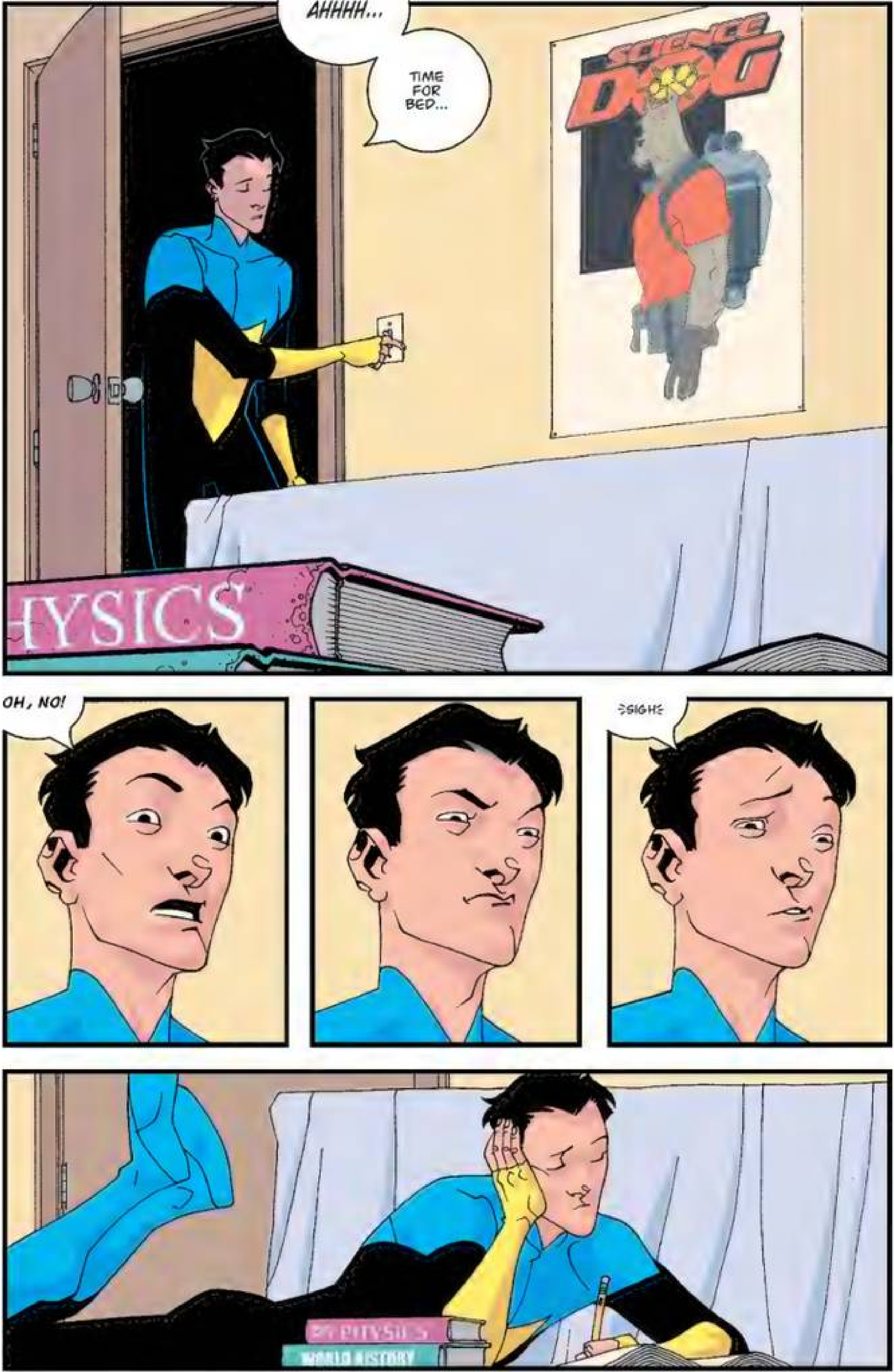

WHY WOULD WE SIGN UP FOR THAT?! IT DOESN'T MAKE SENSE.
MOST PEOPLE ON MY PLANET DON'T EVEN ACKNOWLEDGE THE EXISTENCE OF ALIENS, LET ALONE SIGN UP ON INTERPLANETARY COMMITTEES WITH THEM!
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? I'VE GOT THE MANDATE FOR THIS PLANET RIGHT HERE!
SEE? URATH! IT SAYS IT RIGHT HERE.
URATH?! WHERE THE HELL IS URATH?! THIS IS EARTH!!
OH...
...CRAP.


I'VE WASTED ALMOST FIFTEEN YEARS ON THIS PLANET! THE URATHIANS MUST BE PISSED! OH, MAN... AND I'VE GOT AN EVALUATION COMING UP IN TWENTY YEARS!
SORRY TO HAVE TO BREAK THE NEWS TO YOU, MAN.
DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT. IF IT WASN'T FOR YOU I MIGHT HAVE BEEN FIRED WHEN MY EVALUATION CAME UP... COME TO THINK OF IT, I MIGHT STILL BE...
...I GOTTA GO.
AGAIN, THANKS FOR ALL THE HELP. MY NAME'S ALLEN, I DIDN'T CATCH YOURS.
INVINCIBLE.
SEE YOU AROUND, INVINCIBLE.
WHOA...

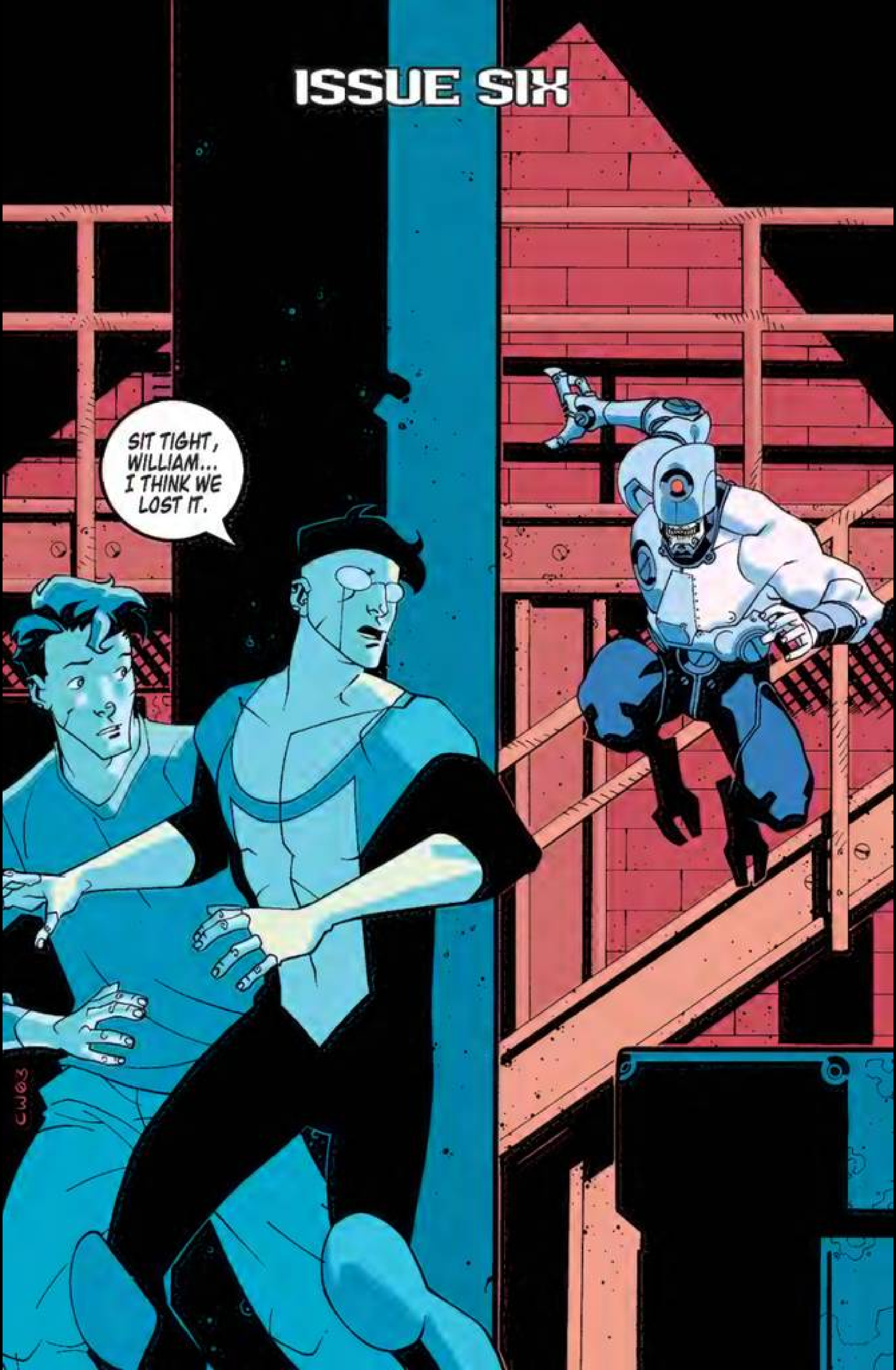

...COOL.

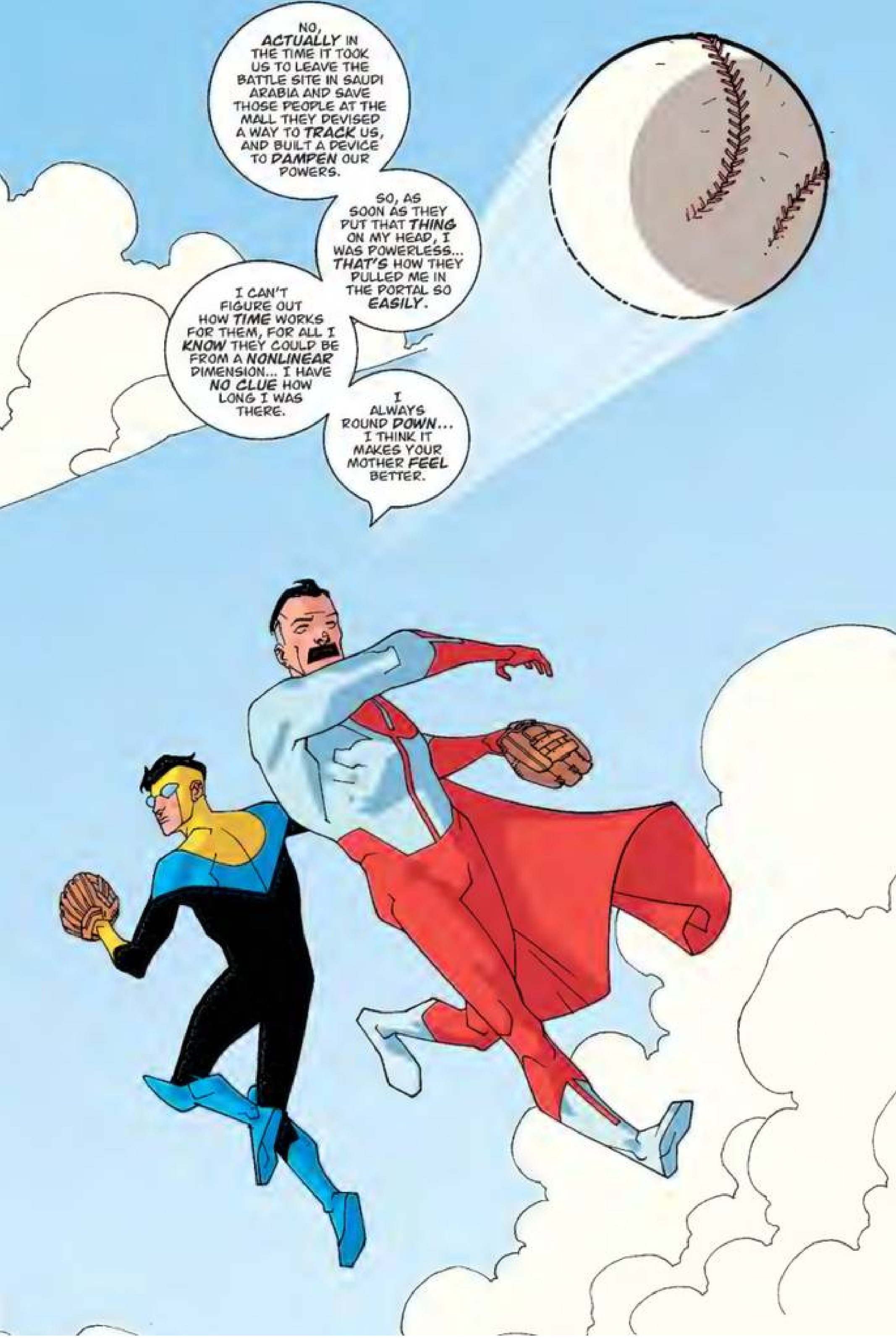

IT'S SO NICE TO HAVE YOU HOME THIS EARLY.
I HAD A LITTLE HELP TODAY...
HOW'D THAT GO, ANYWAY?
ACTUALLY... NOT THAT BAD AT ALL.
REALLY?
YEAH, HE WON'T BE BACK. TURNS OUT HE'S BEEN COMING TO THE WRONG PLANET THIS WHOLE TIME. EVERY THREE YEARS FOR NEARLY FIFTEEN YEARS... I'M GLAD I TOOK THE TIME TO TALK TO HIM.
DAMN, SON... I'M IMPRESSED. I WISH YOU HAD BEEN AROUND THE FIRST TIME I FOUGHT HIM.

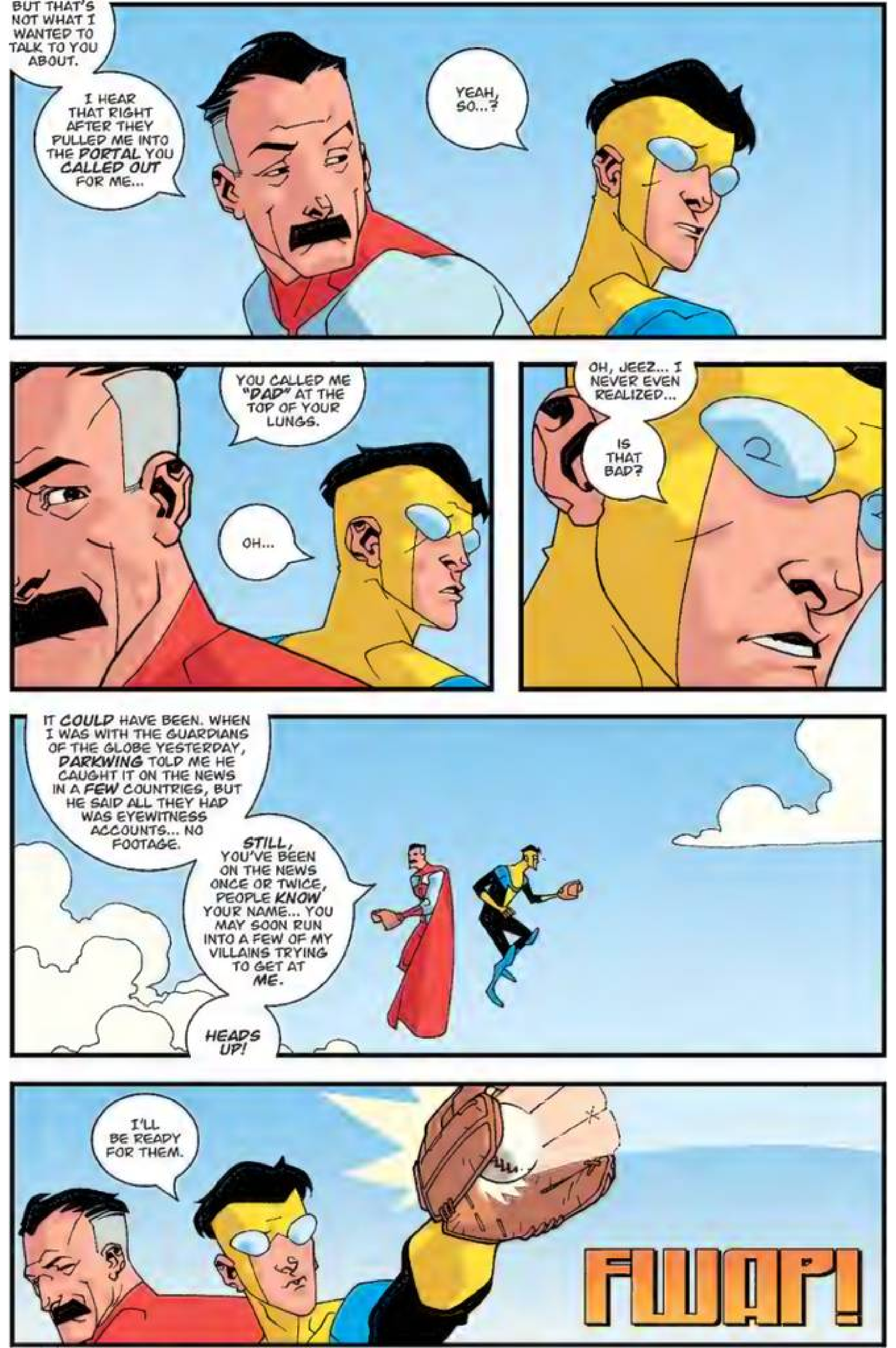

I'VE GOT SCHOOL TOMORROW AND I'M **BEAT**... I'M GOING TO GO TO BED.
AT LEAST MAKE SURE YOU RINSE YOUR PLATE.
YES, MA'AM.
SOUNDS TO ME LIKE **SOMEONE** SITTING AT THIS TABLE SHOULD START USING HIS **BRAINS** A LITTLE MORE OFTEN THAN HIS **BRAWN**.
OH, **COME ON**... HOW WAS I SUPPOSED TO--?
OUR SON **DID**.
BEGINNER'S LUCK.

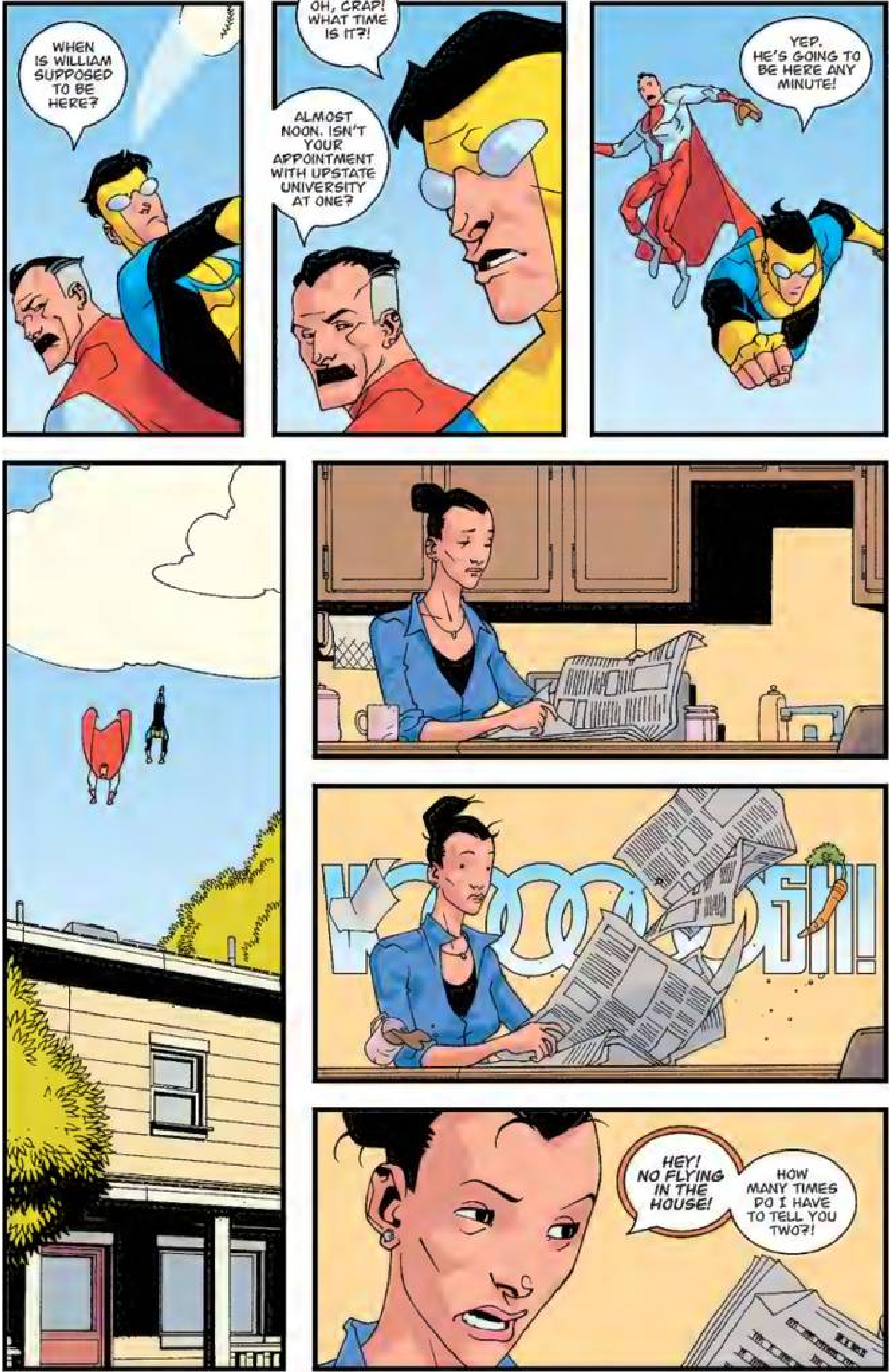

AHHHH...
TIME FOR BED...
SCIENCE DOG
HYSICS
OH, NO!
SIGH
PHYSICS
WORLD HISTORY

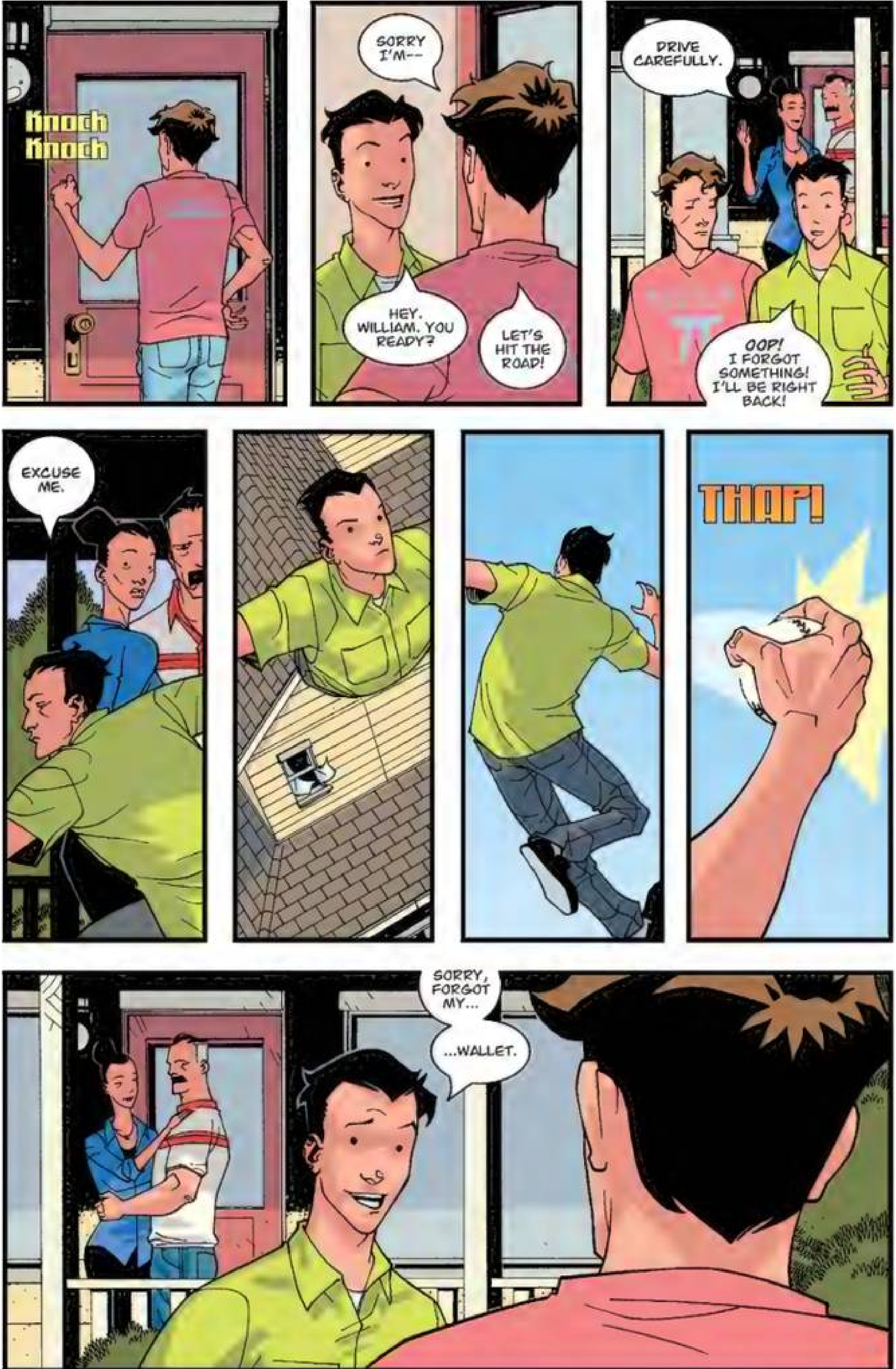
ISSUE SIX

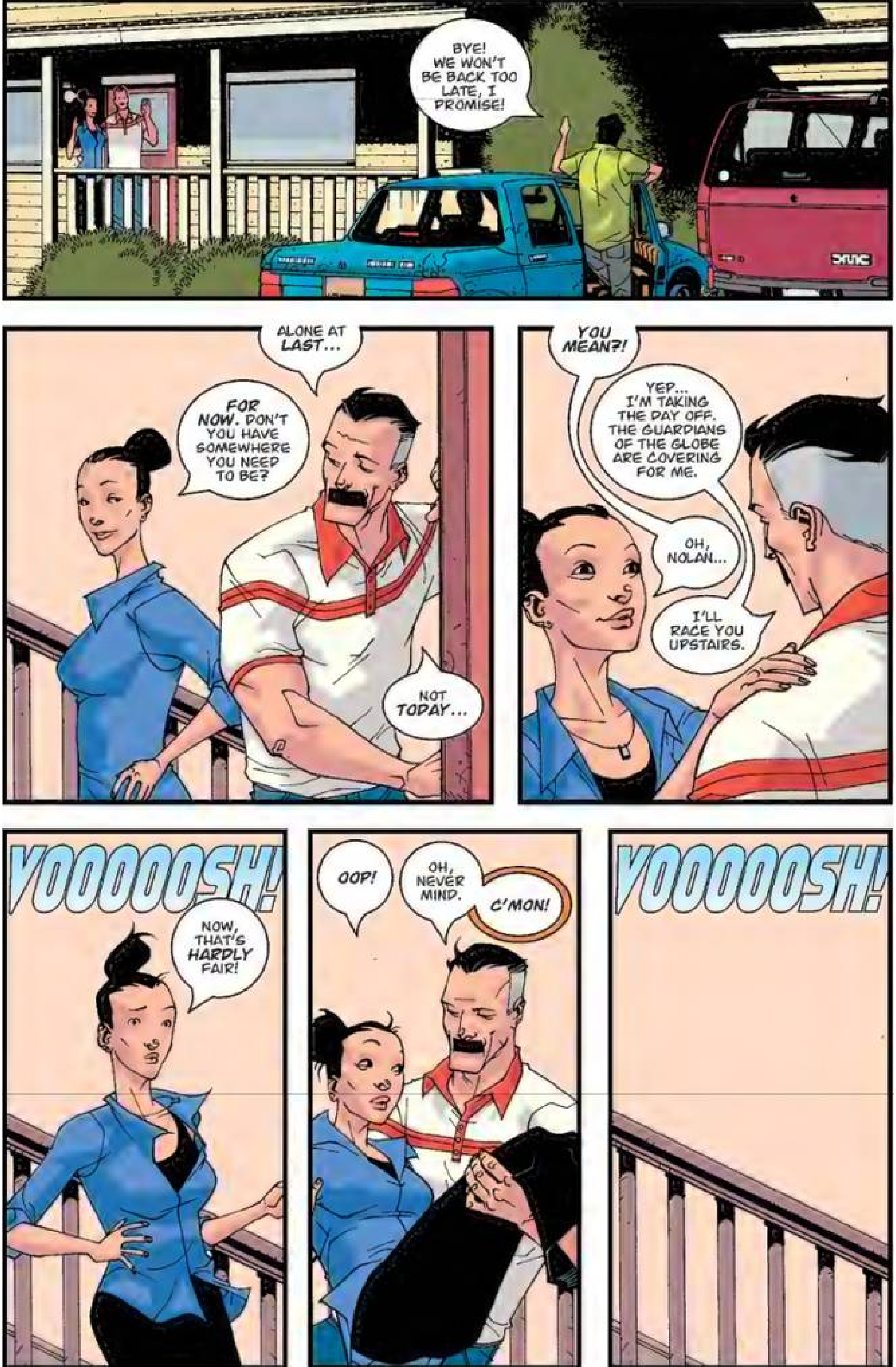

SIT TIGHT, WILLIAM... I THINK WE LOST IT.
CW03

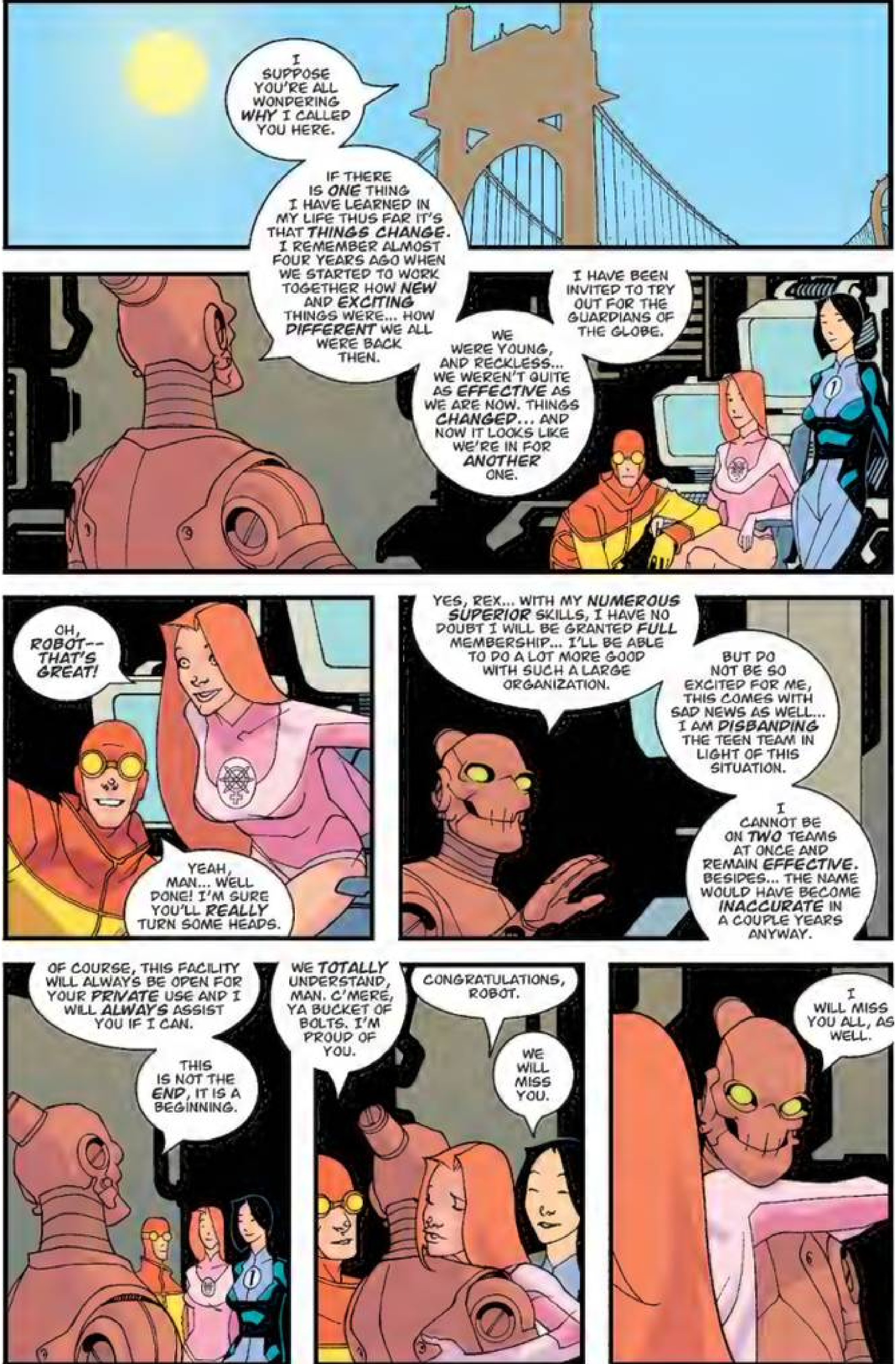

NO, ACTUALLY IN THE TIME IT TOOK US TO LEAVE THE BATTLE SITE IN SAUDI ARABIA AND SAVE THOSE PEOPLE AT THE MALL THEY DEVISED A WAY TO TRACK US, AND BUILT A DEVICE TO DAMPEN OUR POWERS.
SO, AS SOON AS THEY PUT THAT THING ON MY HEAD, I WAS POWERLESS... THAT'S HOW THEY PULLED ME IN THE PORTAL SO EASILY.
I CAN'T FIGURE OUT HOW TIME WORKS FOR THEM, FOR ALL I KNOW THEY COULD BE FROM A NONLINEAR DIMENSION... I HAVE NO CLUE HOW LONG I WAS THERE.
I ALWAYS ROUND DOWN... I THINK IT MAKES YOUR MOTHER FEEL BETTER.

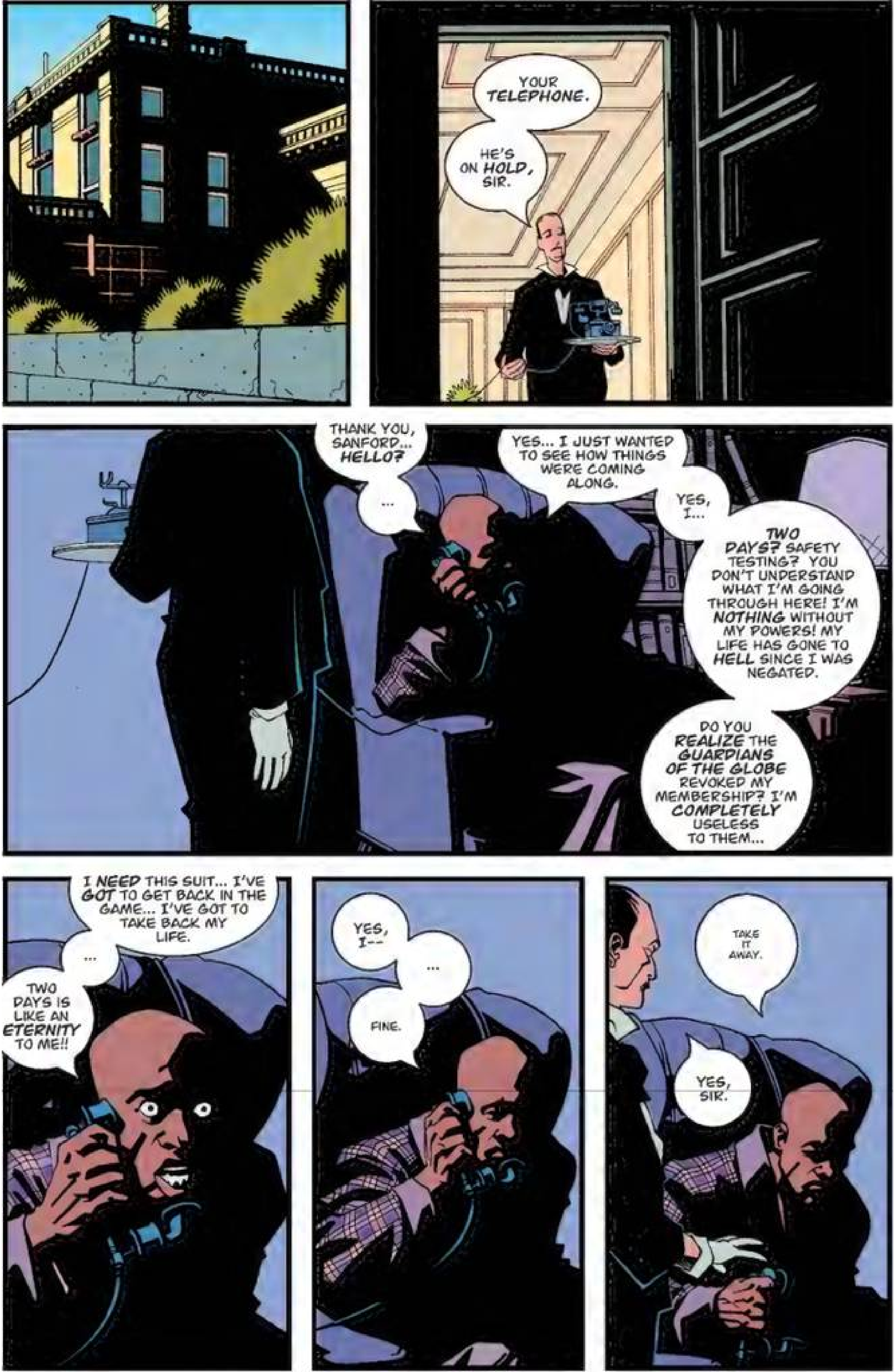

BUT THAT'S NOT WHAT I WANTED TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT.
I HEAR THAT RIGHT AFTER THEY PULLED ME INTO THE **PORTAL** YOU **CALLED OUT** FOR ME...
YEAH, SO...?
YOU CALLED ME "**DAD**" AT THE TOP OF YOUR LUNGS.
OH...
OH, JEEZ... I NEVER EVEN REALIZED...
IS THAT BAD?
IT **COULD** HAVE BEEN. WHEN I WAS WITH THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE YESTERDAY, **DARKWING** TOLD ME HE CAUGHT IT ON THE NEWS IN A **FEW** COUNTRIES, BUT HE SAID ALL THEY HAD WAS EYEWITNESS ACCOUNTS... NO FOOTAGE.
STILL, YOU'VE BEEN ON THE NEWS ONCE OR TWICE, PEOPLE **KNOW** YOUR NAME... YOU MAY SOON RUN INTO A FEW OF MY VILLAINS TRYING TO GET AT **ME**.
HEADS UP!
I'LL BE READY FOR THEM.
FWAP!

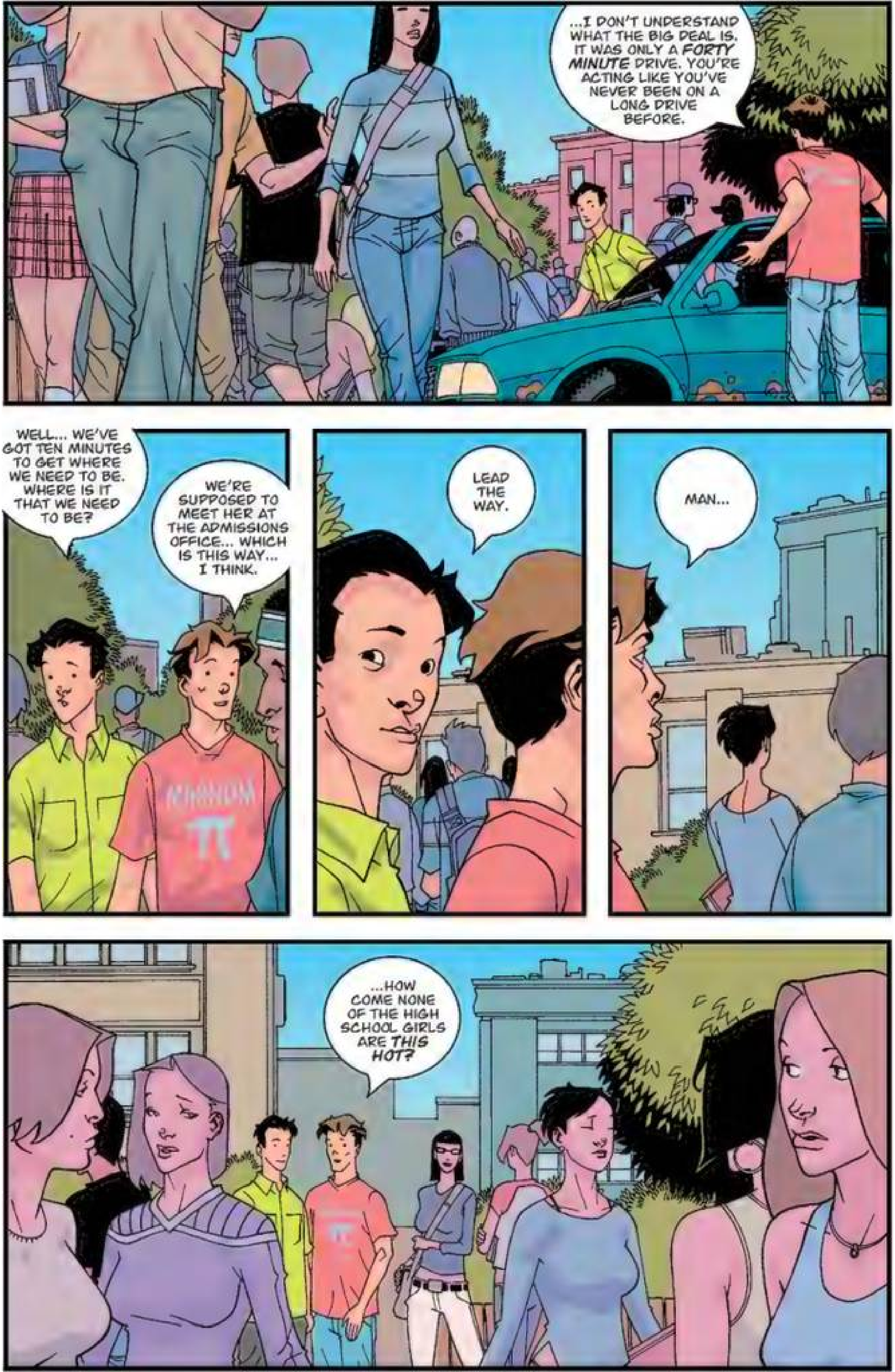

WHEN IS WILLIAM SUPPOSED TO BE HERE?
OH, CRAP! WHAT TIME IS IT?!
ALMOST NOON. ISN'T YOUR APPOINTMENT WITH UPSTATE UNIVERSITY AT ONE?
YEP. HE'S GOING TO BE HERE ANY MINUTE!
WOOOOOSH!
HEY! NO FLYING IN THE HOUSE!
HOW MANY TIMES DO I HAVE TO TELL YOU TWO?!

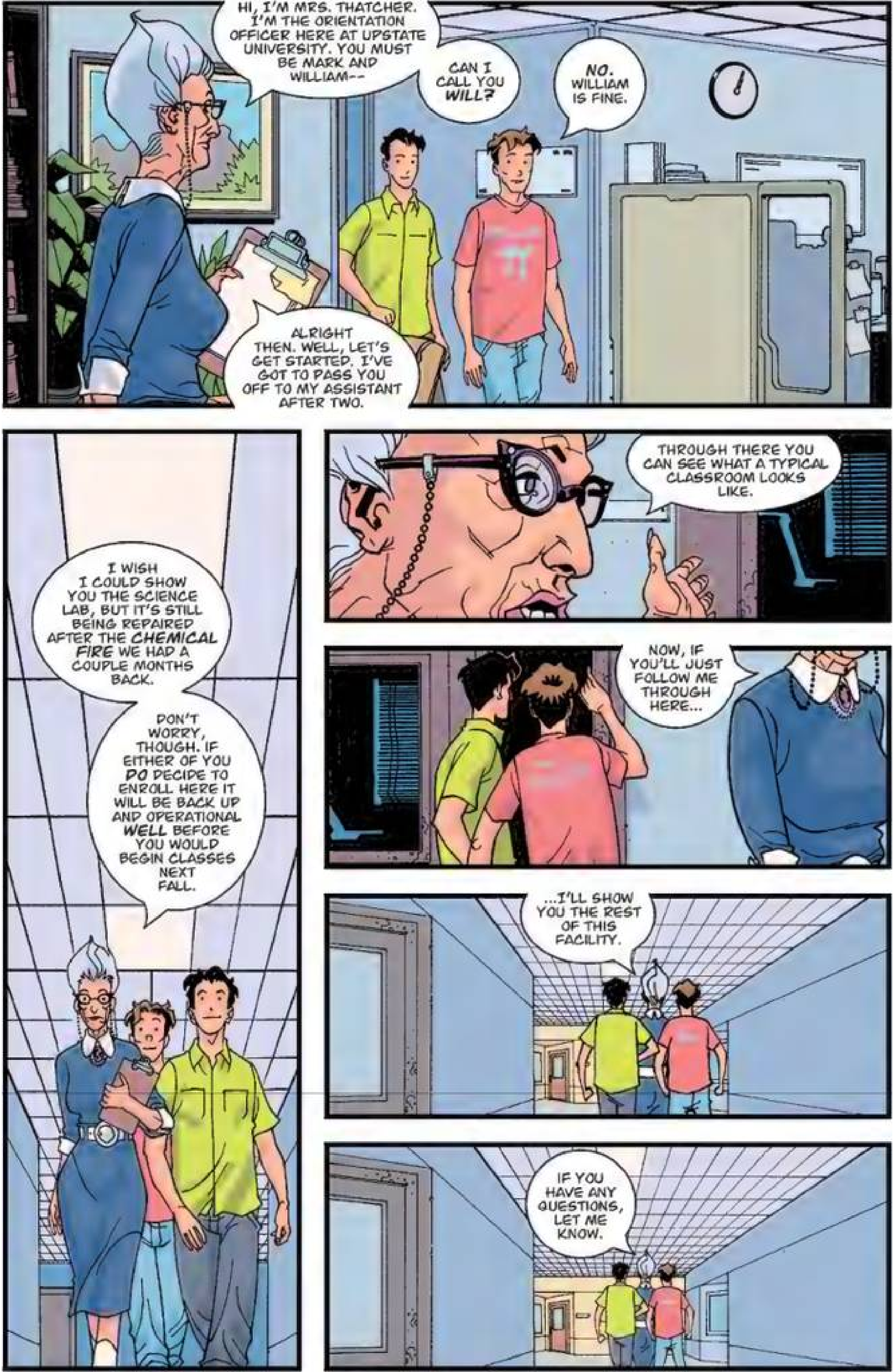

Knock
Knock
SORRY I'M--
HEY. WILLIAM. YOU READY?
LET'S HIT THE ROAD!
DRIVE CAREFULLY.
OOP! I FORGOT SOMETHING! I'LL BE RIGHT BACK!
EXCUSE ME.
THAP!
SORRY, FORGOT MY...
...WALLET.

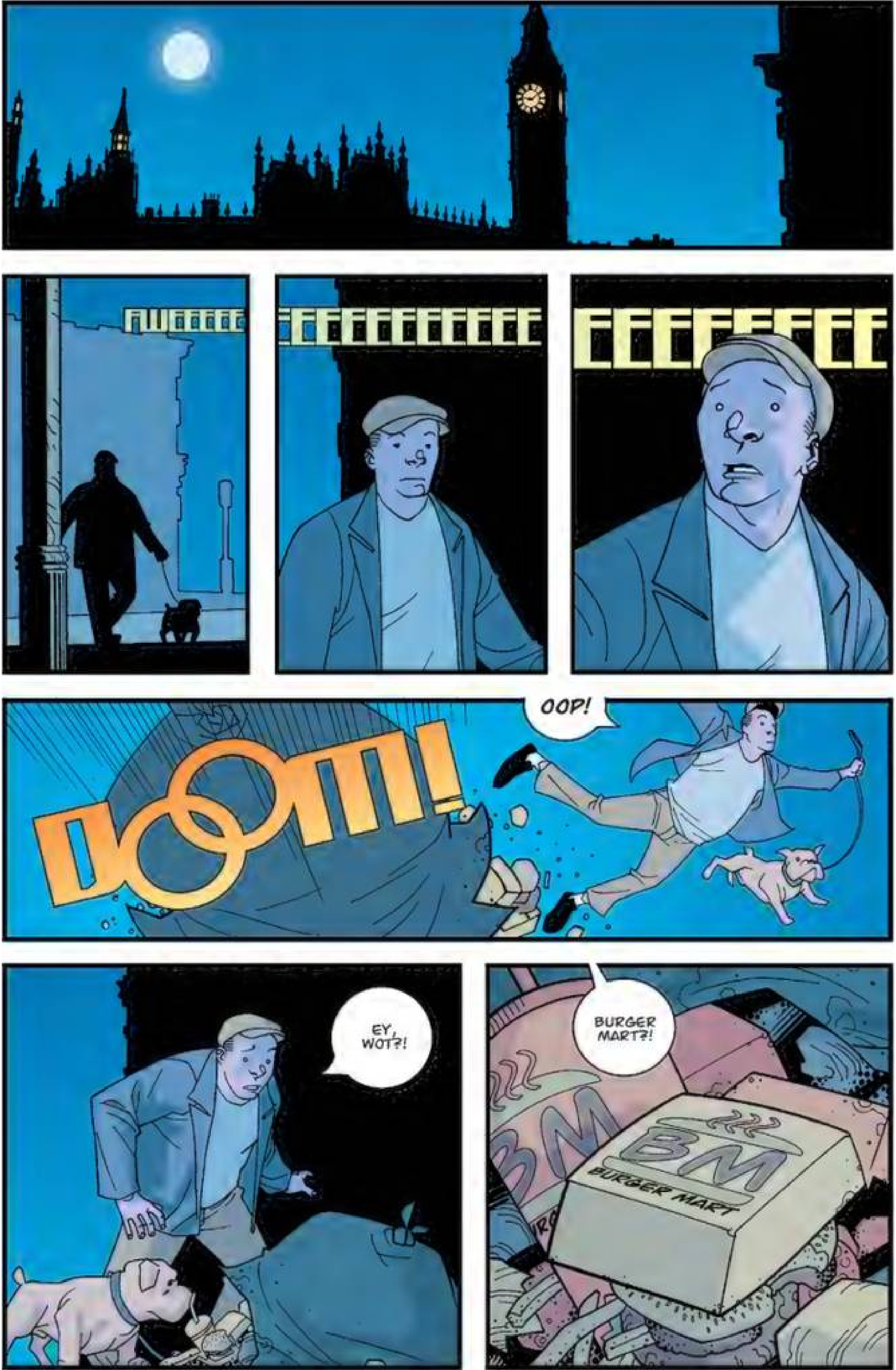

BYE! WE WON'T BE BACK TOO LATE, I PROMISE!
ALONE AT LAST...
FOR NOW. DON'T YOU HAVE SOMEWHERE YOU NEED TO BE?
NOT TODAY...
YOU MEAN?!
YEP... I'M TAKING THE DAY OFF. THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE ARE COVERING FOR ME.
OH, NOLAN...
I'LL RACE YOU UPSTAIRS.
VOOOOOSH!
NOW, THAT'S HARDLY FAIR!
OOP!
OH, NEVER MIND.
C'MON!
VOOOOOSH!

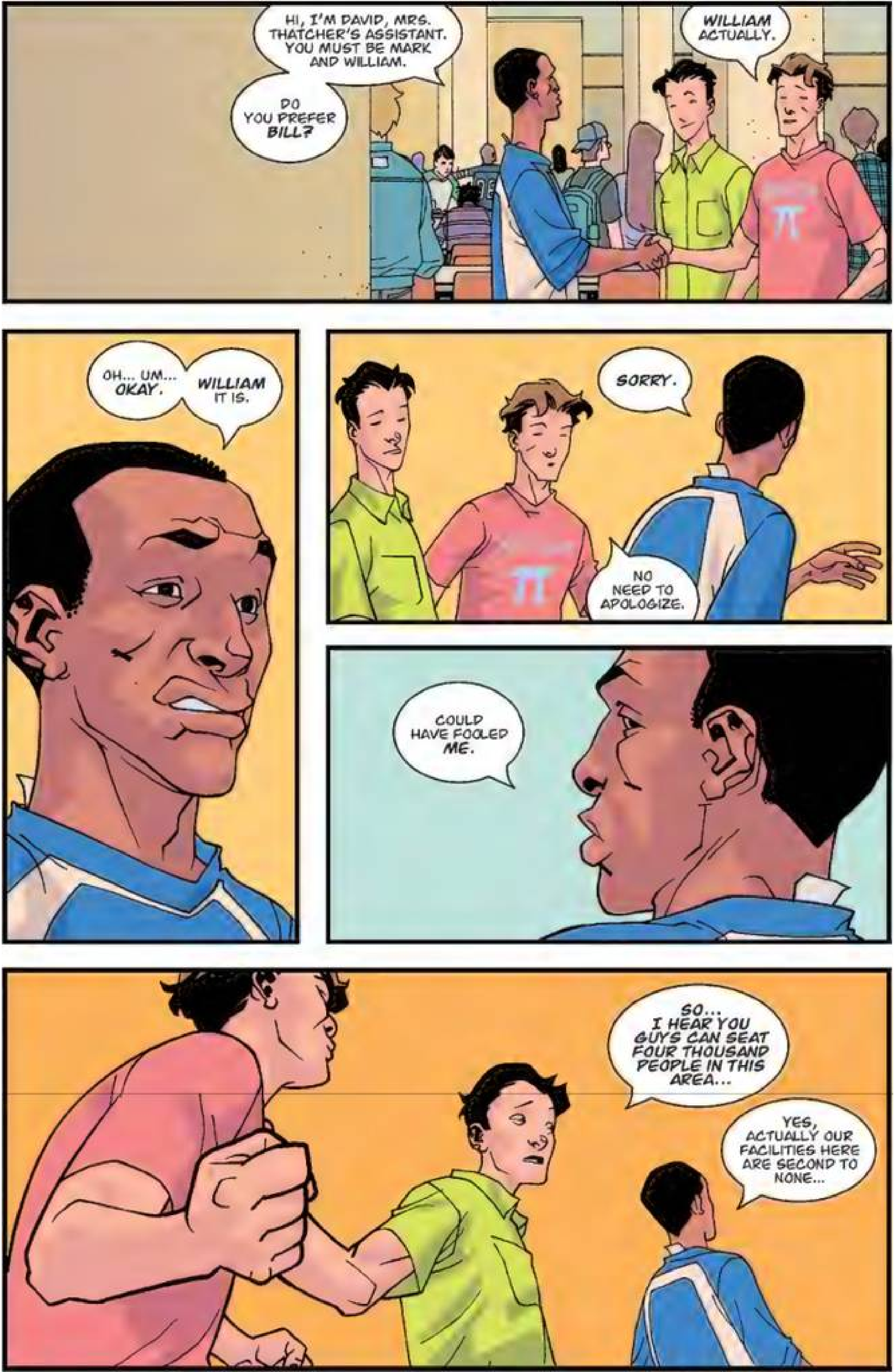

I SUPPOSE YOU'RE ALL WONDERING *WHY* I CALLED YOU HERE.
IF THERE IS *ONE* THING I HAVE LEARNED IN MY LIFE THUS FAR IT'S THAT *THINGS CHANGE*. I REMEMBER ALMOST FOUR YEARS AGO WHEN WE STARTED TO WORK TOGETHER HOW *NEW* AND *EXCITING* THINGS WERE... HOW *DIFFERENT* WE ALL WERE BACK THEN.
WE WERE YOUNG, AND RECKLESS... WE WEREN'T QUITE AS *EFFECTIVE* AS WE ARE NOW. THINGS *CHANGED*... AND NOW IT LOOKS LIKE WE'RE IN FOR *ANOTHER* ONE.
I HAVE BEEN INVITED TO TRY OUT FOR THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE.
OH, *ROBOT*-- THAT'S *GREAT*!
YEAH, MAN... WELL DONE! I'M SURE YOU'LL *REALLY* TURN SOME HEADS.
YES, REX... WITH MY *NUMEROUS SUPERIOR* SKILLS, I HAVE NO DOUBT I WILL BE GRANTED *FULL* MEMBERSHIP... I'LL BE ABLE TO DO A LOT MORE GOOD WITH SUCH A LARGE ORGANIZATION.
BUT DO NOT BE SO EXCITED FOR ME, THIS COMES WITH SAD NEWS AS WELL... I AM *DISBANDING* THE TEEN TEAM IN LIGHT OF THIS SITUATION.
I CANNOT BE ON *TWO* TEAMS AT ONCE AND REMAIN *EFFECTIVE*. BESIDES... THE NAME WOULD HAVE BECOME *INACCURATE* IN A COUPLE YEARS ANYWAY.
OF COURSE, THIS FACILITY WILL ALWAYS BE OPEN FOR YOUR *PRIVATE* USE AND I WILL *ALWAYS* ASSIST YOU IF I CAN.
THIS IS NOT THE *END*, IT IS A BEGINNING.
WE *TOTALLY* UNDERSTAND, MAN. C'MERE, YA BUCKET OF BOLTS. I'M PROUD OF YOU.
CONGRATULATIONS, ROBOT.
WE WILL MISS YOU.
I WILL MISS YOU ALL, AS WELL.

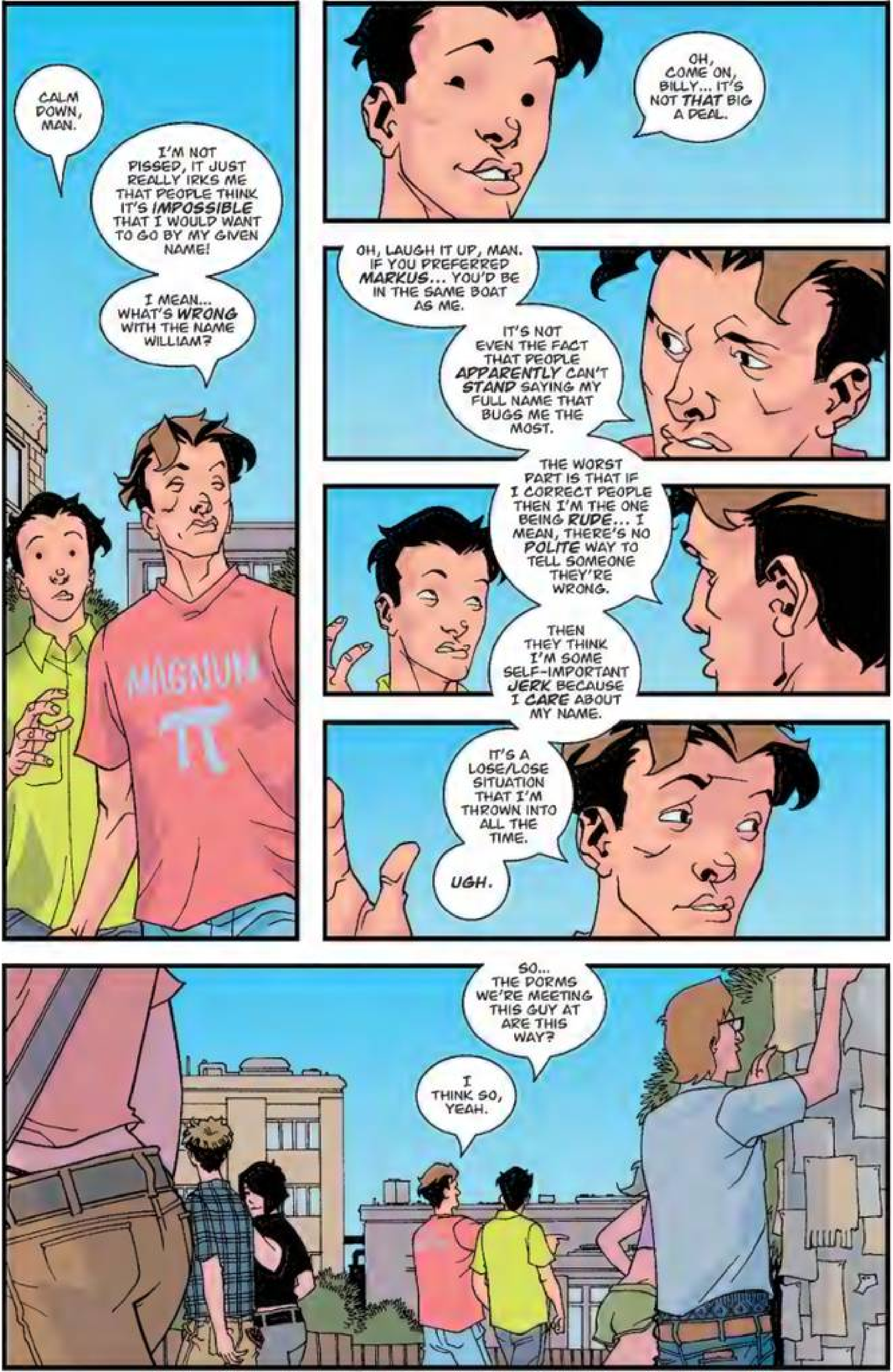

YOUR TELEPHONE.
HE'S ON HOLD, SIR.
THANK YOU, SANFORD... HELLO?
...
YES... I JUST WANTED TO SEE HOW THINGS WERE COMING ALONG.
YES, I...
TWO DAYS? SAFETY TESTING? YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND WHAT I'M GOING THROUGH HERE! I'M NOTHING WITHOUT MY POWERS! MY LIFE HAS GONE TO HELL SINCE I WAS NEGATED.
DO YOU REALIZE THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE REVOKED MY MEMBERSHIP? I'M COMPLETELY USELESS TO THEM...
I NEED THIS SUIT... I'VE GOT TO GET BACK IN THE GAME... I'VE GOT TO TAKE BACK MY LIFE.
...
TWO DAYS IS LIKE AN ETERNITY TO ME!!
YES, I--
...
FINE.
TAKE IT AWAY.
YES, SIR.

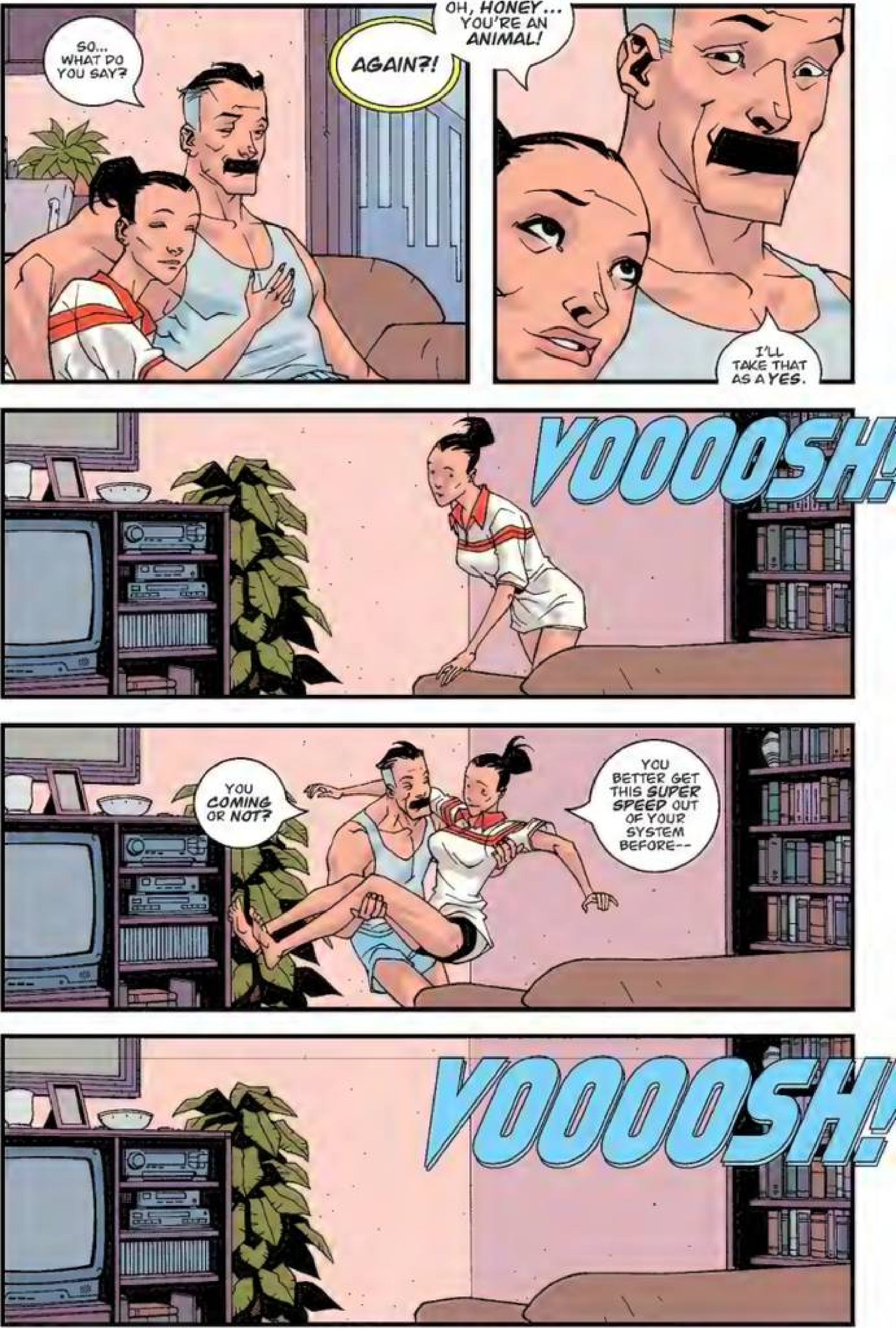

...I DON'T UNDERSTAND WHAT THE BIG DEAL IS. IT WAS ONLY A *FORTY MINUTE* DRIVE. YOU'RE ACTING LIKE YOU'VE NEVER BEEN ON A LONG DRIVE BEFORE.
WELL... WE'VE GOT TEN MINUTES TO GET WHERE WE NEED TO BE. WHERE IS IT THAT WE NEED TO BE?
WE'RE SUPPOSED TO MEET HER AT THE ADMISSIONS OFFICE... WHICH IS THIS WAY... I THINK.
LEAD THE WAY.
MAN...
...HOW COME NONE OF THE HIGH SCHOOL GIRLS ARE *THIS HOT?*

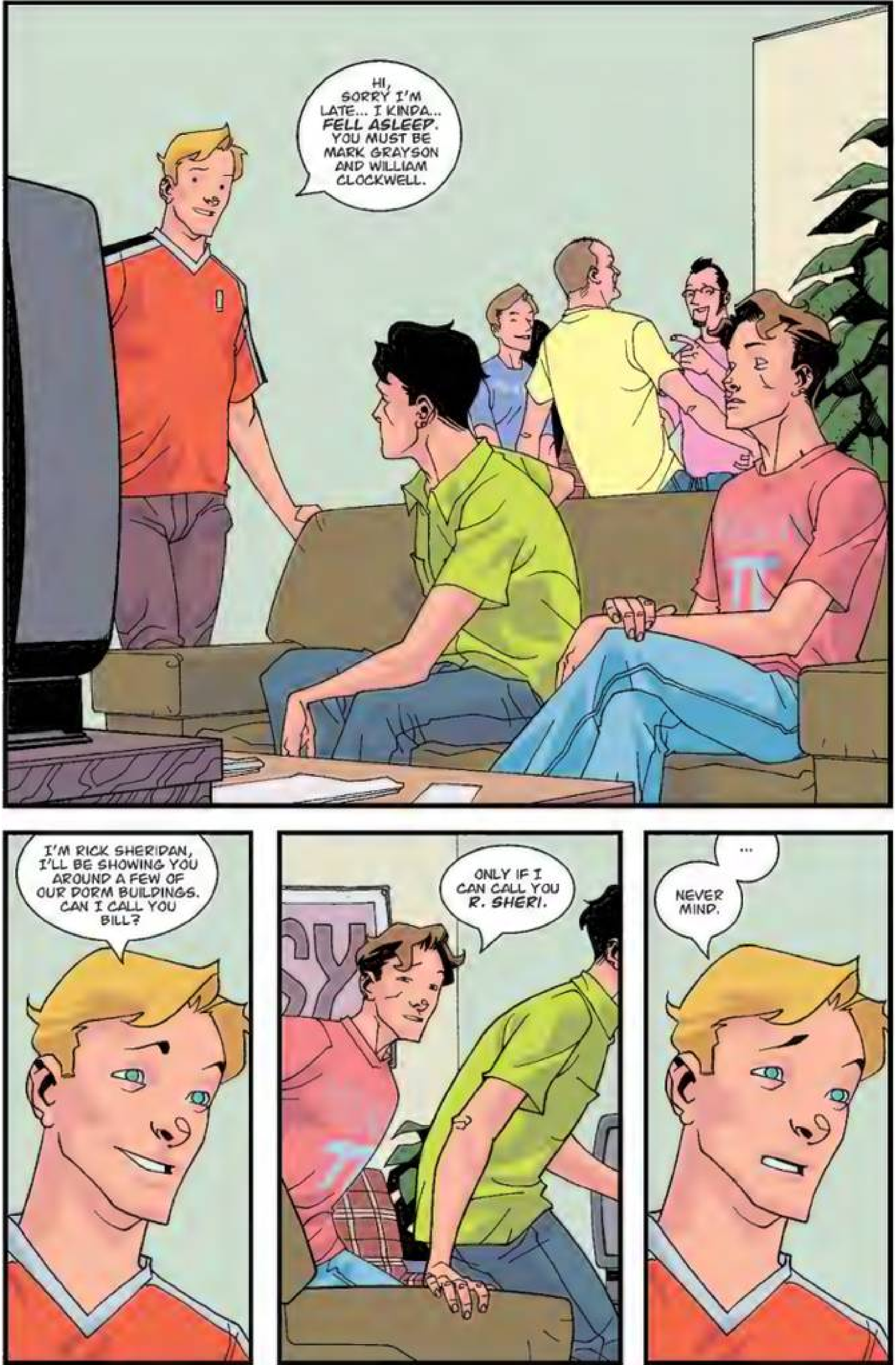

HI, I'M MRS. THATCHER. I'M THE ORIENTATION OFFICER HERE AT UPSTATE UNIVERSITY. YOU MUST BE MARK AND WILLIAM--
CAN I CALL YOU *WILL?*
NO. WILLIAM IS FINE.
ALRIGHT THEN. WELL, LET'S GET STARTED. I'VE GOT TO PASS YOU OFF TO MY ASSISTANT AFTER TWO.
I WISH I COULD SHOW YOU THE SCIENCE LAB, BUT IT'S STILL BEING REPAIRED AFTER THE *CHEMICAL FIRE* WE HAD A COUPLE MONTHS BACK.
DON'T WORRY, THOUGH. IF EITHER OF YOU *DO* DECIDE TO ENROLL HERE IT WILL BE BACK UP AND OPERATIONAL *WELL* BEFORE YOU WOULD BEGIN CLASSES NEXT FALL.
THROUGH THERE YOU CAN SEE WHAT A TYPICAL CLASSROOM LOOKS LIKE.
NOW, IF YOU'LL JUST FOLLOW ME THROUGH HERE...
...I'LL SHOW YOU THE REST OF THIS FACILITY.
IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS, LET ME KNOW.

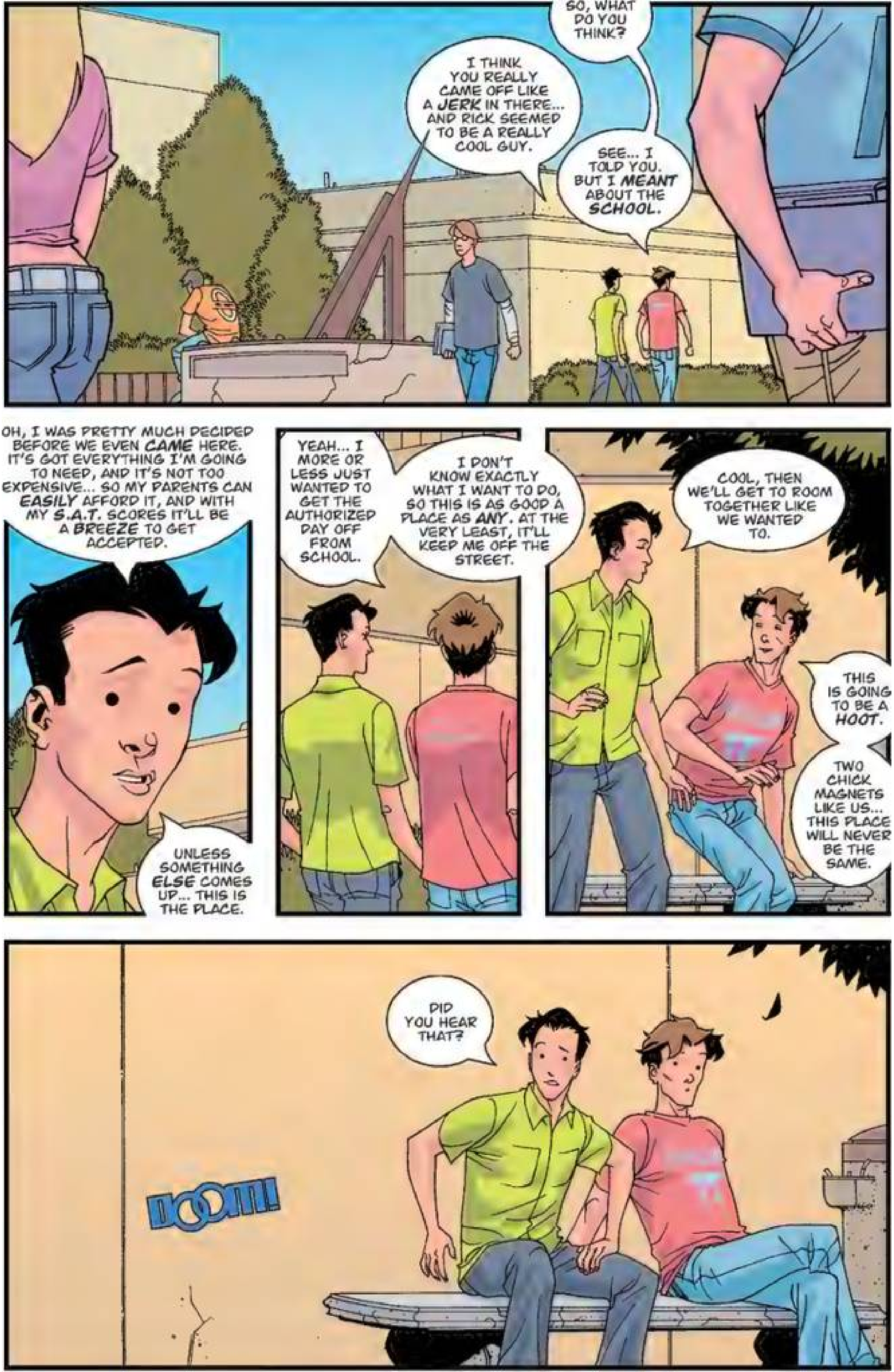

AWEEEEE
EEEEEEEEEE
EEEEEEEE
DOOM!
OOP!
EY, WOT?!
BURGER MART?!
BM
BURGER MART

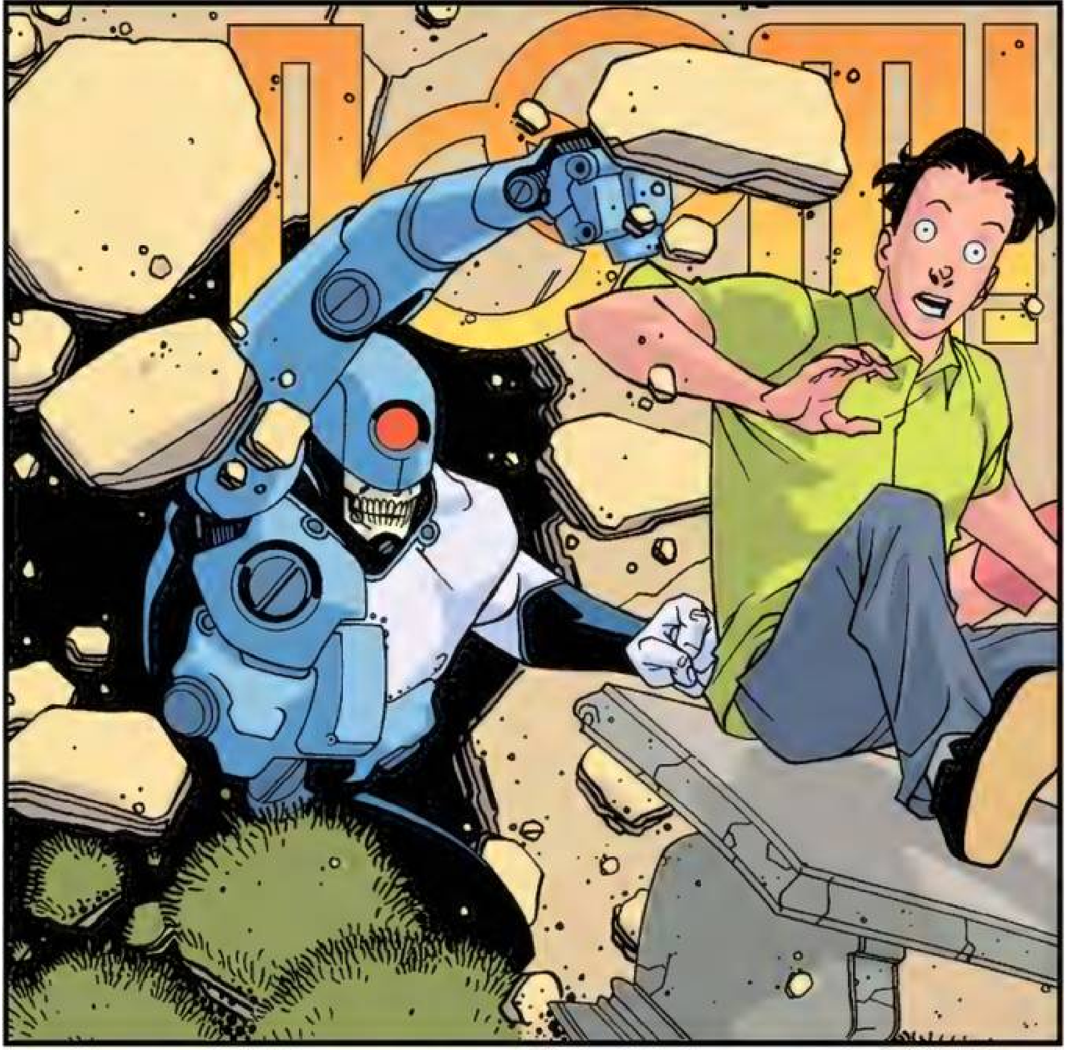

HI, I'M DAVID, MRS. THATCHER'S ASSISTANT. YOU MUST BE MARK AND WILLIAM.
DO YOU PREFER BILL?
WILLIAM ACTUALLY.
OH... UM... OKAY.
WILLIAM IT IS.
SORRY.
NO NEED TO APOLOGIZE.
COULD HAVE FOOLED ME.
SO... I HEAR YOU GUYS CAN SEAT FOUR THOUSAND PEOPLE IN THIS AREA...
YES, ACTUALLY OUR FACILITIES HERE ARE SECOND TO NONE...

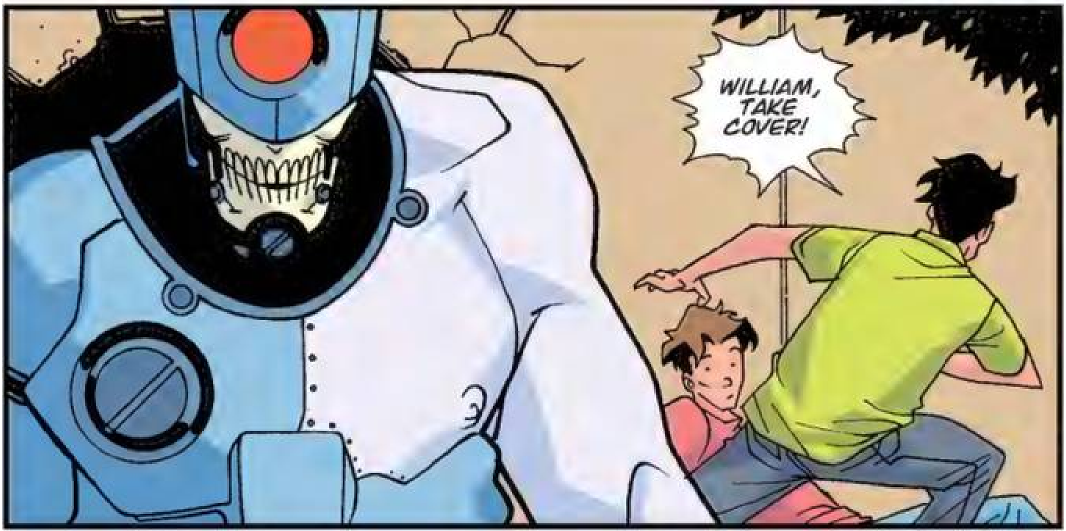

CALM DOWN, MAN.
I'M NOT PISSED, IT JUST REALLY IRKS ME THAT PEOPLE THINK IT'S *IMPOSSIBLE* THAT I WOULD WANT TO GO BY MY GIVEN NAME!
I MEAN... WHAT'S *WRONG* WITH THE NAME WILLIAM?
MAGNUM π
OH, COME ON, BILLY... IT'S NOT *THAT* BIG A DEAL.
OH, LAUGH IT UP, MAN. IF YOU PREFERRED *MARKUS*... YOU'D BE IN THE SAME BOAT AS ME.
IT'S NOT EVEN THE FACT THAT PEOPLE *APPARENTLY* CAN'T *STAND* SAYING MY FULL NAME THAT BUGS ME THE MOST.
THE WORST PART IS THAT IF I CORRECT PEOPLE THEN I'M THE ONE BEING *RUDE*... I MEAN, THERE'S NO *POLITE* WAY TO TELL SOMEONE THEY'RE WRONG.
THEN THEY THINK I'M SOME SELF-IMPORTANT *JERK* BECAUSE I *CARE* ABOUT MY NAME.
IT'S A LOSE/LOSE SITUATION THAT I'M THROWN INTO ALL THE TIME.
UGH.
SO... THE DORMS WE'RE MEETING THIS GUY AT ARE THIS WAY?
I THINK SO, YEAH.

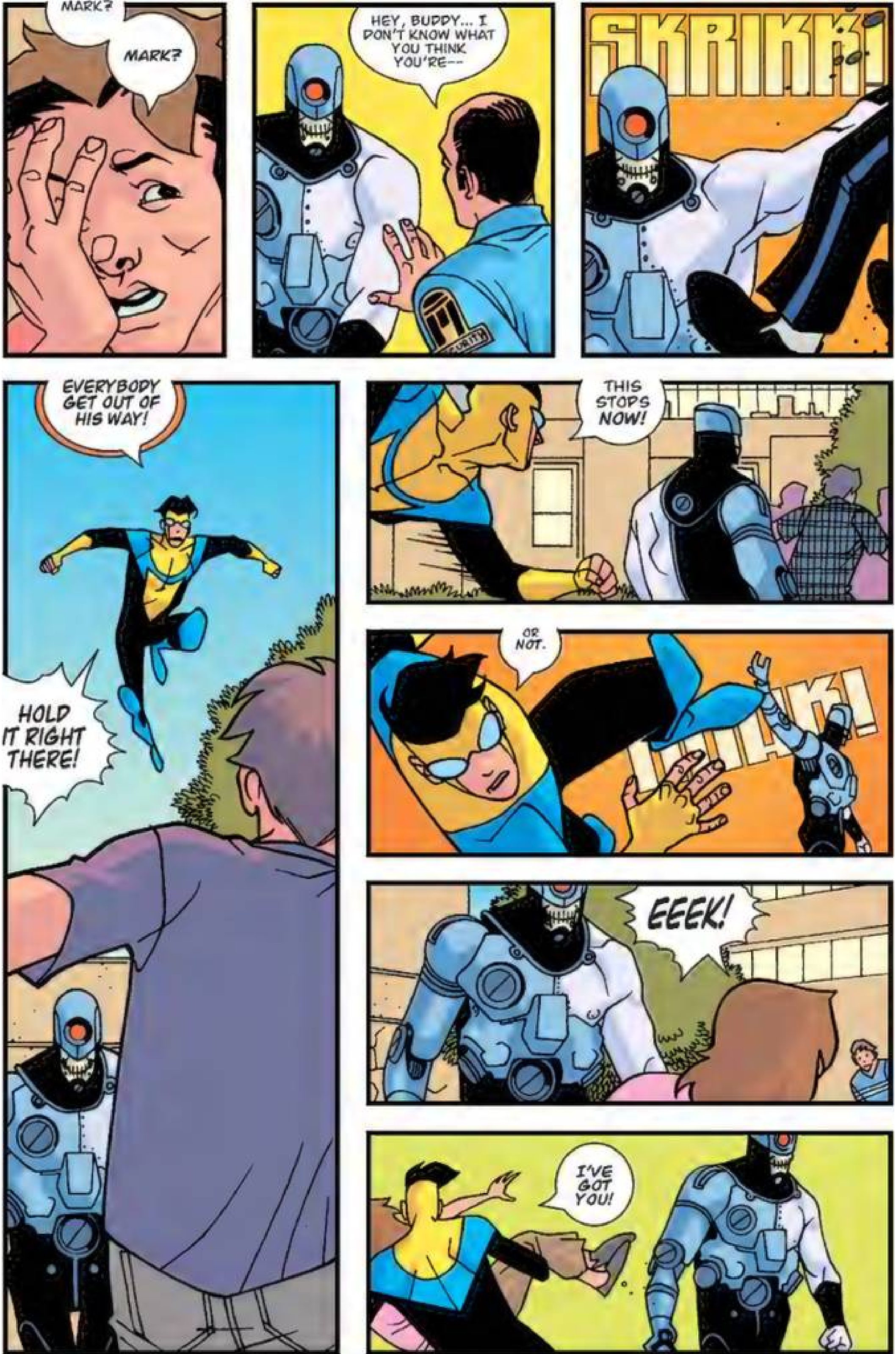

SO... WHAT DO YOU SAY?
AGAIN?!
OH, HONEY... YOU'RE AN ANIMAL!
I'LL TAKE THAT AS A YES.
VOOOOSH!
YOU COMING OR NOT?
YOU BETTER GET THIS SUPER SPEED OUT OF YOUR SYSTEM BEFORE--
VOOOOSH!

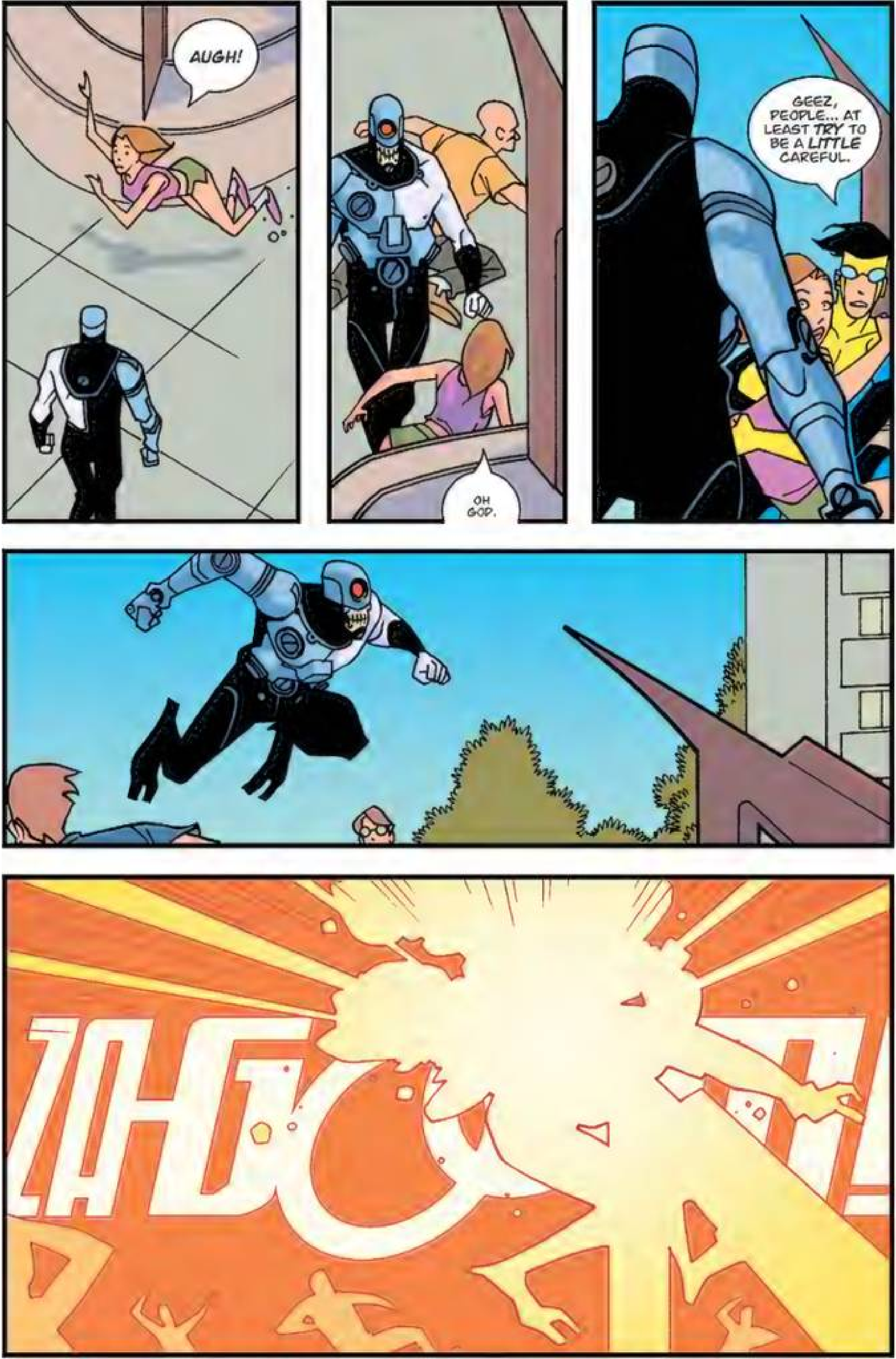

HI, SORRY I'M LATE... I KINDA... **FELL ASLEEP**. YOU MUST BE MARK GRAYSON AND WILLIAM CLOCKWELL.
I'M RICK SHERIDAN, I'LL BE SHOWING YOU AROUND A FEW OF OUR DORM BUILDINGS. CAN I CALL YOU BILL?
ONLY IF I CAN CALL YOU **R. SHERI.**
...
NEVER MIND.

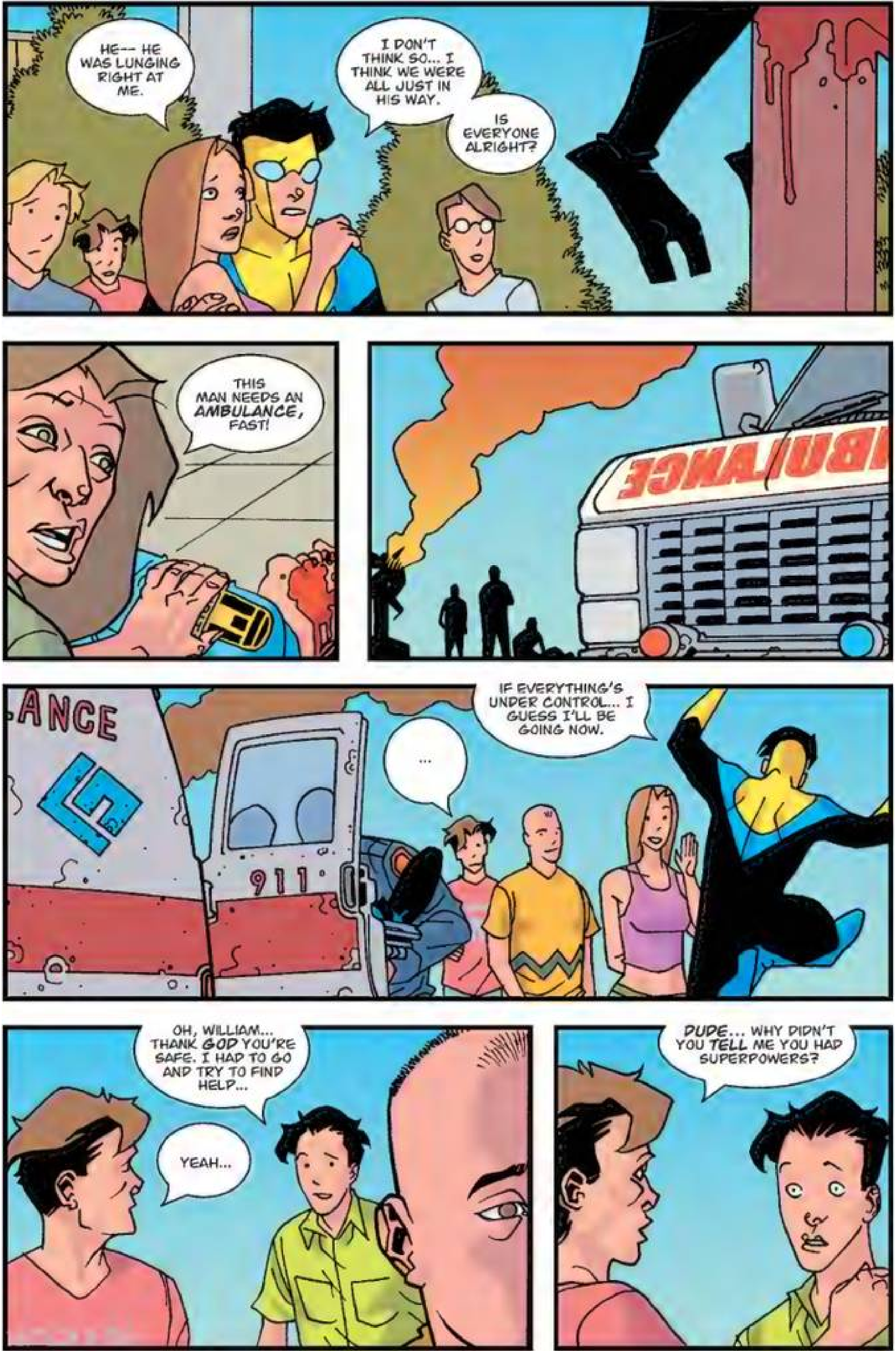

SO, WHAT DO YOU THINK?
I THINK YOU REALLY CAME OFF LIKE A JERK IN THERE... AND RICK SEEMED TO BE A REALLY COOL GUY.
SEE... I TOLD YOU. BUT I MEANT ABOUT THE SCHOOL.
OH, I WAS PRETTY MUCH DECIDED BEFORE WE EVEN CAME HERE. IT'S GOT EVERYTHING I'M GOING TO NEED, AND IT'S NOT TOO EXPENSIVE... SO MY PARENTS CAN EASILY AFFORD IT, AND WITH MY S.A.T. SCORES IT'LL BE A BREEZE TO GET ACCEPTED.
UNLESS SOMETHING ELSE COMES UP... THIS IS THE PLACE.
YEAH... I MORE OR LESS JUST WANTED TO GET THE AUTHORIZED DAY OFF FROM SCHOOL.
I DON'T KNOW EXACTLY WHAT I WANT TO DO, SO THIS IS AS GOOD A PLACE AS ANY. AT THE VERY LEAST, IT'LL KEEP ME OFF THE STREET.
COOL, THEN WE'LL GET TO ROOM TOGETHER LIKE WE WANTED TO.
THIS IS GOING TO BE A HOOT.
TWO CHICK MAGNETS LIKE US... THIS PLACE WILL NEVER BE THE SAME.
DID YOU HEAR THAT?
BOOM!

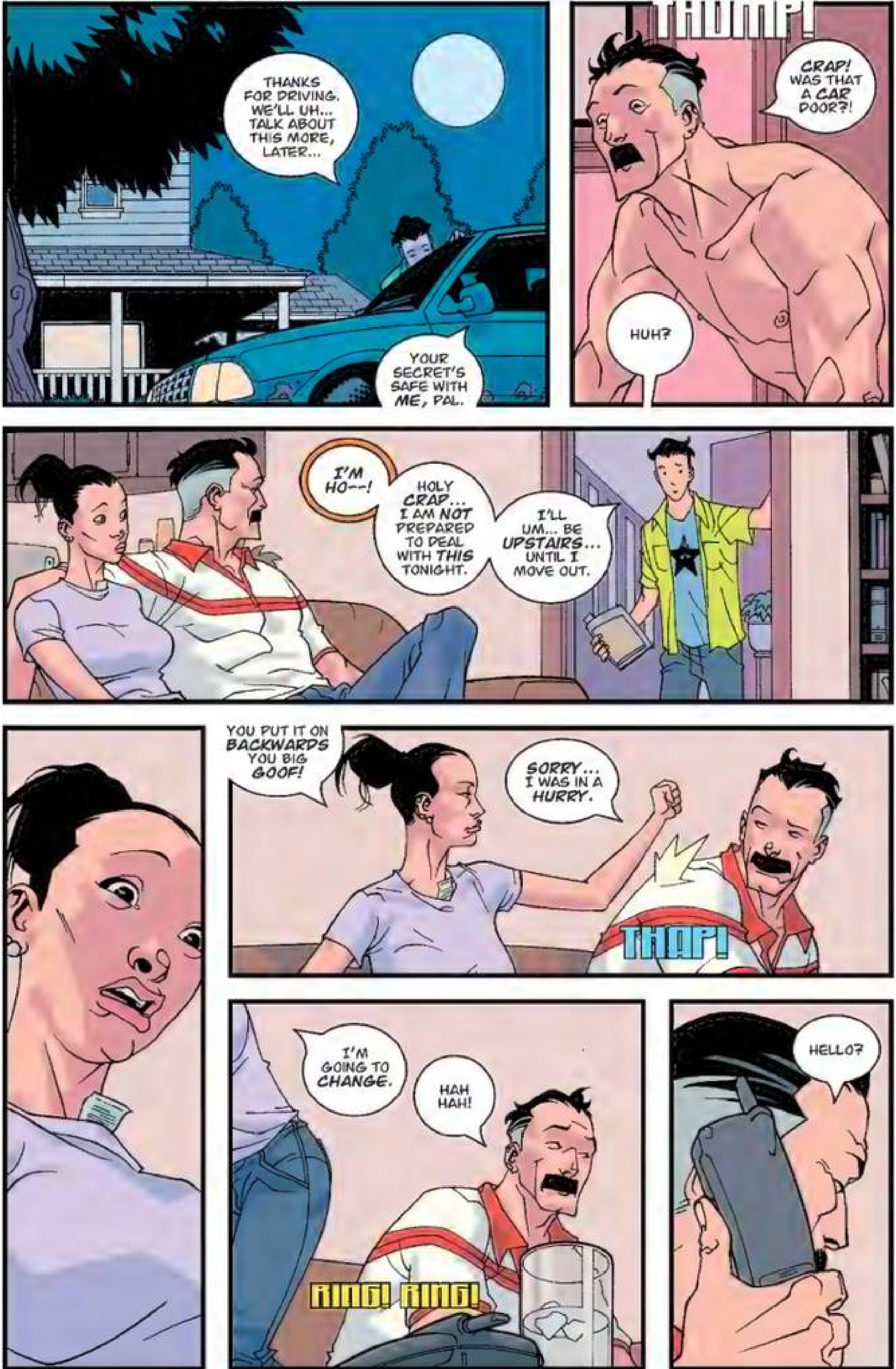


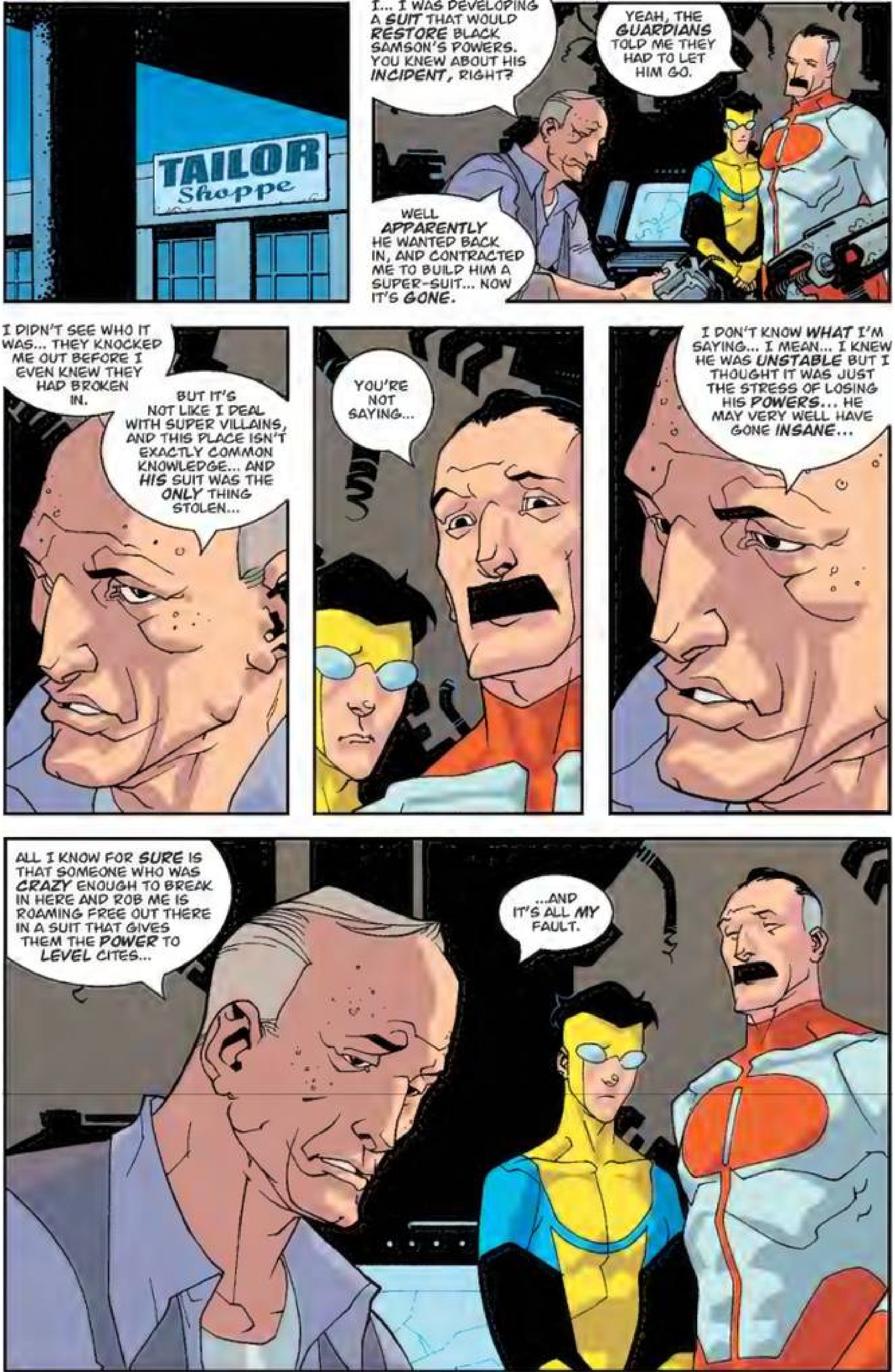

WILLIAM, TAKE COVER!

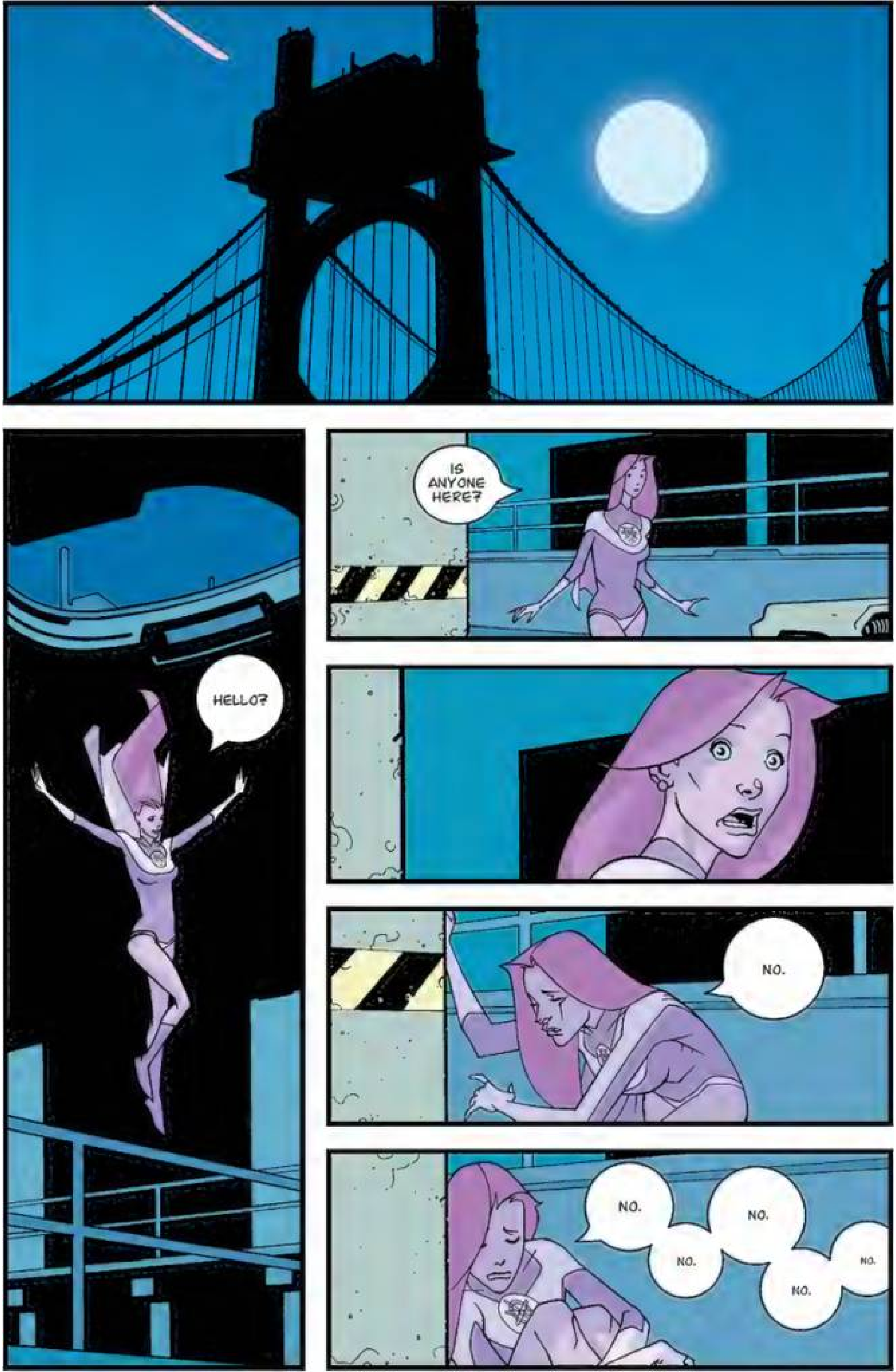

MARK?
MARK?
HEY, BUDDY... I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU THINK YOU'RE--
SKRIKK!
EVERYBODY GET OUT OF HIS WAY!
HOLD IT RIGHT THERE!
THIS STOPS NOW!
OR NOT.
EEEK!
I'VE GOT YOU!


AUGH!
OH GOD.
GEEZ, PEOPLE... AT LEAST TRY TO BE A LITTLE CAREFUL.

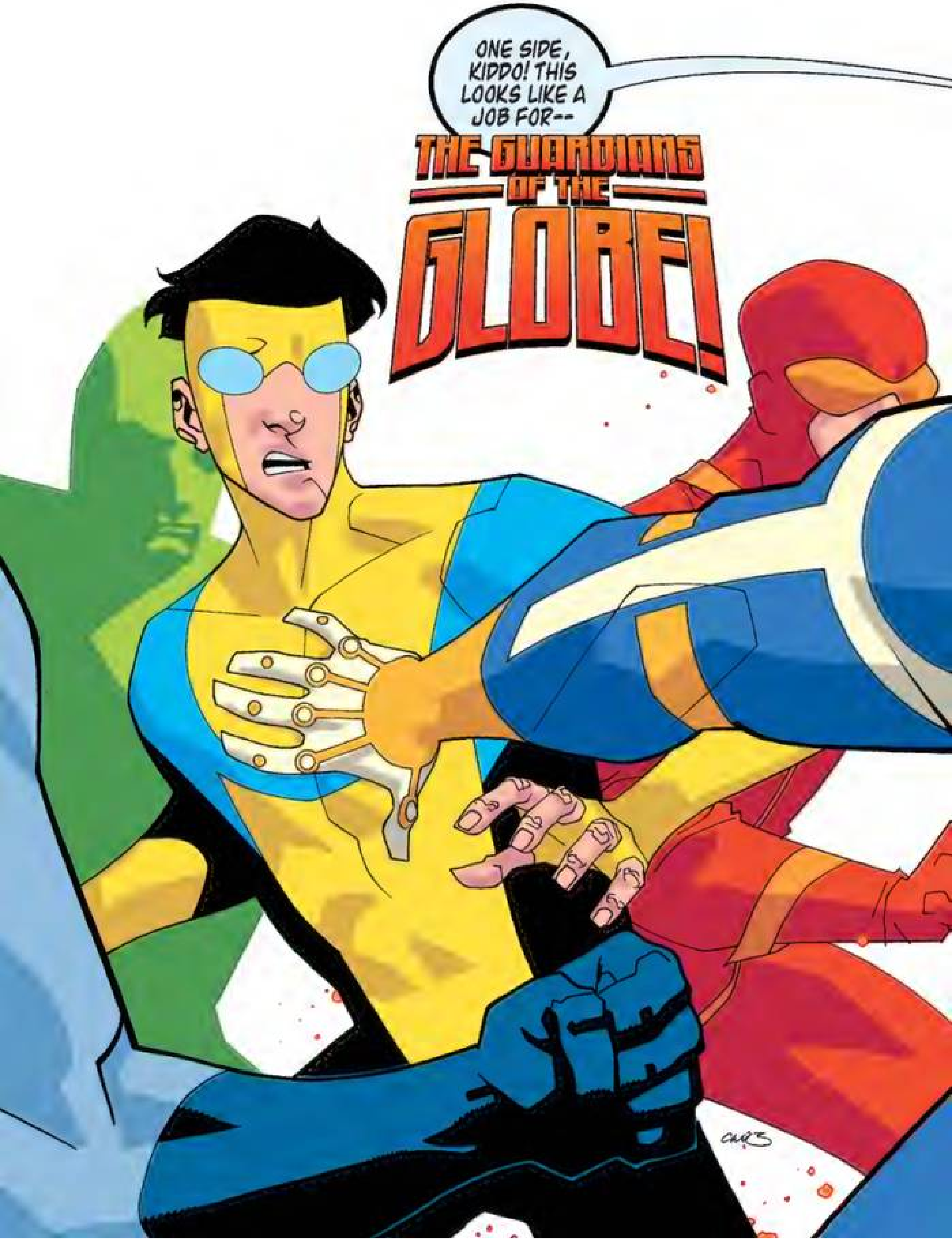

HE-- HE WAS LUNGING RIGHT AT ME.
I DON'T THINK SO... I THINK WE WERE ALL JUST IN HIS WAY.
IS EVERYONE ALRIGHT?
THIS MAN NEEDS AN *AMBULANCE*, FAST!
AMBULANCE
ANCE
911
...
IF EVERYTHING'S UNDER CONTROL... I GUESS I'LL BE GOING NOW.
OH, WILLIAM... THANK *GOD* YOU'RE SAFE. I HAD TO GO AND TRY TO FIND HELP...
YEAH...
DUDE... WHY DIDN'T YOU *TELL* ME YOU HAD SUPERPOWERS?

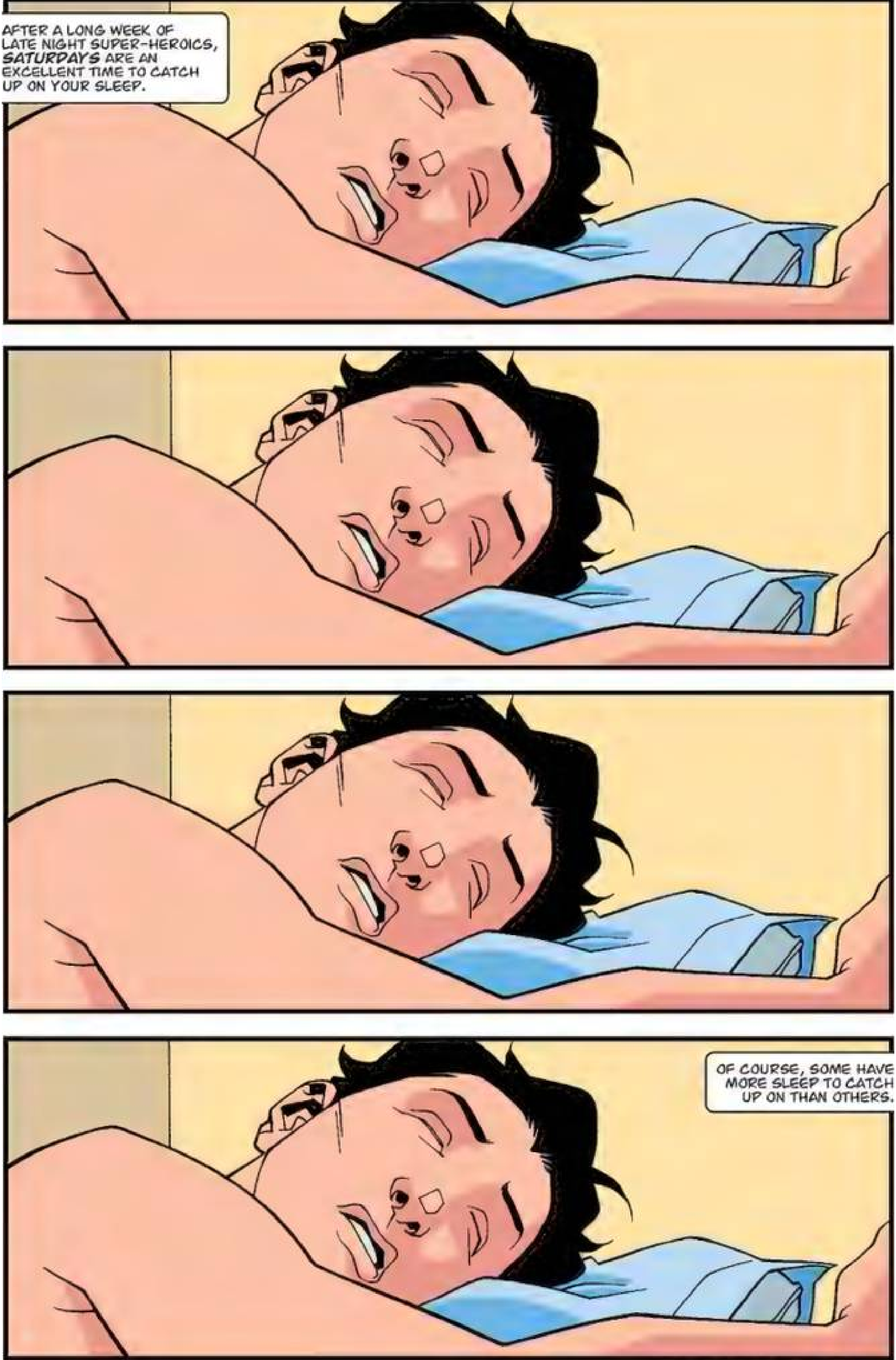

THANKS FOR DRIVING. WE'LL UH... TALK ABOUT THIS MORE, LATER...
YOUR SECRET'S SAFE WITH ME, PAL.
THUMP!
CRAP! WAS THAT A CAR DOOR?!
HUH?
I'M HO--!
HOLY CRAP... I AM NOT PREPARED TO DEAL WITH THIS TONIGHT.
I'LL UM... BE UPSTAIRS... UNTIL I MOVE OUT.
YOU PUT IT ON BACKWARDS YOU BIG GOOF!
SORRY... I WAS IN A HURRY.
THAP!
I'M GOING TO CHANGE.
HAH HAH!
RING! RING!
HELLO?

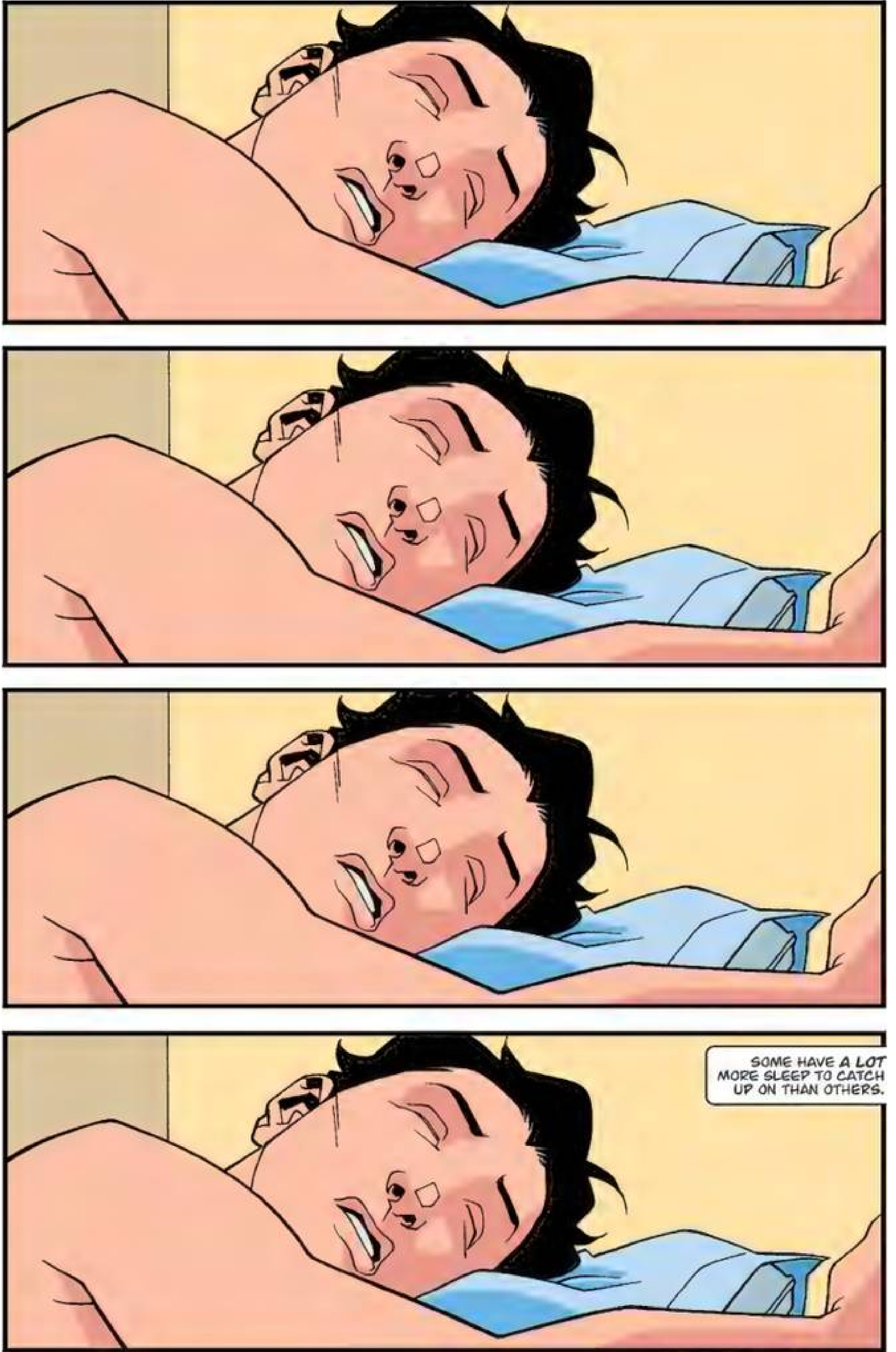

TAILOR Shoppe
I... I WAS DEVELOPING A SUIT THAT WOULD RESTORE BLACK SAMSON'S POWERS. YOU KNEW ABOUT HIS INCIDENT, RIGHT?
YEAH, THE GUARDIANS TOLD ME THEY HAD TO LET HIM GO.
WELL APPARENTLY HE WANTED BACK IN, AND CONTRACTED ME TO BUILD HIM A SUPER-SUIT... NOW IT'S GONE.
I DIDN'T SEE WHO IT WAS... THEY KNOCKED ME OUT BEFORE I EVEN KNEW THEY HAD BROKEN IN.
BUT IT'S NOT LIKE I DEAL WITH SUPER VILLAINS, AND THIS PLACE ISN'T EXACTLY COMMON KNOWLEDGE... AND HIS SUIT WAS THE ONLY THING STOLEN...
YOU'RE NOT SAYING...
I DON'T KNOW WHAT I'M SAYING... I MEAN... I KNEW HE WAS UNSTABLE BUT I THOUGHT IT WAS JUST THE STRESS OF LOSING HIS POWERS... HE MAY VERY WELL HAVE GONE INSANE...
ALL I KNOW FOR SURE IS THAT SOMEONE WHO WAS CRAZY ENOUGH TO BREAK IN HERE AND ROB ME IS ROAMING FREE OUT THERE IN A SUIT THAT GIVES THEM THE POWER TO LEVEL CITES...
...AND IT'S ALL MY FAULT.

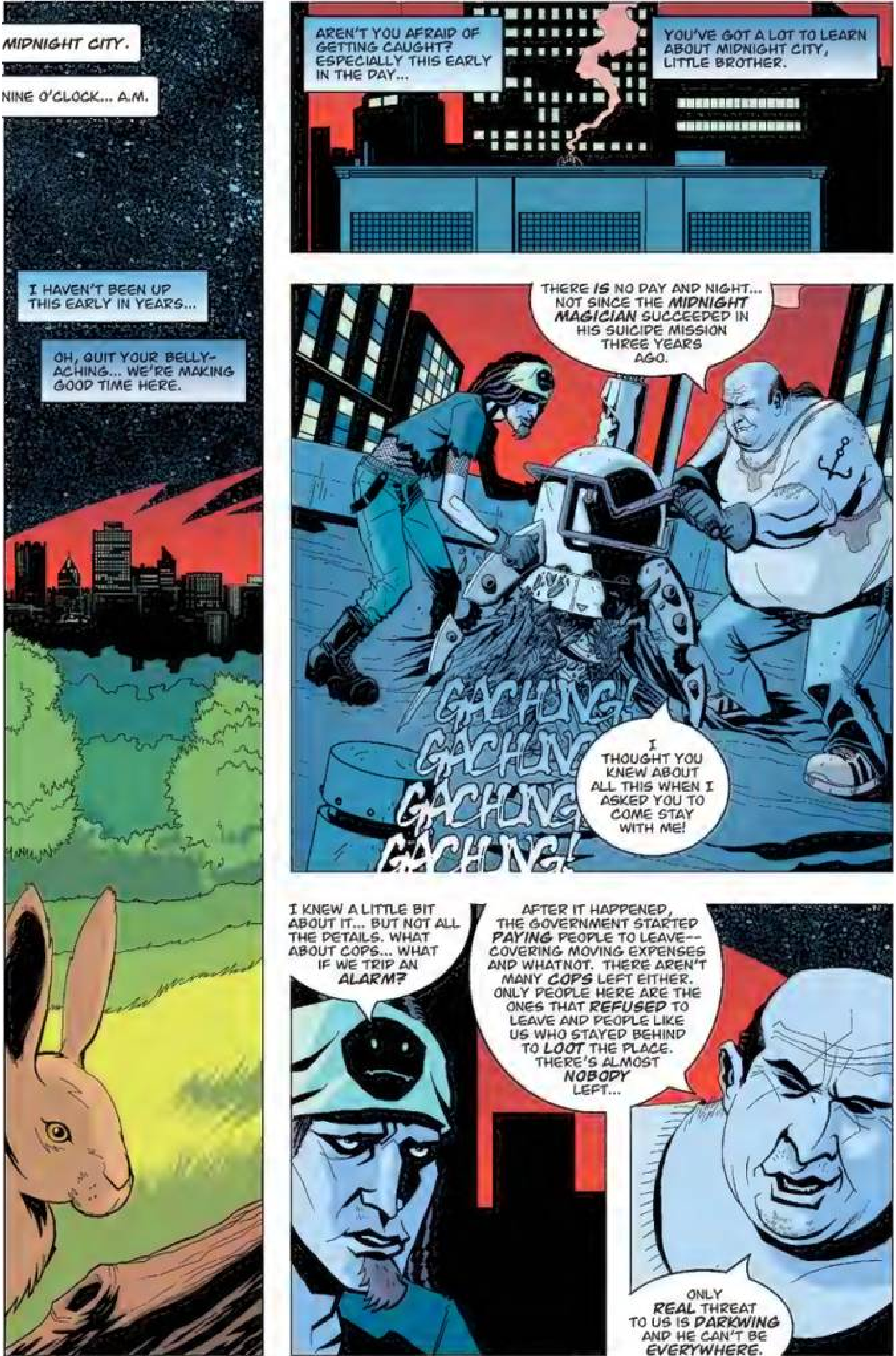

HELLO?
IS ANYONE HERE?
NO.
NO.
NO.
NO.
NO.
NO.

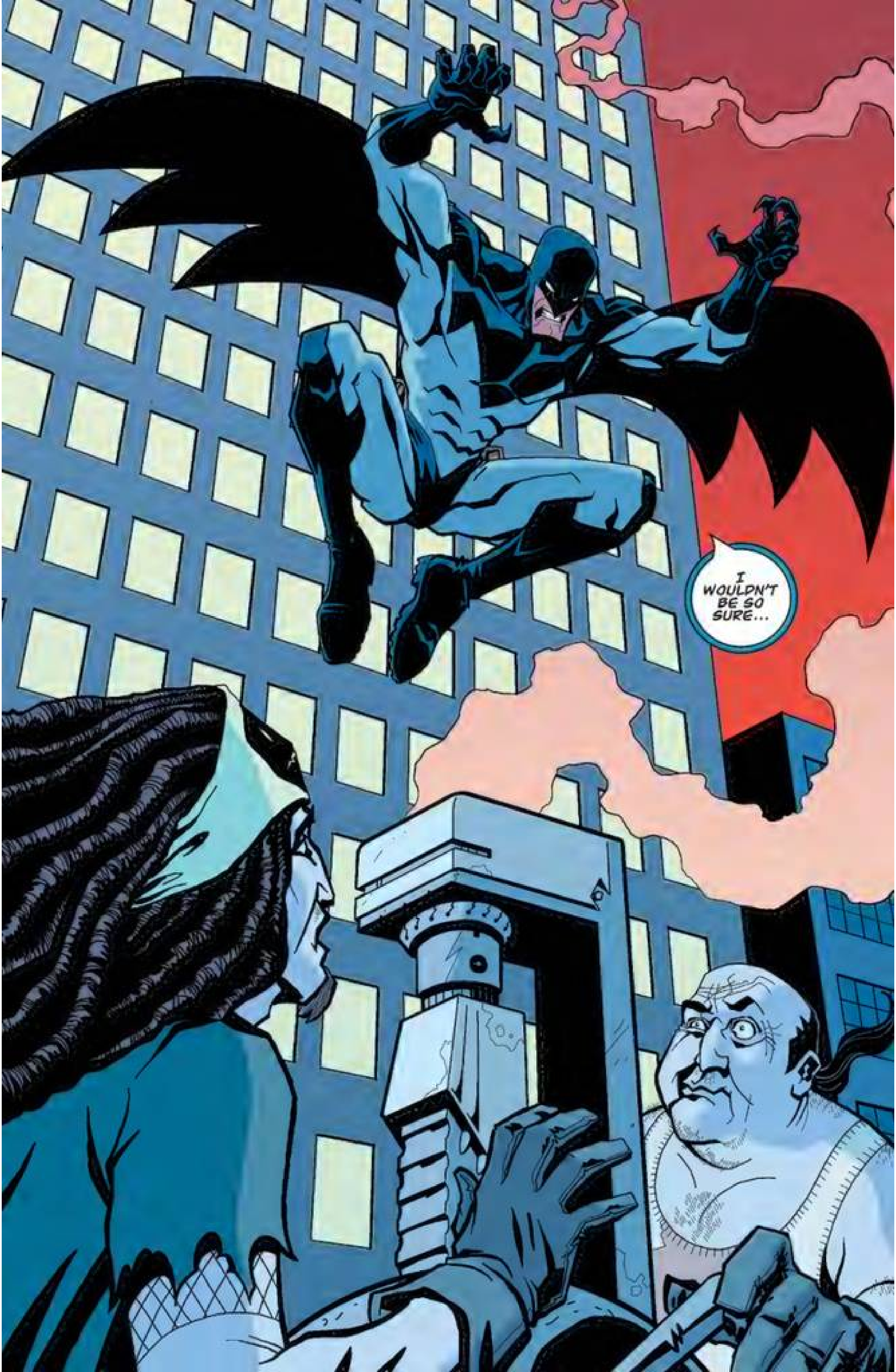
ISSUE SEVEN

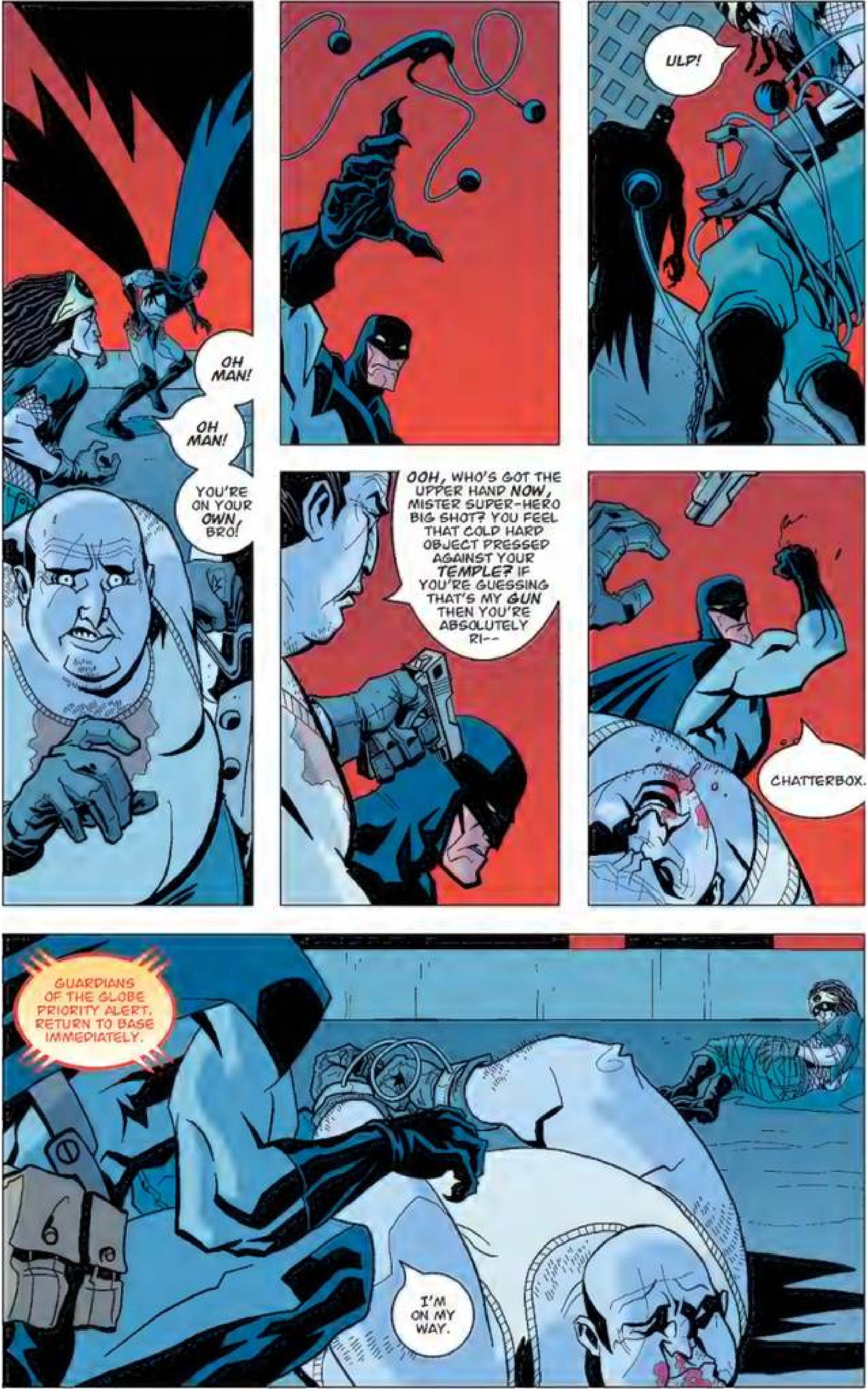

ONE SIDE, KIDDO! THIS LOOKS LIKE A JOB FOR--
THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE!
CMcS

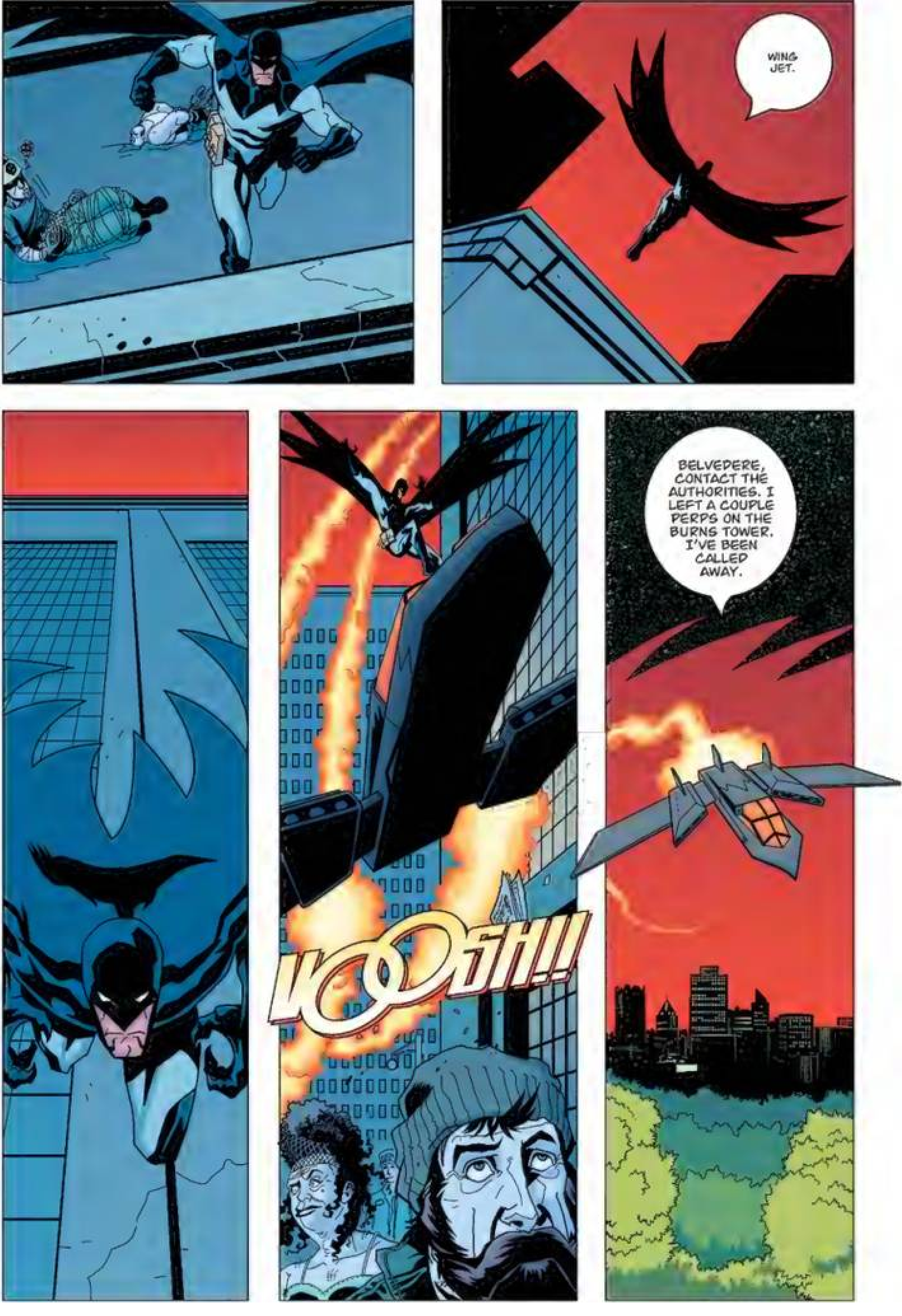

AFTER A LONG WEEK OF LATE NIGHT SUPER-HEROICS, **SATURDAYS** ARE AN EXCELLENT TIME TO CATCH UP ON YOUR SLEEP.
OF COURSE, SOME HAVE MORE SLEEP TO CATCH UP ON THAN OTHERS.

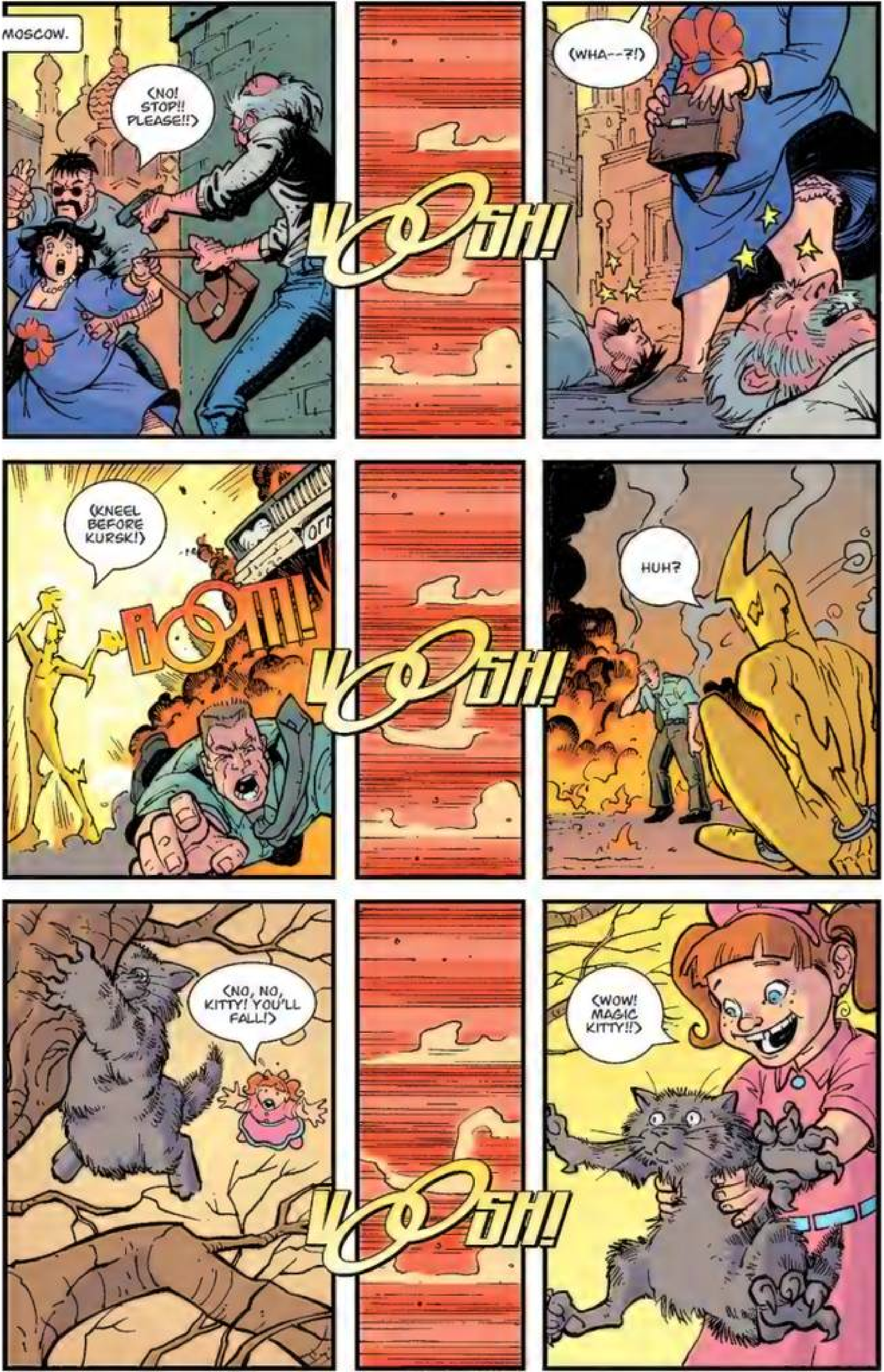

SOME HAVE A *LOT* MORE SLEEP TO CATCH UP ON THAN OTHERS.

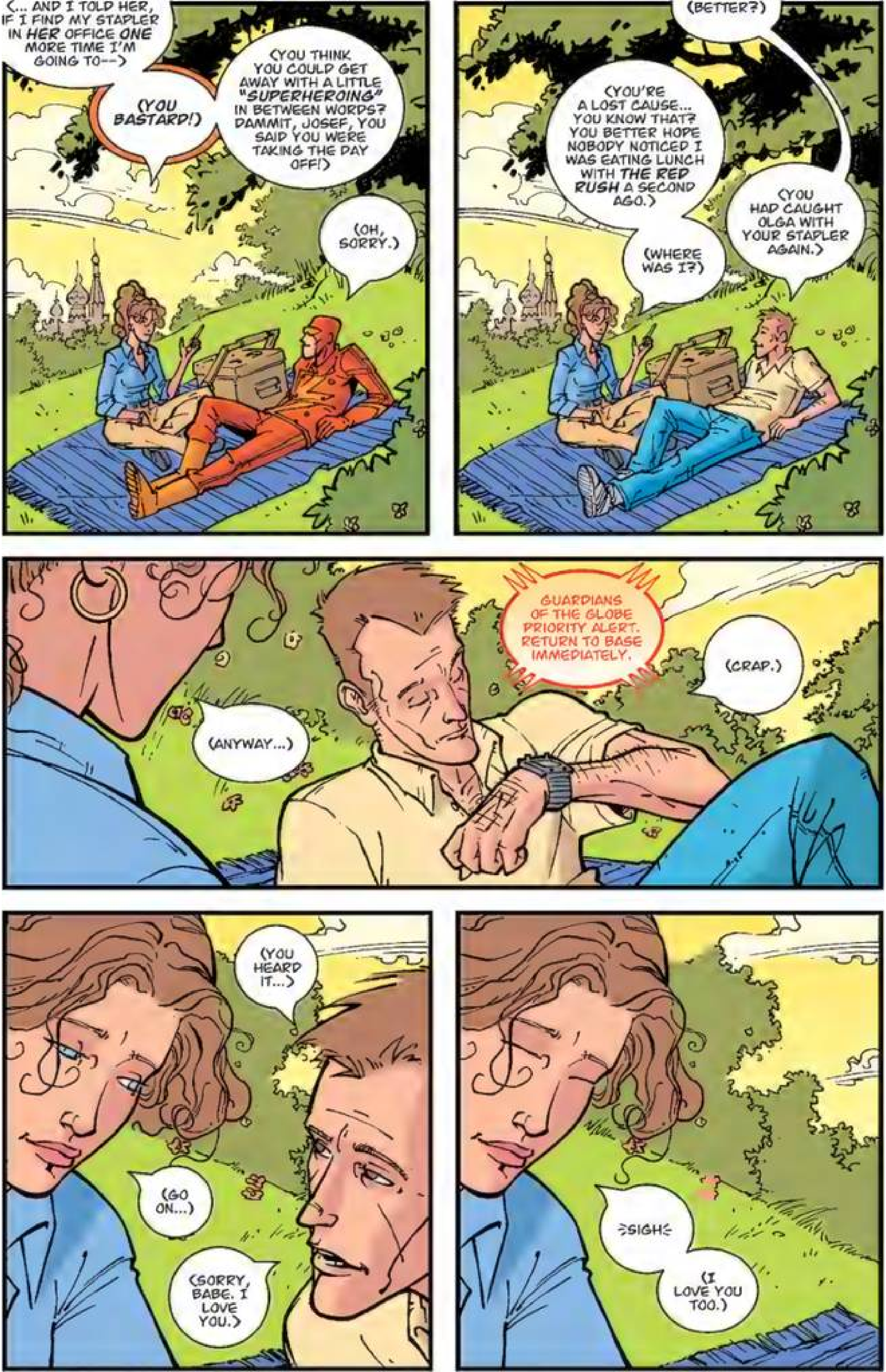

MIDNIGHT CITY.
NINE O'CLOCK... A.M.
I HAVEN'T BEEN UP THIS EARLY IN YEARS...
OH, QUIT YOUR BELLY-ACHING... WE'RE MAKING GOOD TIME HERE.
AREN'T YOU AFRAID OF GETTING CAUGHT? ESPECIALLY THIS EARLY IN THE DAY...
YOU'VE GOT A LOT TO LEARN ABOUT MIDNIGHT CITY, LITTLE BROTHER.
THERE IS NO DAY AND NIGHT... NOT SINCE THE MIDNIGHT MAGICIAN SUCCEEDED IN HIS SUICIDE MISSION THREE YEARS AGO.
GACHUNG! GACHUNG! GACHUNG! GACHUNG!
I THOUGHT YOU KNEW ABOUT ALL THIS WHEN I ASKED YOU TO COME STAY WITH ME!
I KNEW A LITTLE BIT ABOUT IT... BUT NOT ALL THE DETAILS. WHAT ABOUT COPS... WHAT IF WE TRIP AN ALARM?
AFTER IT HAPPENED, THE GOVERNMENT STARTED PAYING PEOPLE TO LEAVE--COVERING MOVING EXPENSES AND WHATNOT. THERE AREN'T MANY COPS LEFT EITHER. ONLY PEOPLE HERE ARE THE ONES THAT REFUSED TO LEAVE AND PEOPLE LIKE US WHO STAYED BEHIND TO LOOT THE PLACE. THERE'S ALMOST NOBODY LEFT...
ONLY REAL THREAT TO US IS DARKWING AND HE CAN'T BE EVERYWHERE.

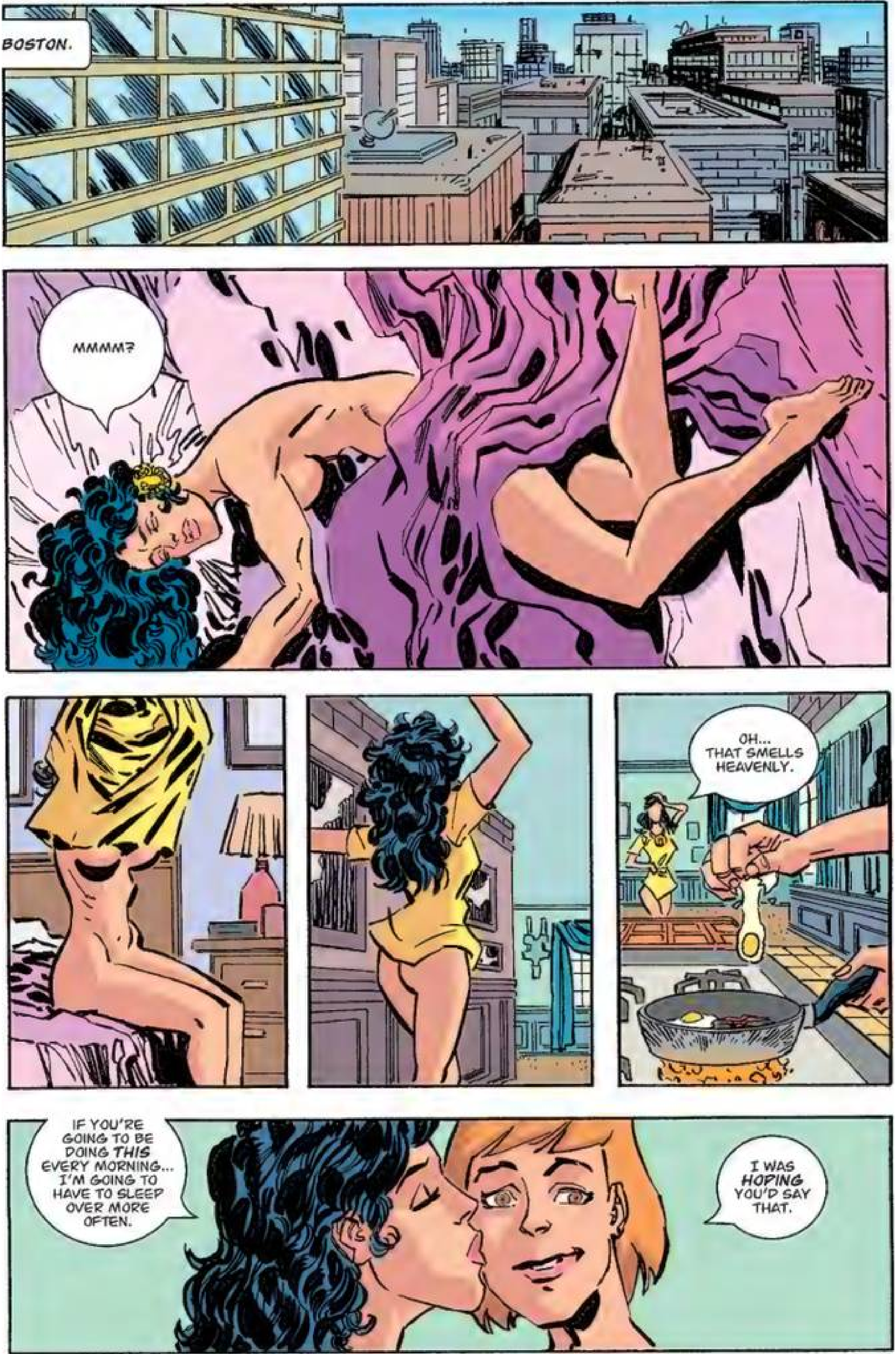

I WOULDN'T BE SO SURE...

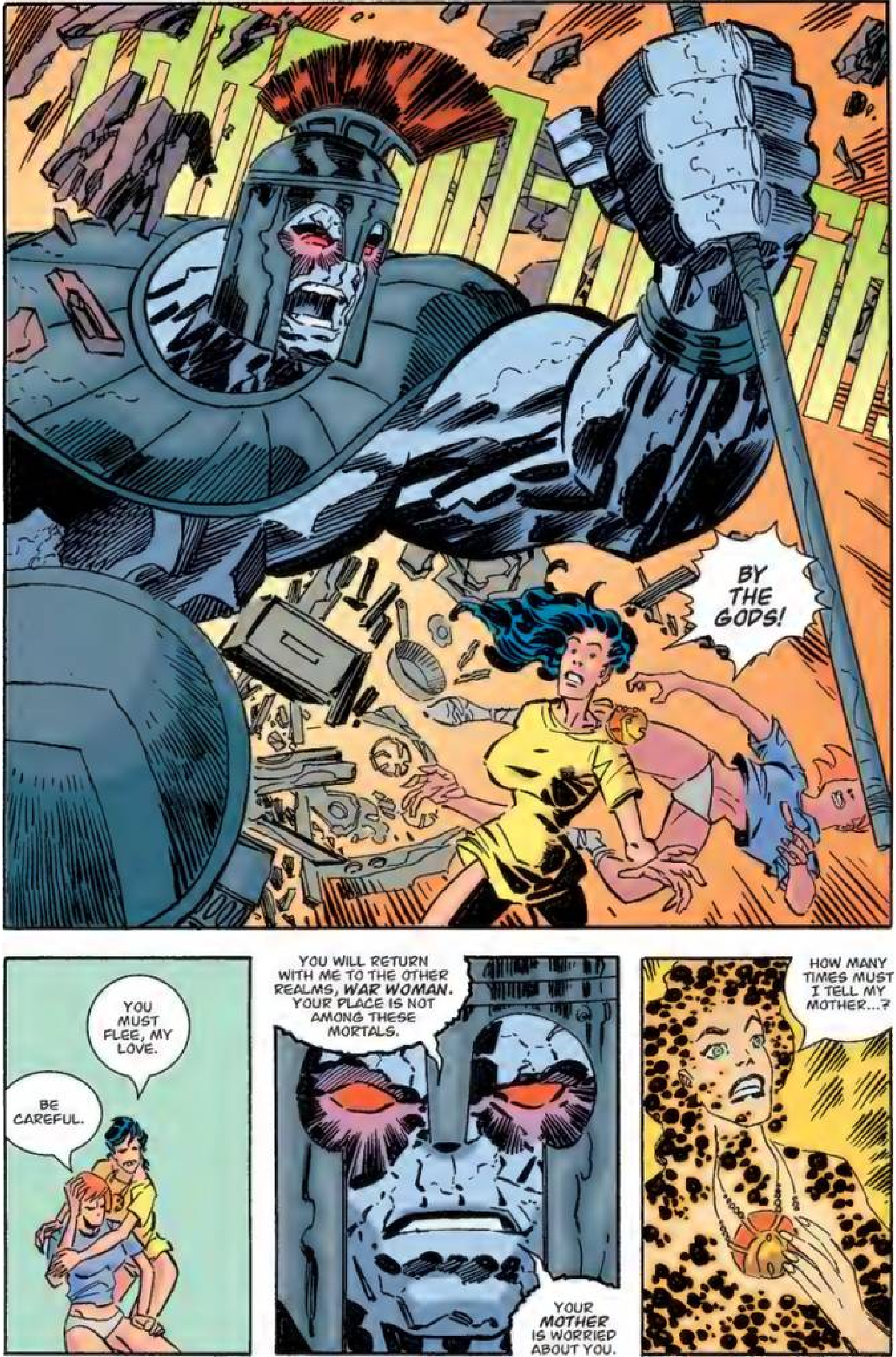

OH MAN!
OH MAN!
YOU'RE ON YOUR OWN, BRO!
ULP!
OOH, WHO'S GOT THE UPPER HAND NOW, MISTER SUPER-HERO BIG SHOT? YOU FEEL THAT COLD HARD OBJECT PRESSED AGAINST YOUR TEMPLE? IF YOU'RE GUESSING THAT'S MY GUN THEN YOU'RE ABSOLUTELY RI--
CHATTERBOX.
GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE PRIORITY ALERT. RETURN TO BASE IMMEDIATELY.
I'M ON MY WAY.

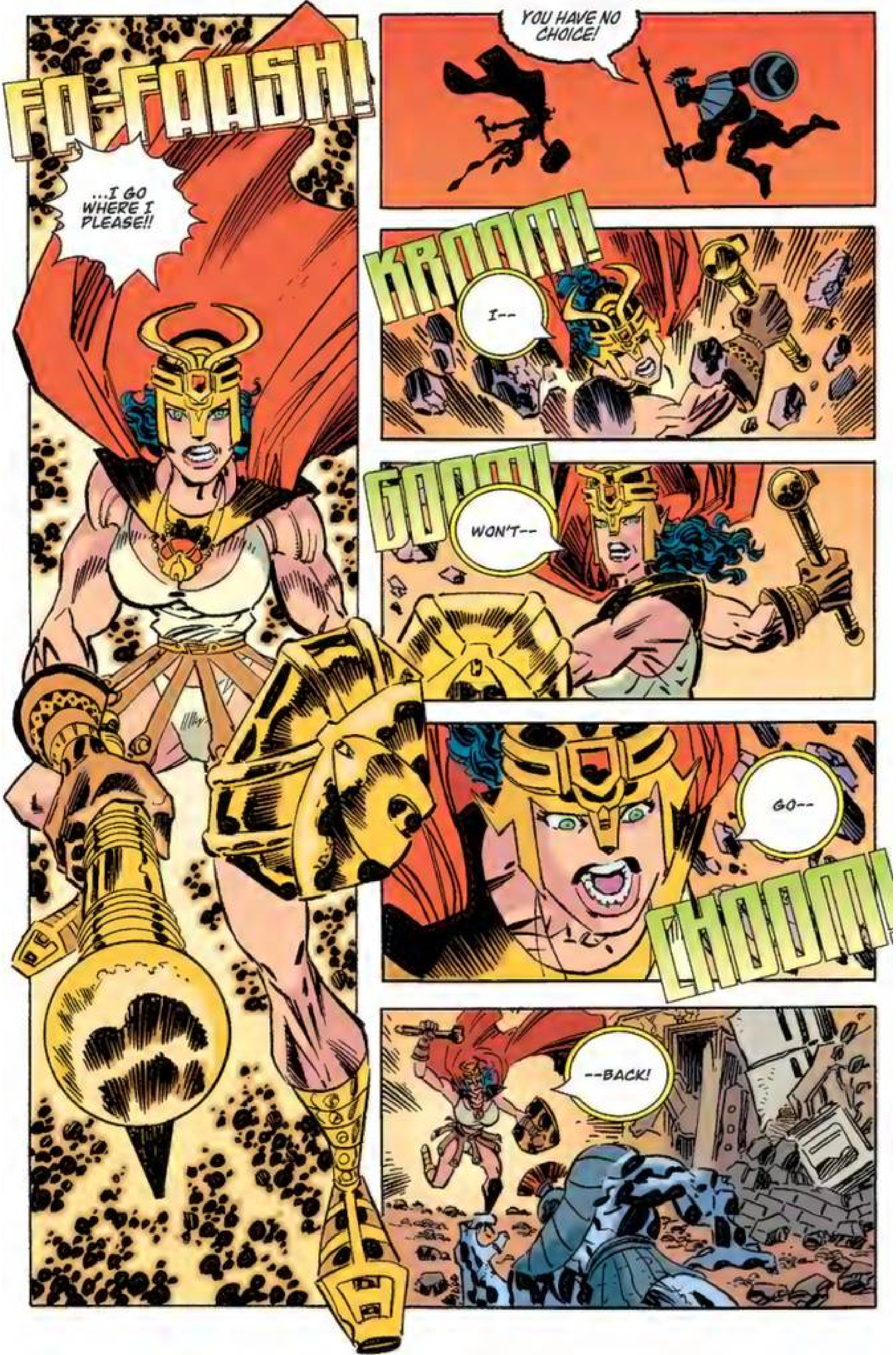

WING JET.
BELVEDERE, CONTACT THE AUTHORITIES. I LEFT A COUPLE PERPS ON THE BURNS TOWER. I'VE BEEN CALLED AWAY.
WOOSH!!

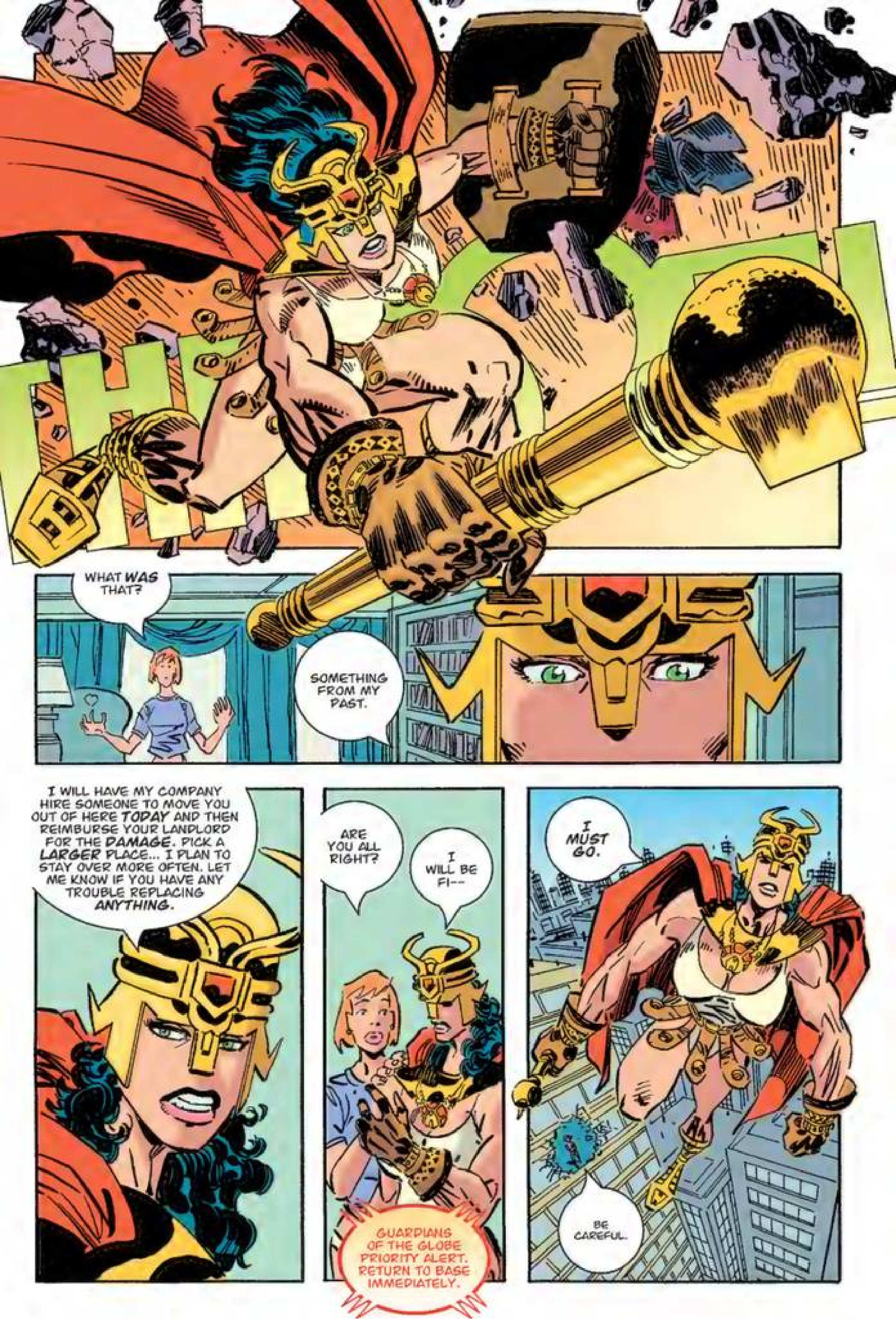

MOSCOW.
<NO! STOP!! PLEASE!!>
WOOSH!
<WHA--?!>
<KNEEL BEFORE KURSK!>
BOOM!
WOOSH!
HUH?
<NO, NO, KITTY! YOU'LL FALL!>
WOOSH!
<WOW! MAGIC KITTY!!>

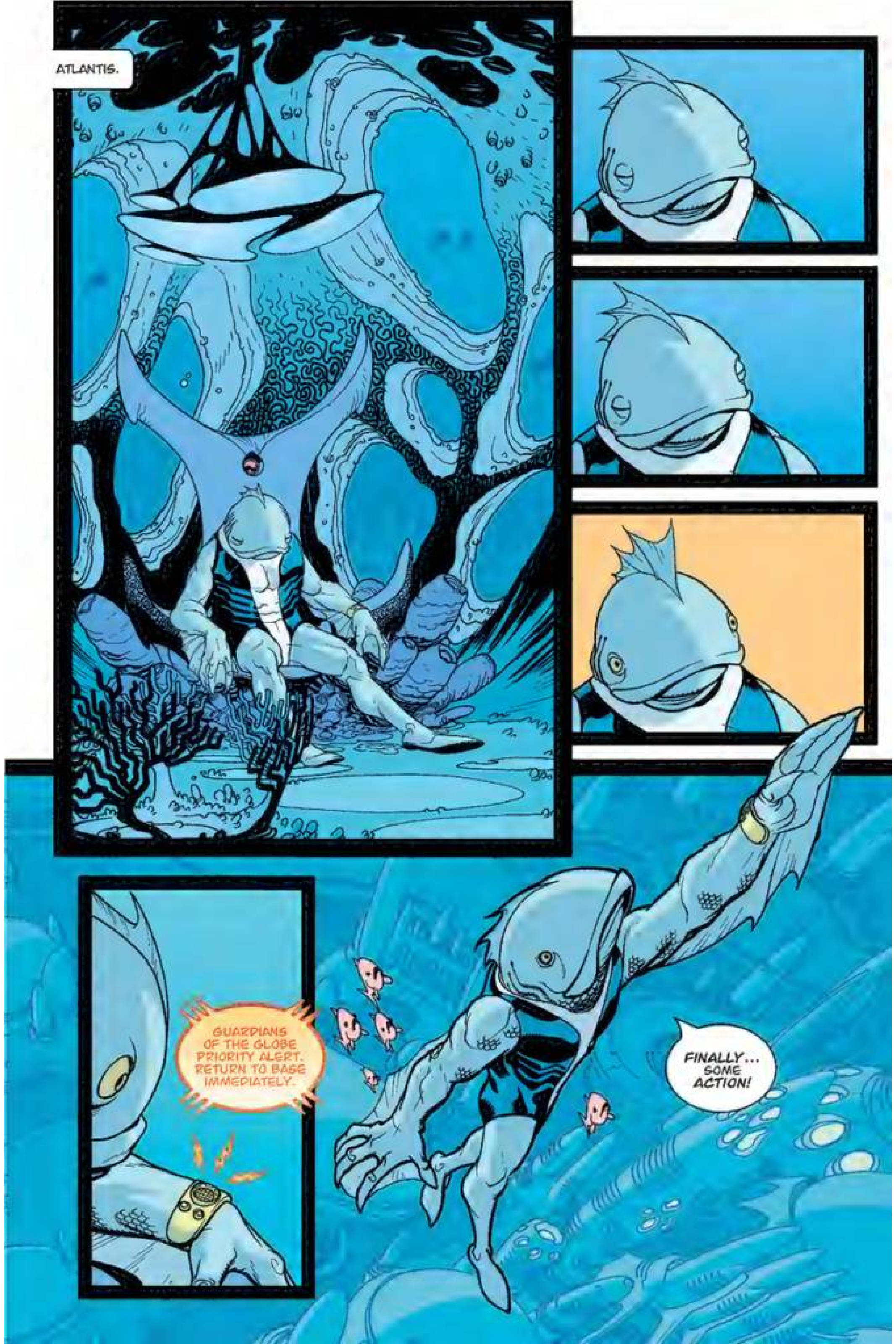

(... AND I TOLD HER, IF I FIND MY STAPLER IN HER OFFICE ONE MORE TIME I'M GOING TO--)
(YOU BASTARD!)
(YOU THINK YOU COULD GET AWAY WITH A LITTLE "SUPERHEROING" IN BETWEEN WORDS? DAMMIT, JOSEF, YOU SAID YOU WERE TAKING THE DAY OFF!)
(OH, SORRY.)
(BETTER?)
(YOU'RE A LOST CAUSE... YOU KNOW THAT? YOU BETTER HOPE NOBODY NOTICED I WAS EATING LUNCH WITH THE RED RUSH A SECOND AGO.)
(WHERE WAS I?)
(YOU HAD CAUGHT OLGA WITH YOUR STAPLER AGAIN.)
(ANYWAY...)
GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE PRIORITY ALERT. RETURN TO BASE IMMEDIATELY.
(CRAP.)
(YOU HEARD IT...)
(GO ON...)
(SORRY, BABE. I LOVE YOU.)
=SIGH=
(I LOVE YOU TOO.)

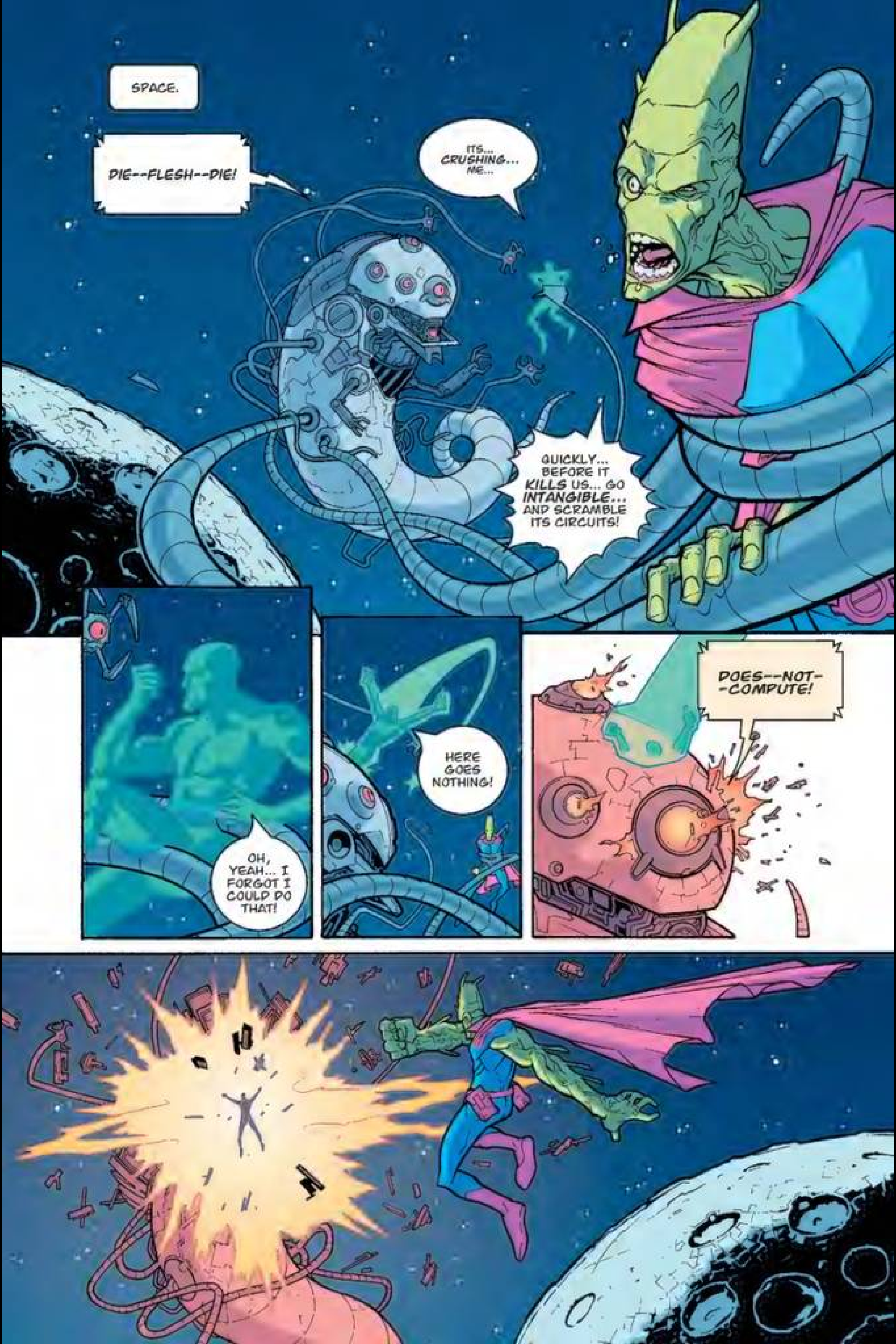

BOSTON.
MMMM?
OH... THAT SMELLS HEAVENLY.
IF YOU'RE GOING TO BE DOING *THIS* EVERY MORNING... I'M GOING TO HAVE TO SLEEP OVER MORE OFTEN.
I WAS *HOPING* YOU'D SAY THAT.

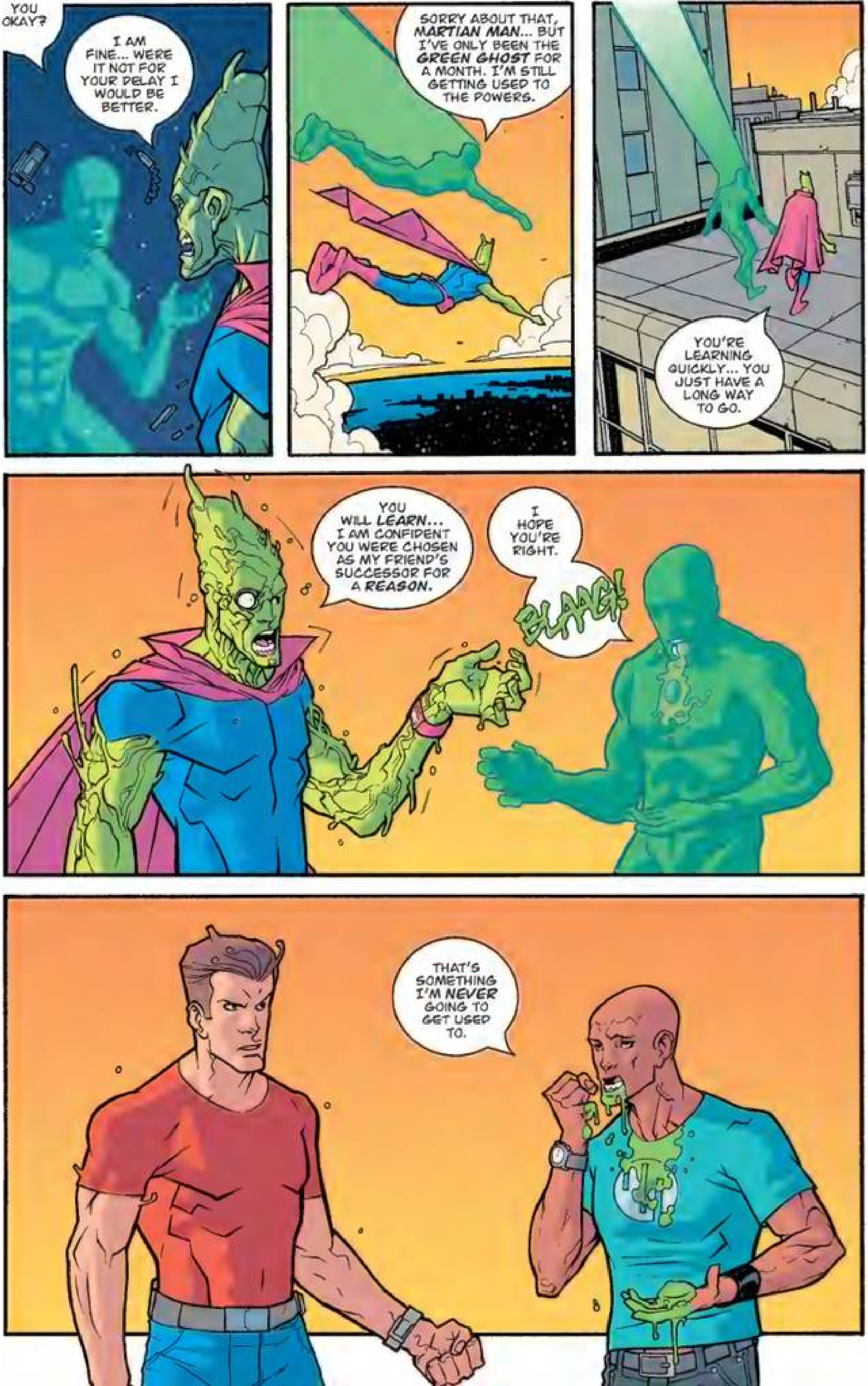

BY THE GODS!
YOU MUST FLEE, MY LOVE.
BE CAREFUL.
YOU WILL RETURN WITH ME TO THE OTHER REALMS, **WAR WOMAN**. YOUR PLACE IS NOT AMONG THESE MORTALS.
YOUR *MOTHER* IS WORRIED ABOUT YOU.
HOW MANY TIMES MUST I TELL MY MOTHER...?

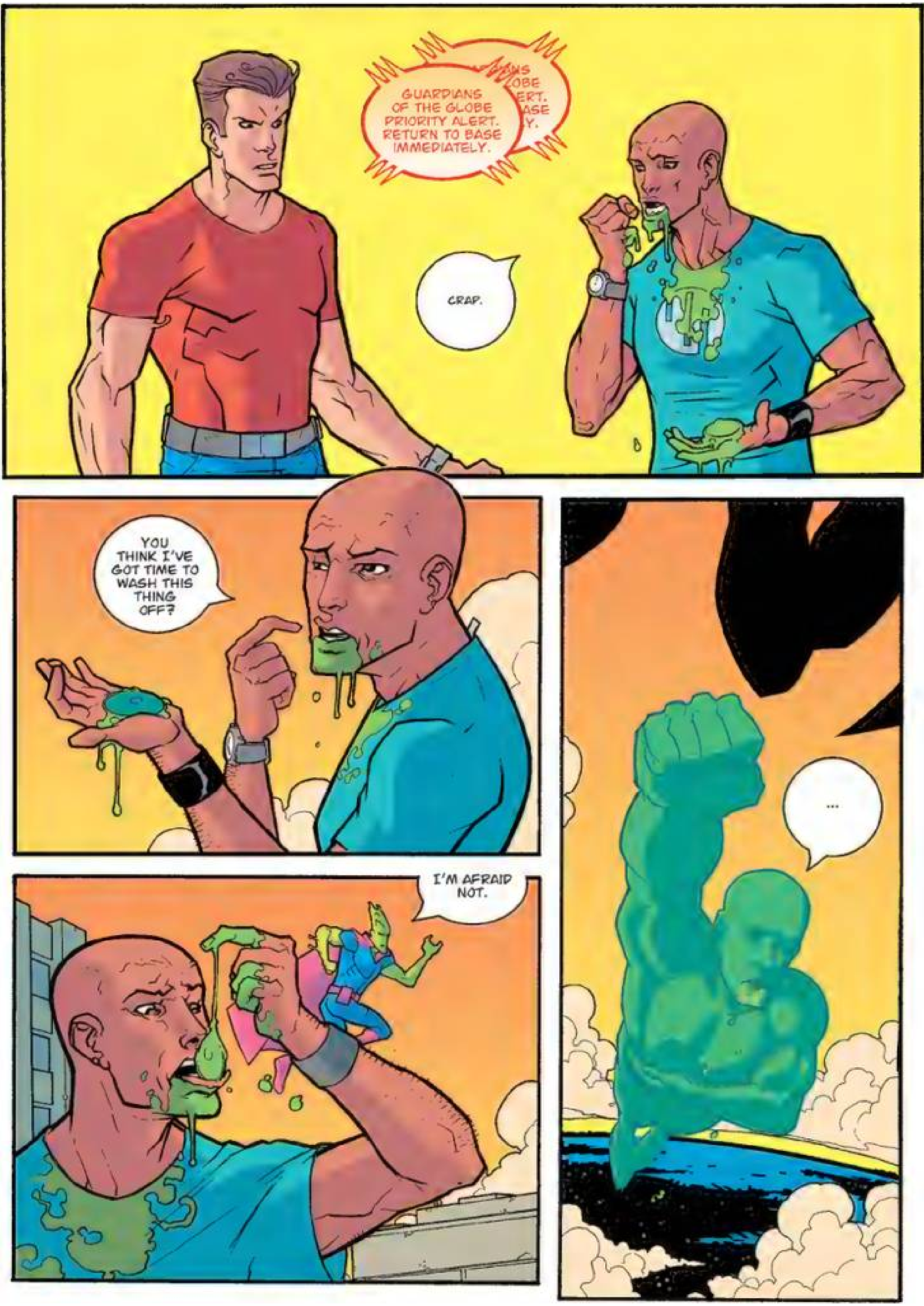

FA-FAASH!
...I GO WHERE I PLEASE!!
YOU HAVE NO CHOICE!
KROOM!
I--
GOOM!
WON'T--
GO--
CHOOM!
--BACK!

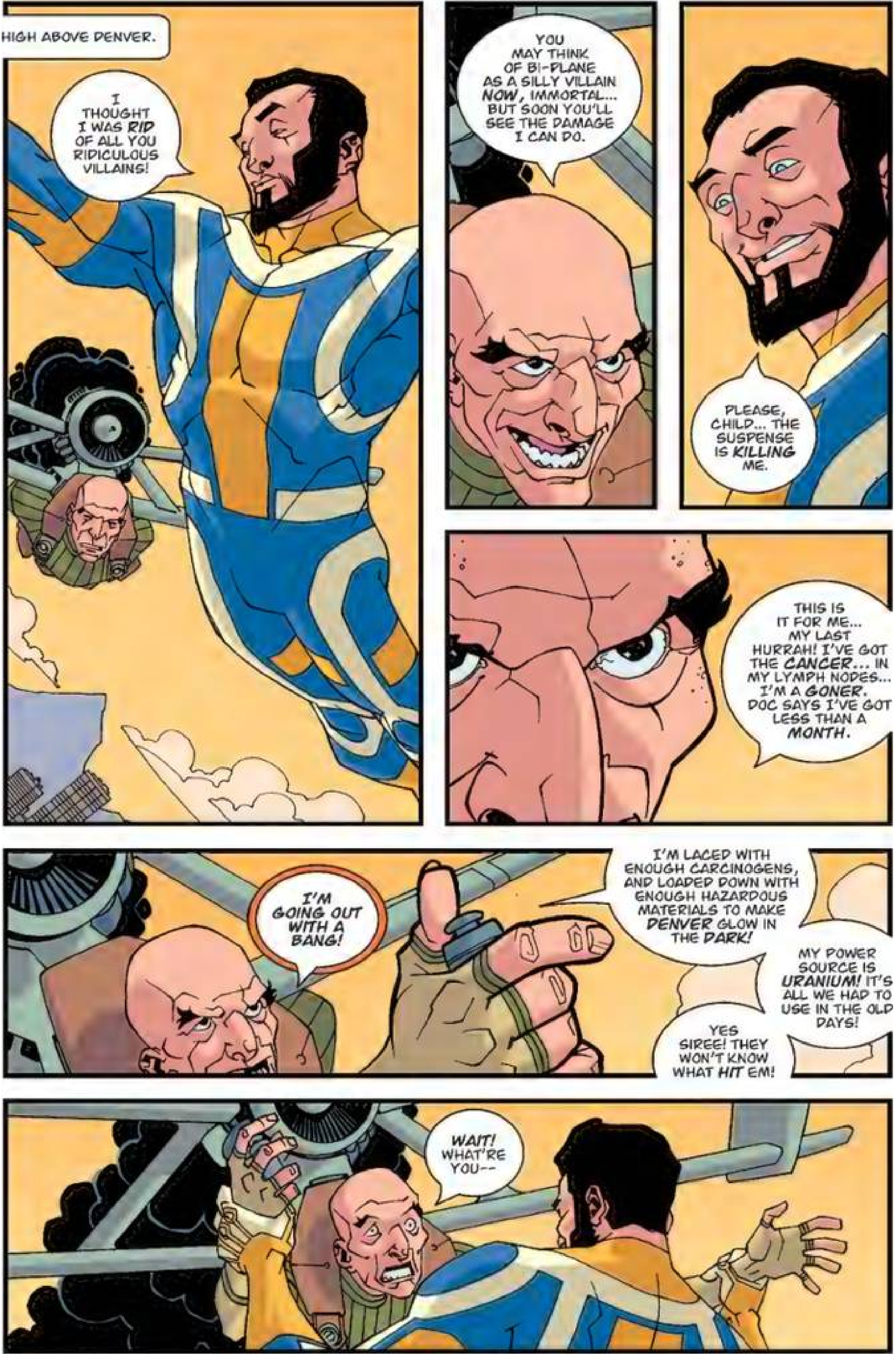

WHAT *WAS* THAT?
SOMETHING FROM MY PAST.
I WILL HAVE MY COMPANY HIRE SOMEONE TO MOVE YOU OUT OF HERE *TODAY* AND THEN REIMBURSE YOUR LANDLORD FOR THE *DAMAGE*. PICK A *LARGER* PLACE... I PLAN TO STAY OVER MORE OFTEN. LET ME KNOW IF YOU HAVE ANY TROUBLE REPLACING *ANYTHING*.
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
I WILL BE FI--
GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE PRIORITY ALERT. RETURN TO BASE IMMEDIATELY.
I *MUST* GO.
BE CAREFUL.

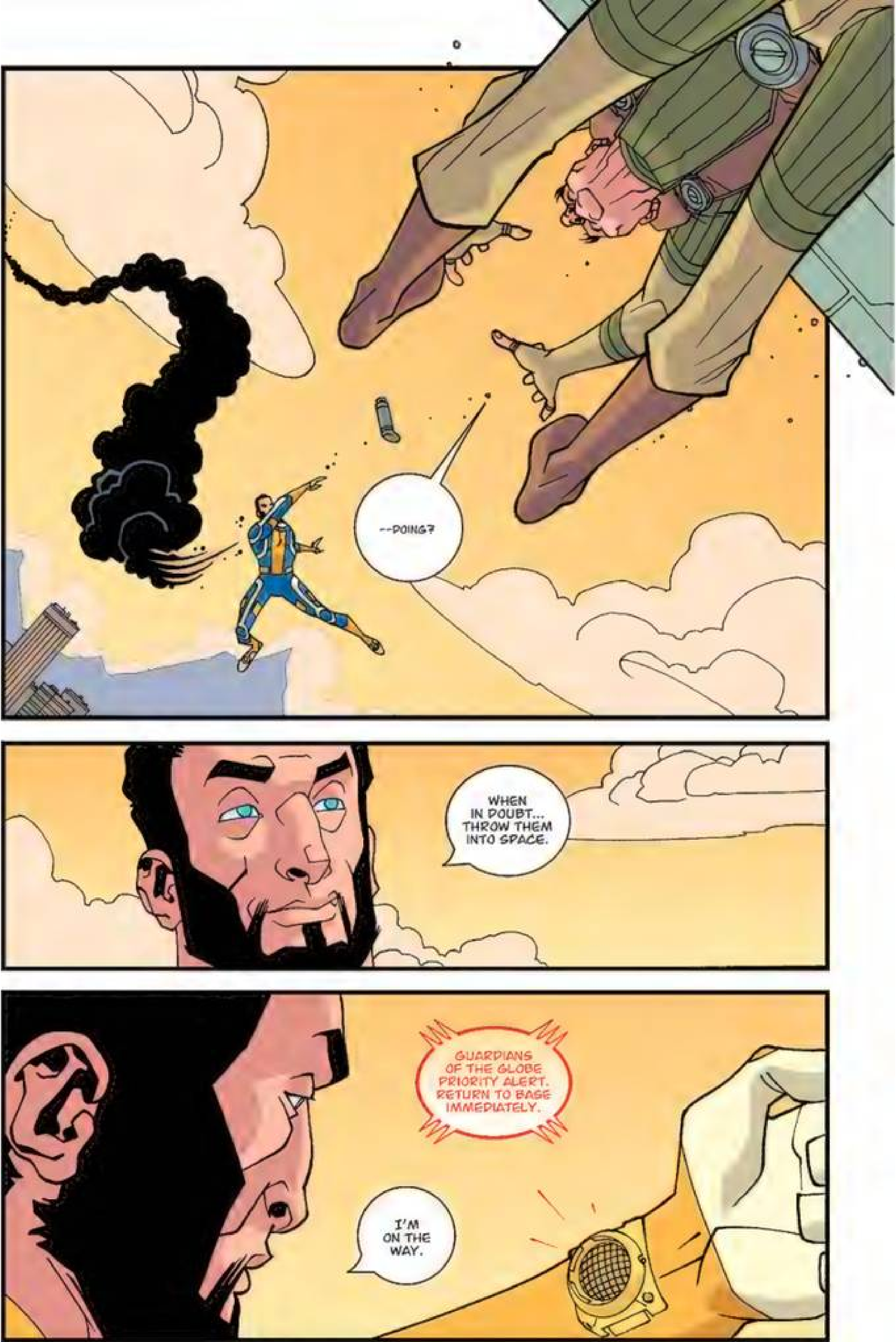

ATLANTIS.
GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE PRIORITY ALERT. RETURN TO BASE IMMEDIATELY.
FINALLY... SOME ACTION!

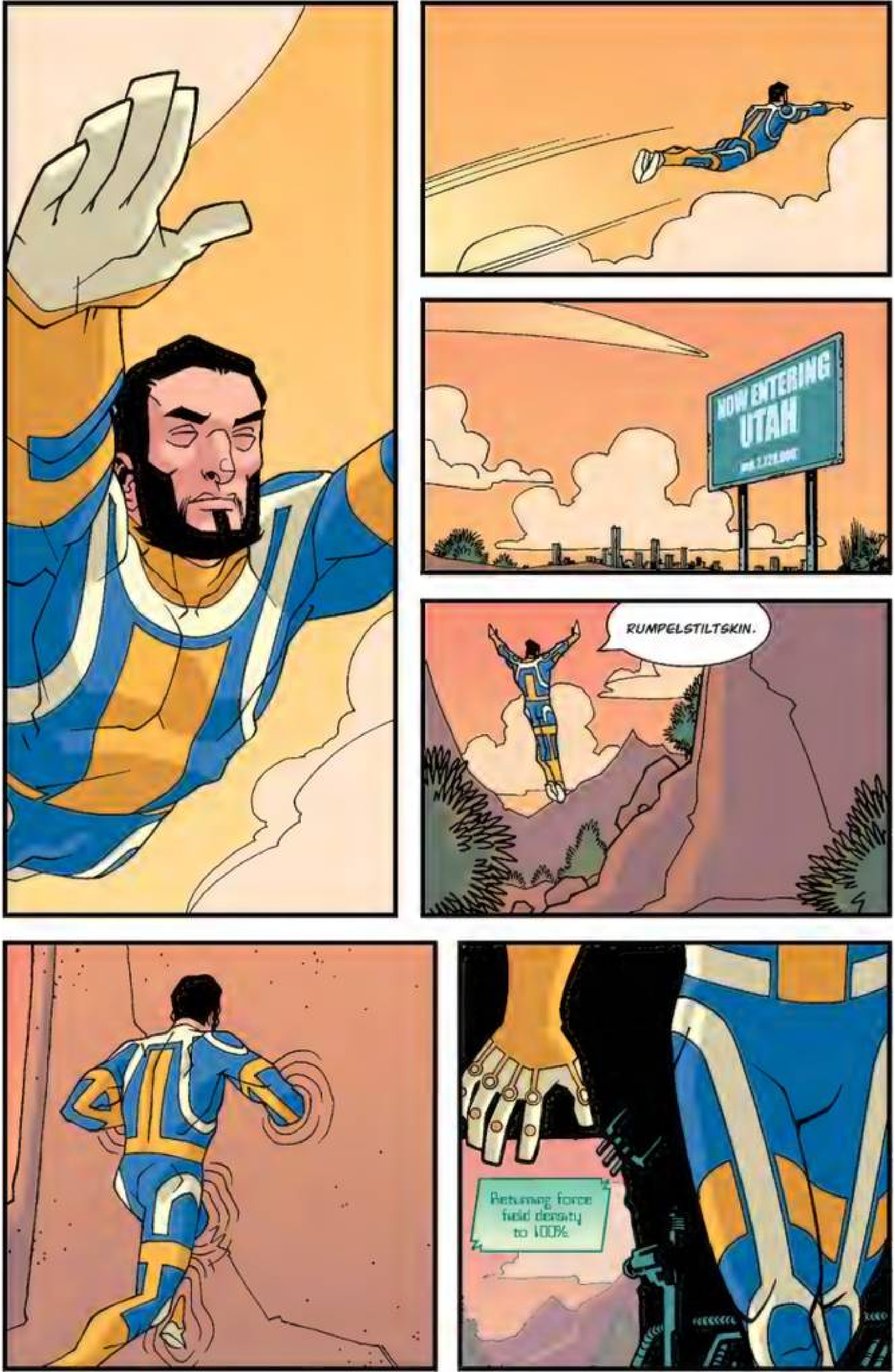

SPACE.
DIE--FLESH--DIE!
ITS... CRUSHING... ME...
QUICKLY... BEFORE IT KILLS US... GO INTANGIBLE... AND SCRAMBLE ITS CIRCUITS!
OH, YEAH... I FORGOT I COULD DO THAT!
HERE GOES NOTHING!
DOES--NOT--COMPUTE!

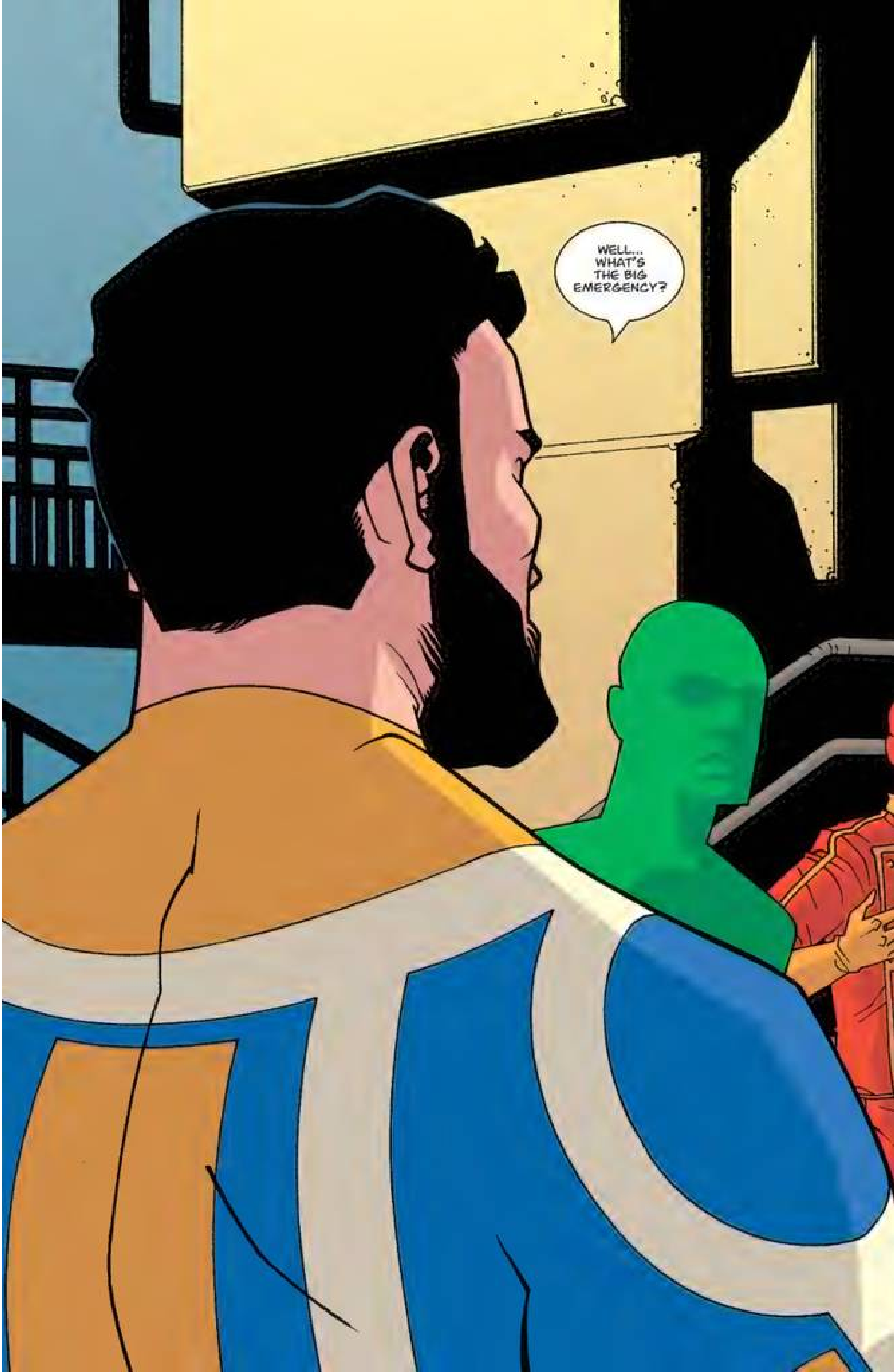

YOU OKAY?
I AM FINE... WERE IT NOT FOR YOUR DELAY I WOULD BE BETTER.
SORRY ABOUT THAT, **MARTIAN MAN**... BUT I'VE ONLY BEEN THE **GREEN GHOST** FOR A MONTH. I'M STILL GETTING USED TO THE POWERS.
YOU'RE LEARNING QUICKLY... YOU JUST HAVE A LONG WAY TO GO.
YOU WILL **LEARN**... I AM CONFIDENT YOU WERE CHOSEN AS MY FRIEND'S SUCCESSOR FOR A **REASON**.
I HOPE YOU'RE RIGHT.
BLAAG!
THAT'S SOMETHING I'M ***NEVER*** GOING TO GET USED TO.

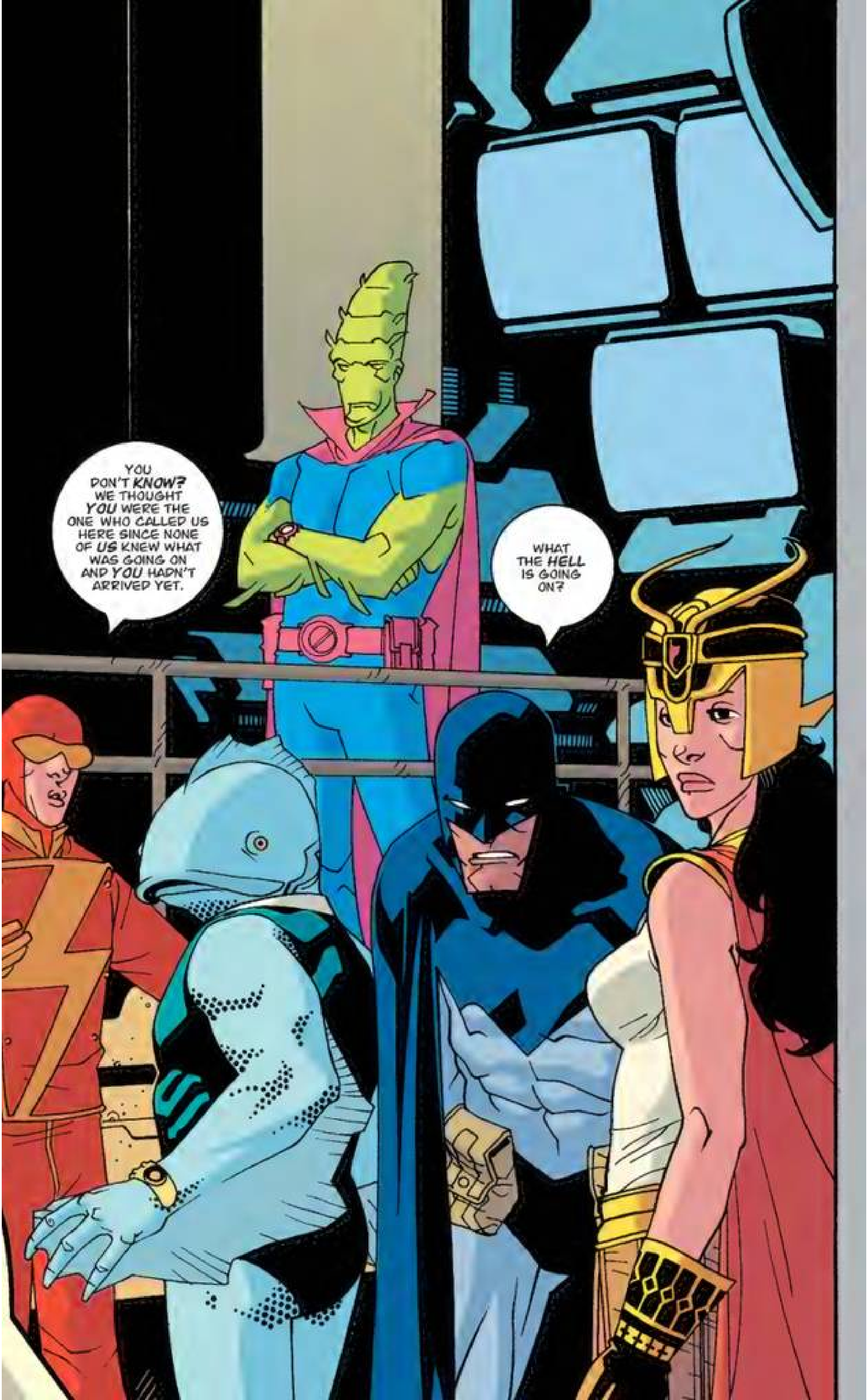

GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE PRIORITY ALERT. RETURN TO BASE IMMEDIATELY.
CRAP.
YOU THINK I'VE GOT TIME TO WASH THIS THING OFF?
I'M AFRAID NOT.
...

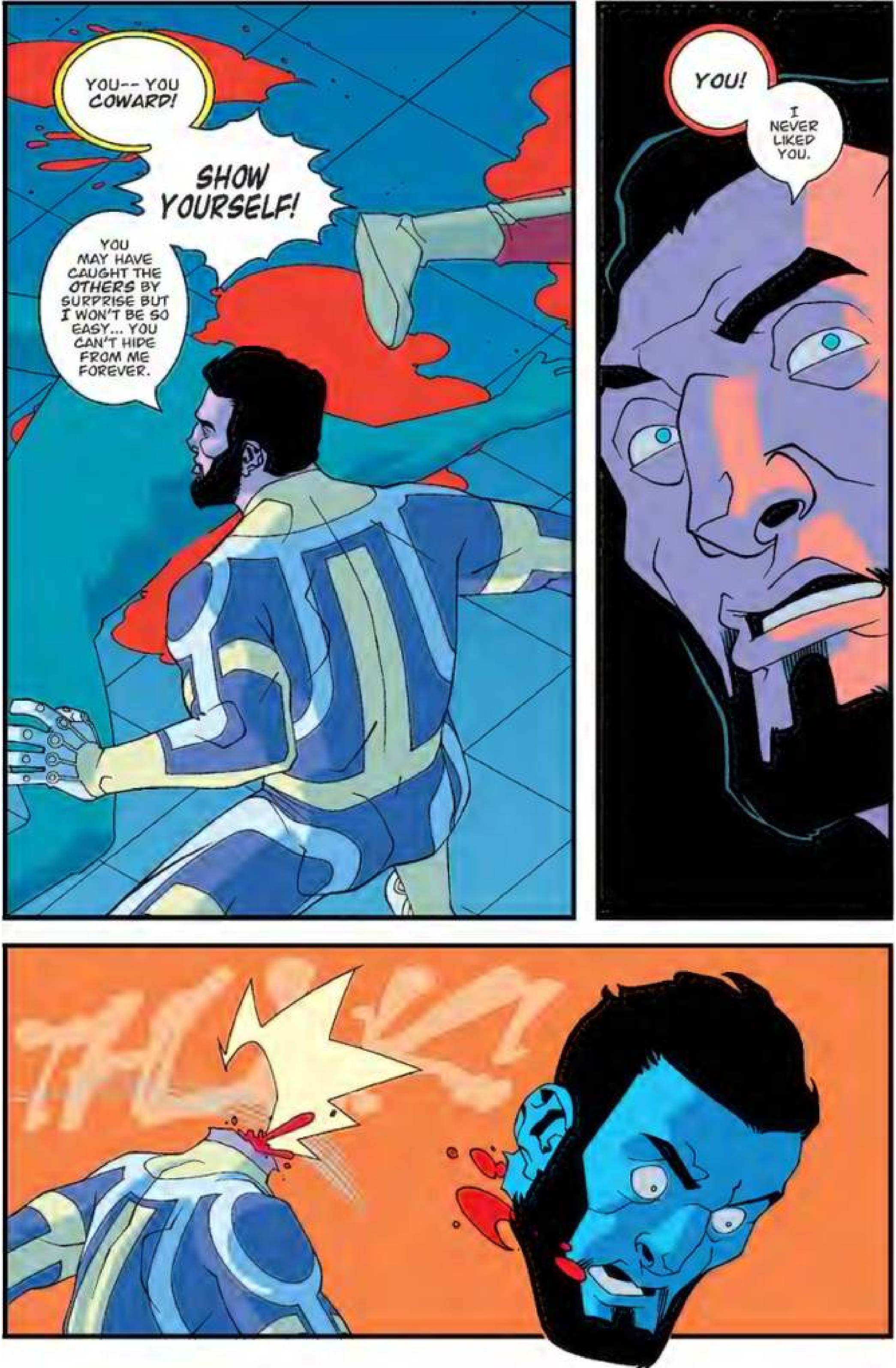

HIGH ABOVE DENVER.
I THOUGHT I WAS RID OF ALL YOU RIDICULOUS VILLAINS!
YOU MAY THINK OF BI-PLANE AS A SILLY VILLAIN NOW, IMMORTAL... BUT SOON YOU'LL SEE THE DAMAGE I CAN DO.
PLEASE, CHILD... THE SUSPENSE IS KILLING ME.
THIS IS IT FOR ME... MY LAST HURRAH! I'VE GOT THE CANCER... IN MY LYMPH NODES... I'M A GONER. DOC SAYS I'VE GOT LESS THAN A MONTH.
I'M GOING OUT WITH A BANG!
I'M LACED WITH ENOUGH CARCINOGENS, AND LOADED DOWN WITH ENOUGH HAZARDOUS MATERIALS TO MAKE DENVER GLOW IN THE DARK!
MY POWER SOURCE IS URANIUM! IT'S ALL WE HAD TO USE IN THE OLD DAYS!
YES SIREE! THEY WON'T KNOW WHAT HIT EM!
WAIT! WHAT'RE YOU--

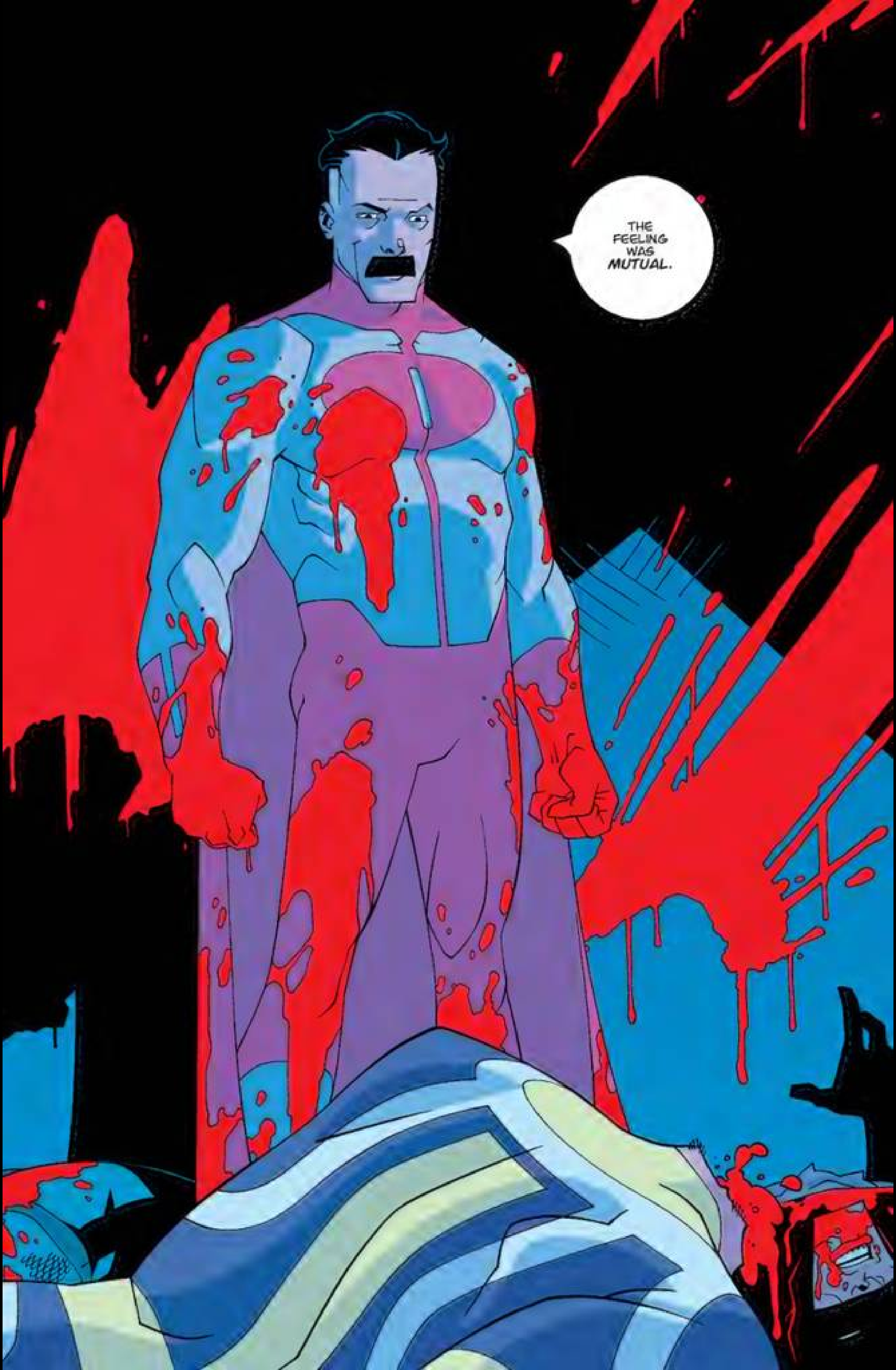

--DOING?
WHEN IN DOUBT... THROW THEM INTO SPACE.
GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE PRIORITY ALERT. RETURN TO BASE IMMEDIATELY.
I'M ON THE WAY.


NOW ENTERING UTAH
RUMPELSTILTSKIN.
Returning force field density to 100%

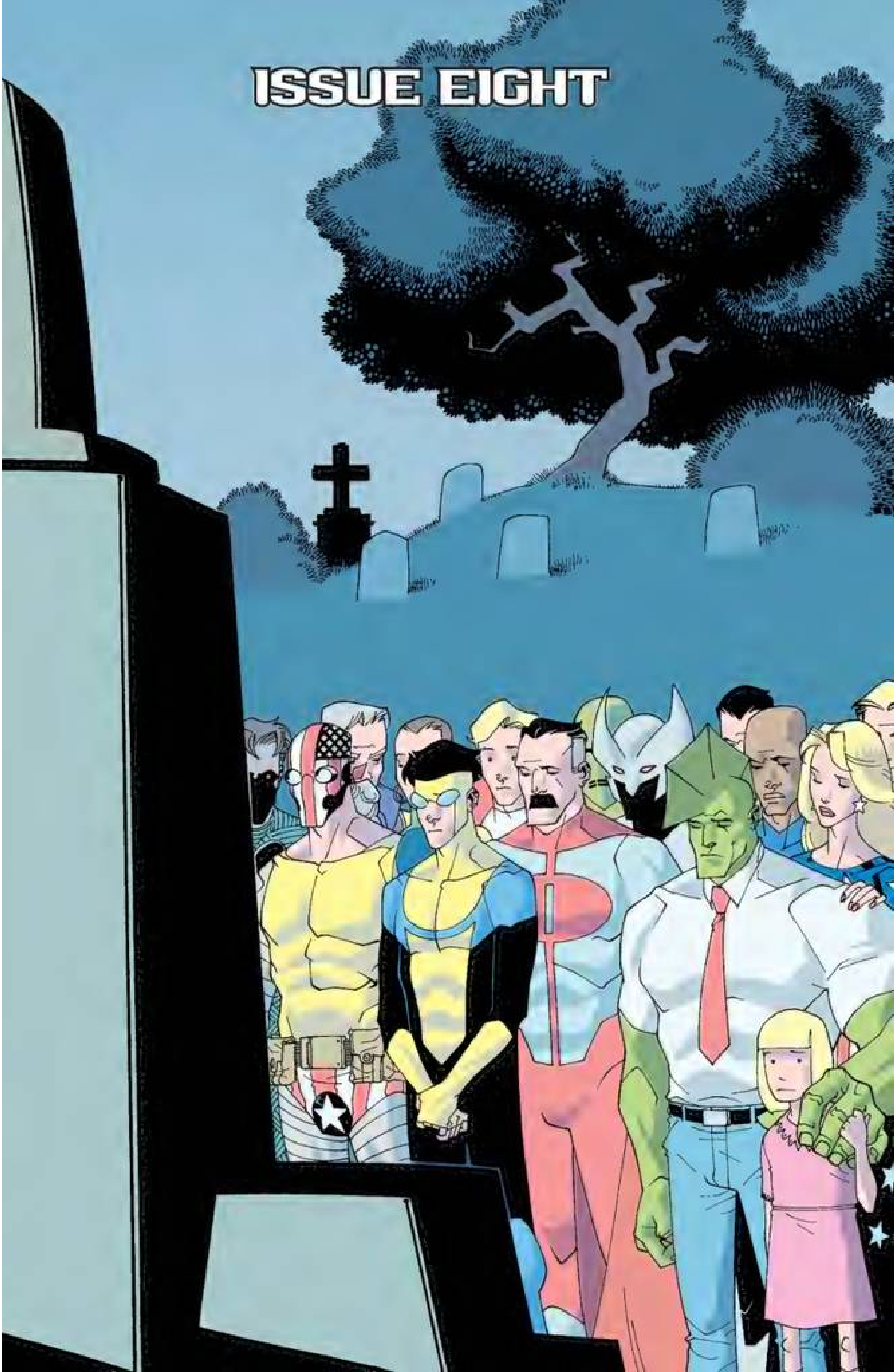

WELL... WHAT'S THE BIG EMERGENCY?

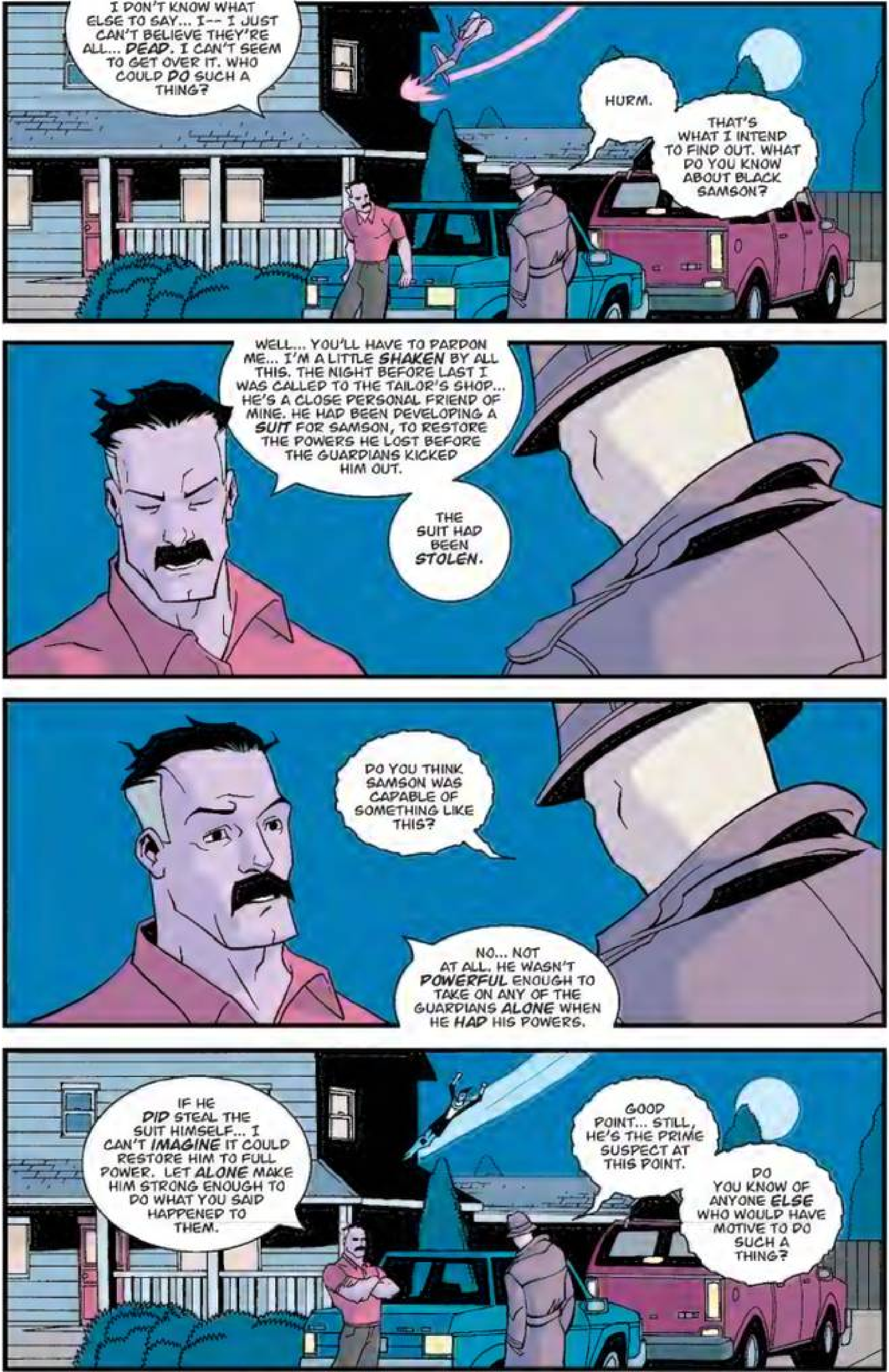

YOU DON'T KNOW? WE THOUGHT YOU WERE THE ONE WHO CALLED US HERE SINCE NONE OF US KNEW WHAT WAS GOING ON AND YOU HADN'T ARRIVED YET.
WHAT THE HELL IS GOING ON?

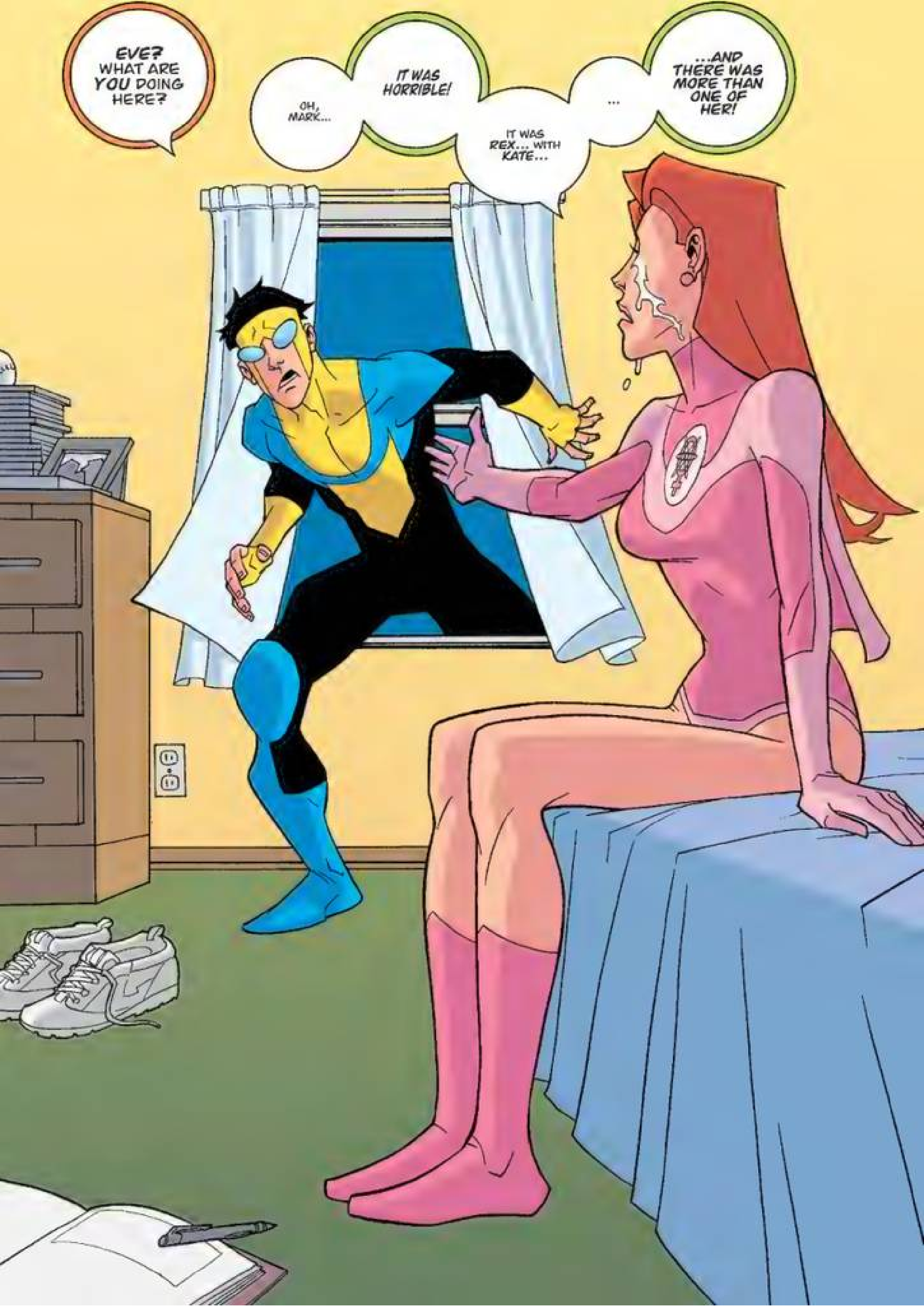

YOU-- YOU COWARD!
SHOW YOURSELF!
YOU MAY HAVE CAUGHT THE OTHERS BY SURPRISE BUT I WON'T BE SO EASY... YOU CAN'T HIDE FROM ME FOREVER.
YOU!
I NEVER LIKED YOU.

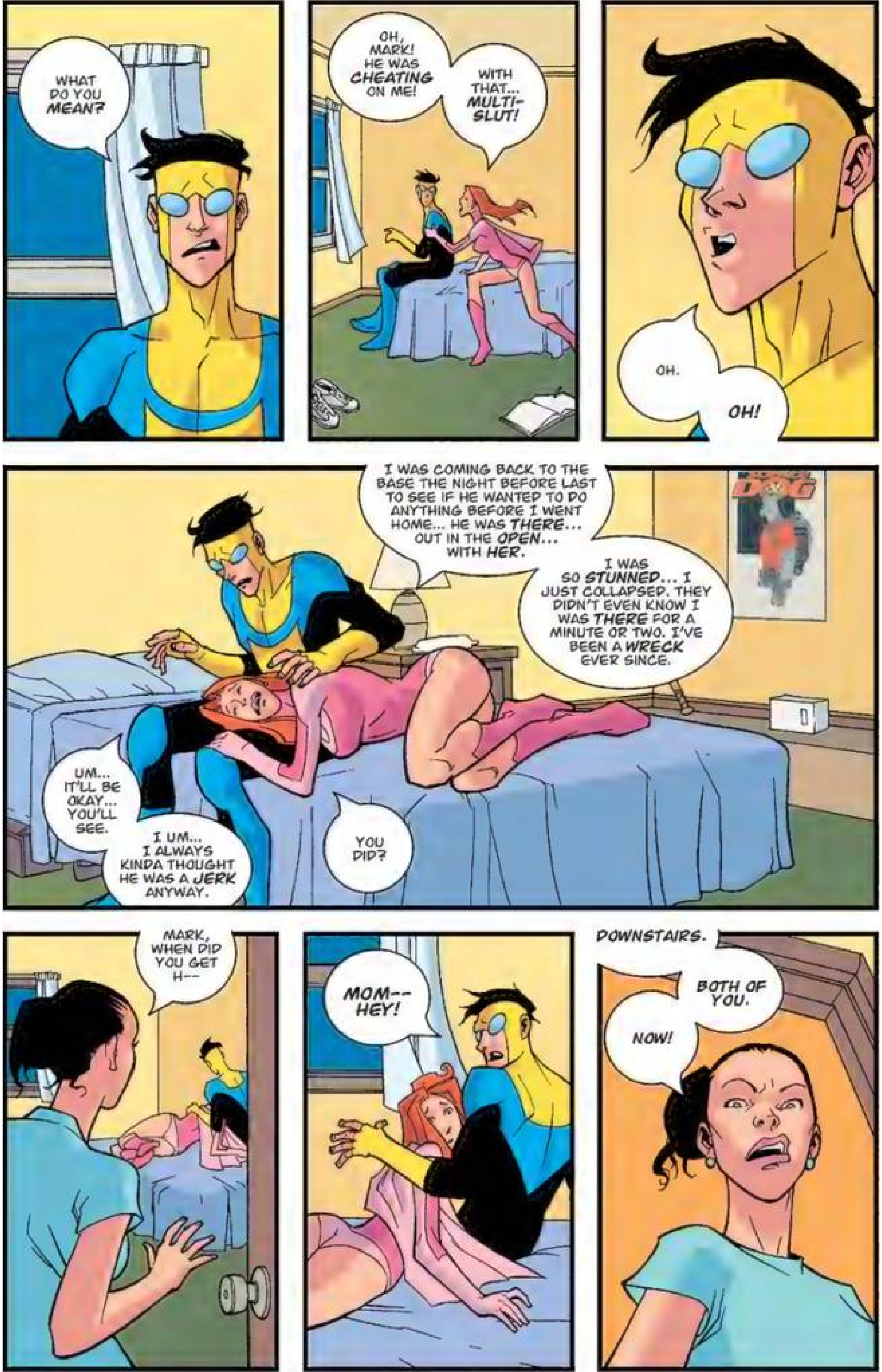

THE FEELING WAS MUTUAL.

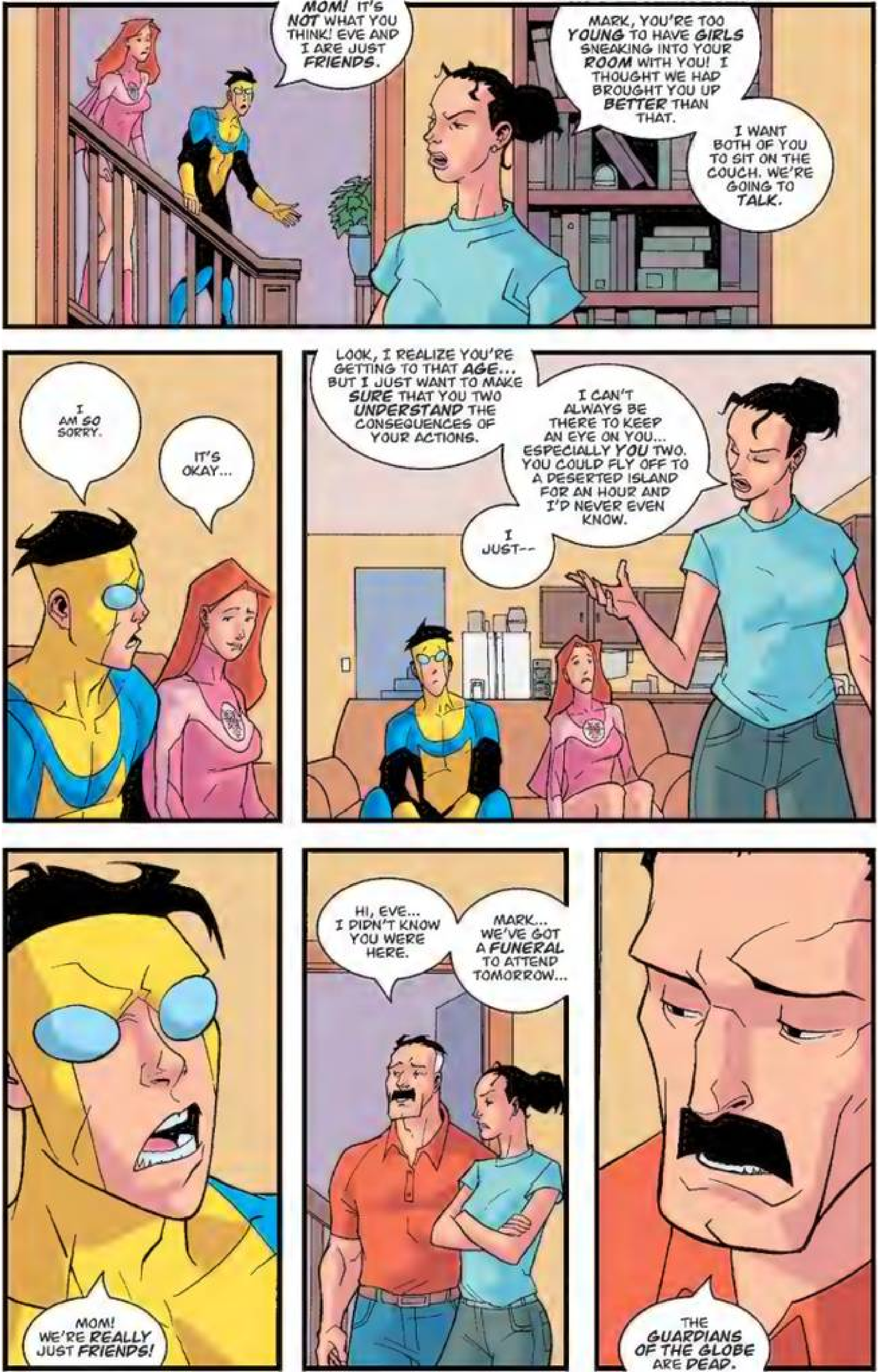
ISSUE EIGHT

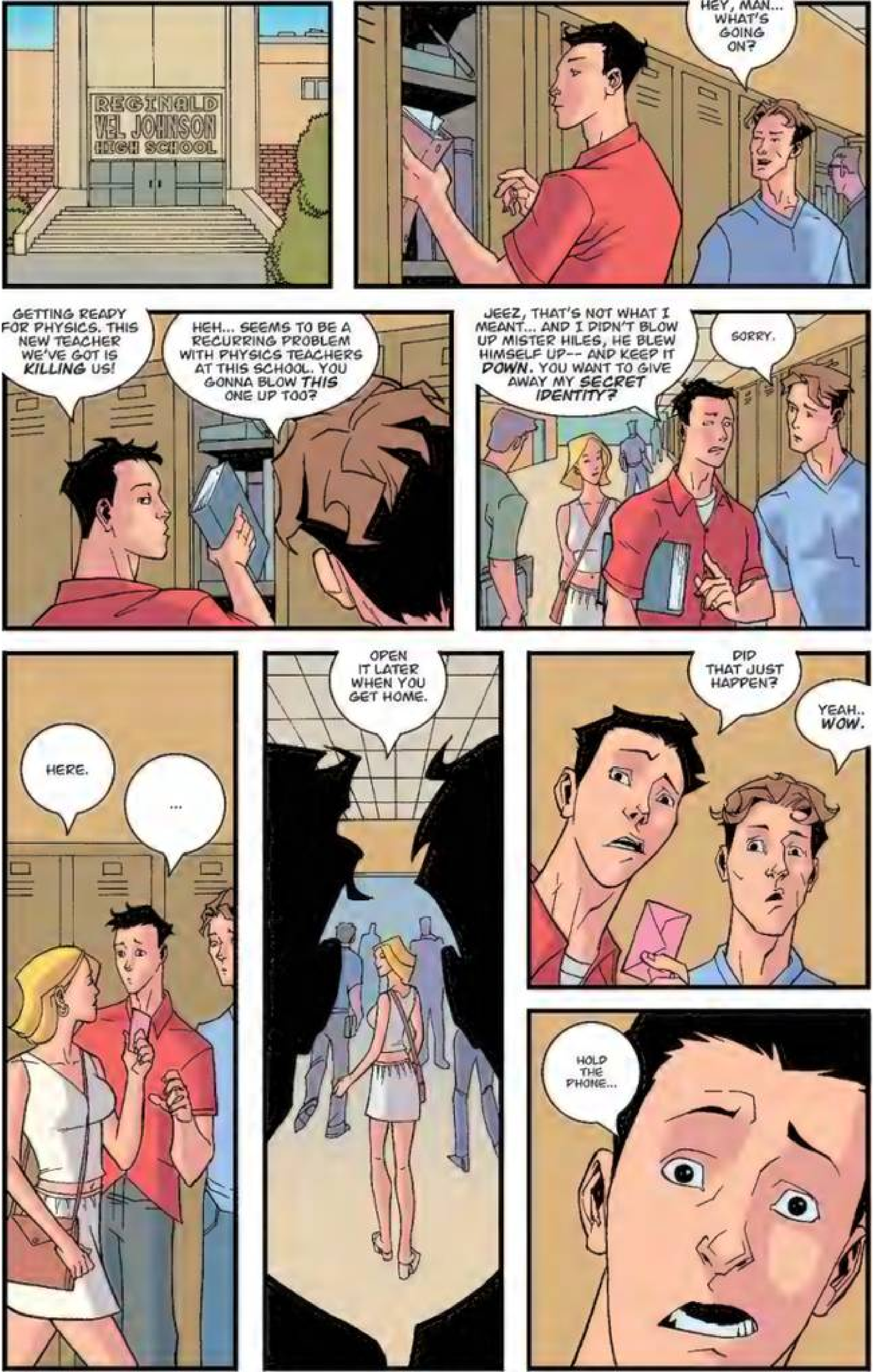


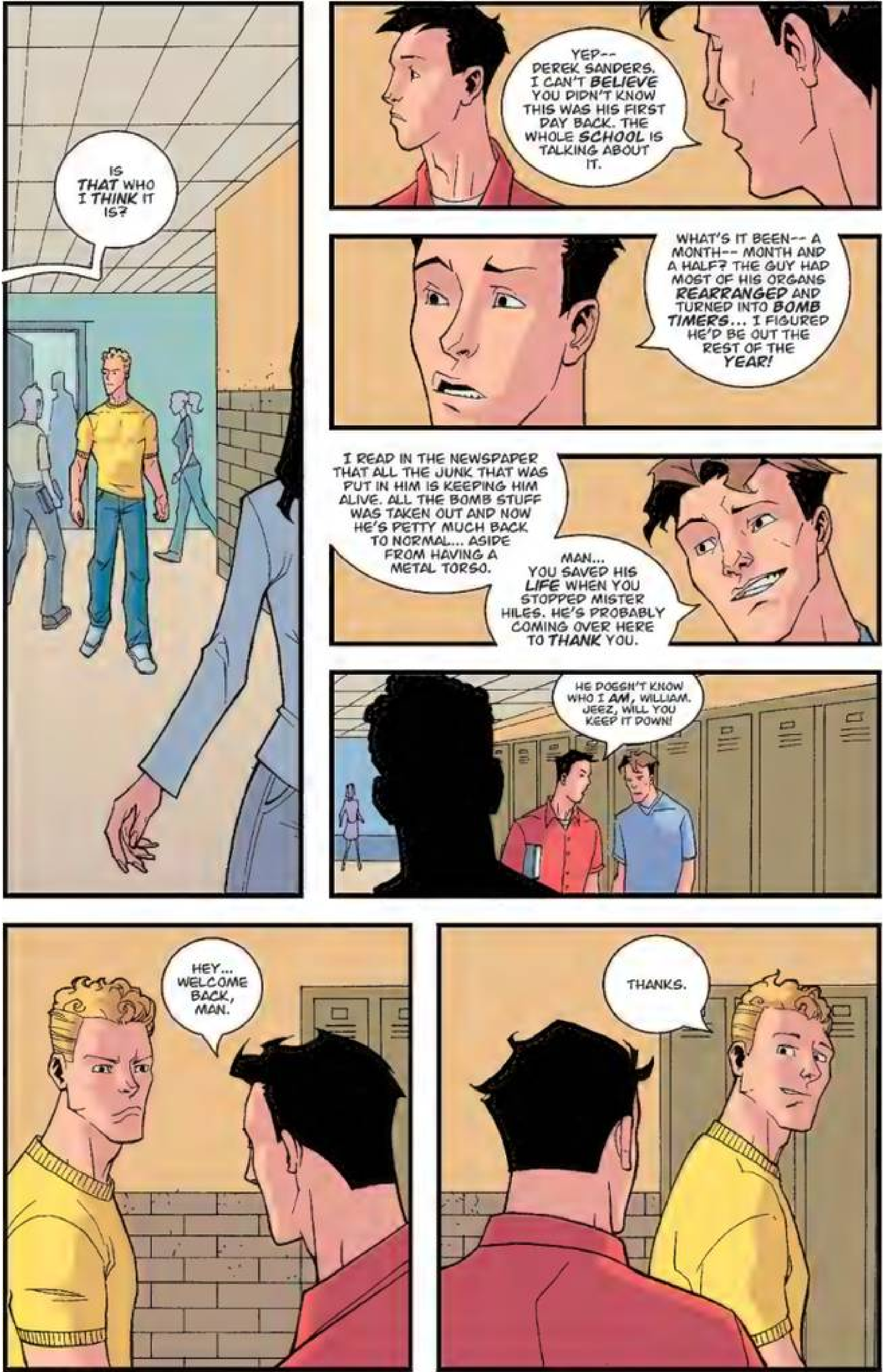

I DON'T KNOW WHAT ELSE TO SAY... I-- I JUST CAN'T BELIEVE THEY'RE ALL... DEAD. I CAN'T SEEM TO GET OVER IT. WHO COULD DO SUCH A THING?
HURM.
THAT'S WHAT I INTEND TO FIND OUT. WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT BLACK SAMSON?
WELL... YOU'LL HAVE TO PARDON ME... I'M A LITTLE SHAKEN BY ALL THIS. THE NIGHT BEFORE LAST I WAS CALLED TO THE TAILOR'S SHOP... HE'S A CLOSE PERSONAL FRIEND OF MINE. HE HAD BEEN DEVELOPING A SUIT FOR SAMSON, TO RESTORE THE POWERS HE LOST BEFORE THE GUARDIANS KICKED HIM OUT.
THE SUIT HAD BEEN STOLEN.
DO YOU THINK SAMSON WAS CAPABLE OF SOMETHING LIKE THIS?
NO... NOT AT ALL. HE WASN'T POWERFUL ENOUGH TO TAKE ON ANY OF THE GUARDIANS ALONE WHEN HE HAD HIS POWERS.
IF HE DID STEAL THE SUIT HIMSELF... I CAN'T IMAGINE IT COULD RESTORE HIM TO FULL POWER. LET ALONE MAKE HIM STRONG ENOUGH TO DO WHAT YOU SAID HAPPENED TO THEM.
GOOD POINT... STILL, HE'S THE PRIME SUSPECT AT THIS POINT.
DO YOU KNOW OF ANYONE ELSE WHO WOULD HAVE MOTIVE TO DO SUCH A THING?

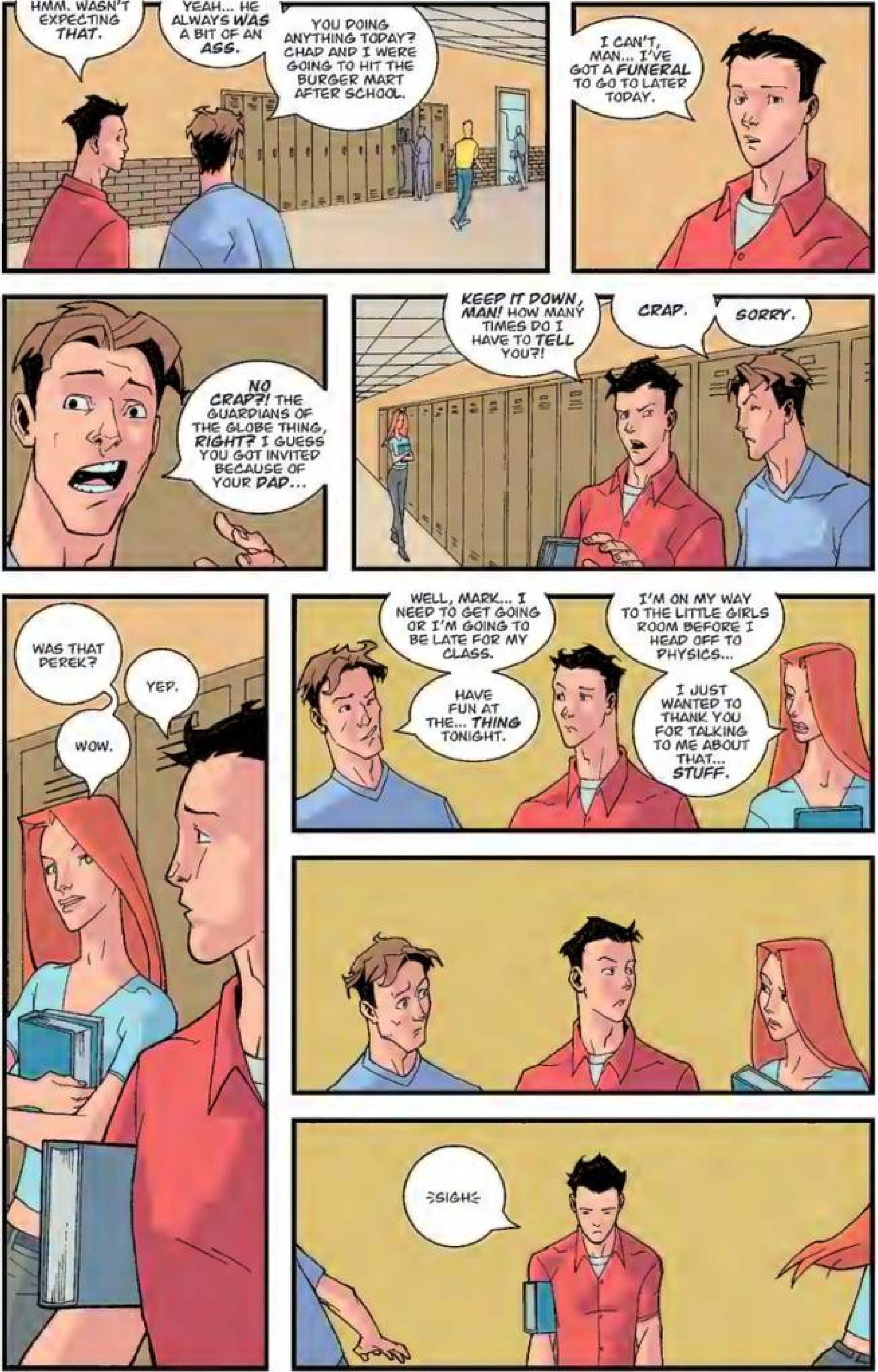

EVE? WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
OH, MARK...
IT WAS HORRIBLE!
IT WAS REX... WITH KATE...
...
...AND THERE WAS MORE THAN ONE OF HER!

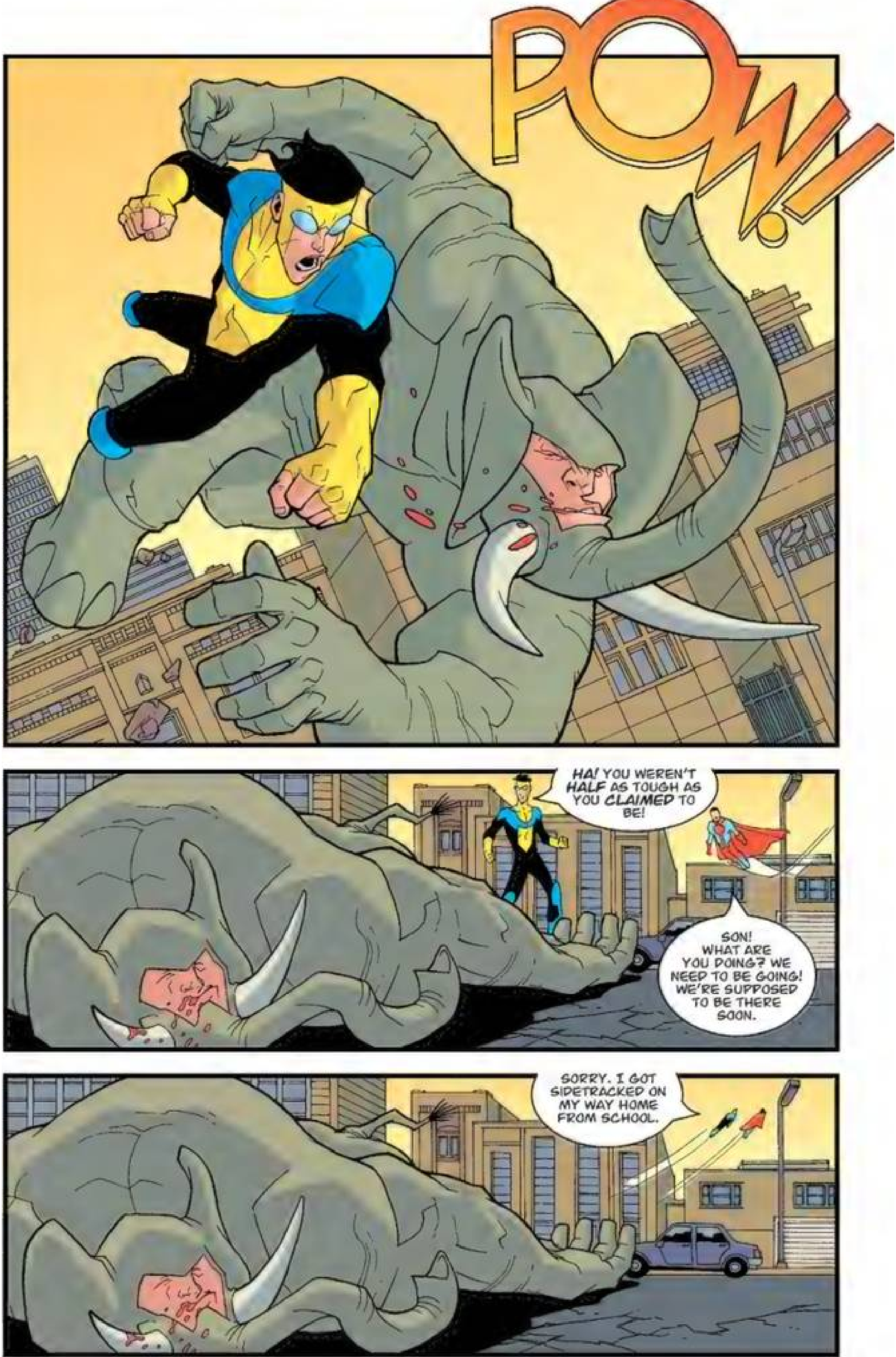

WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
OH, MARK! HE WAS CHEATING ON ME!
WITH THAT... MULTI-SLUT!
OH.
OH!
I WAS COMING BACK TO THE BASE THE NIGHT BEFORE LAST TO SEE IF HE WANTED TO DO ANYTHING BEFORE I WENT HOME... HE WAS THERE... OUT IN THE OPEN... WITH HER.
I WAS SO STUNNED... I JUST COLLAPSED. THEY DIDN'T EVEN KNOW I WAS THERE FOR A MINUTE OR TWO. I'VE BEEN A WRECK EVER SINCE.
UM... IT'LL BE OKAY... YOU'LL SEE.
I UM... I ALWAYS KINDA THOUGHT HE WAS A JERK ANYWAY.
YOU DID?
MARK, WHEN DID YOU GET H--
MOM-- HEY!
DOWNSTAIRS.
BOTH OF YOU.
NOW!

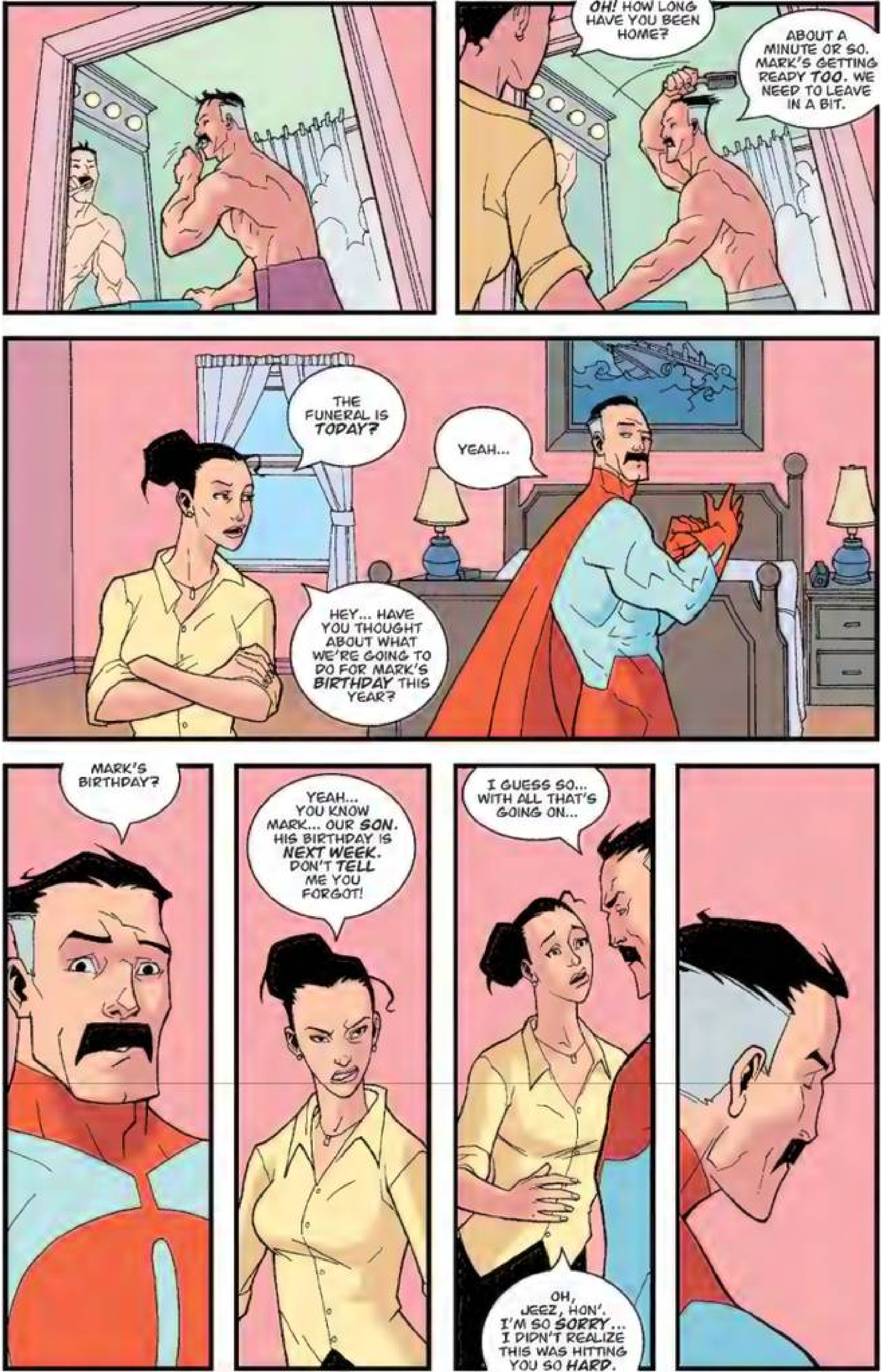

MOM! IT'S NOT WHAT YOU THINK! EVE AND I ARE JUST FRIENDS.
MARK, YOU'RE TOO YOUNG TO HAVE GIRLS SNEAKING INTO YOUR ROOM WITH YOU! I THOUGHT WE HAD BROUGHT YOU UP BETTER THAN THAT.
I WANT BOTH OF YOU TO SIT ON THE COUCH. WE'RE GOING TO TALK.
I AM SO SORRY.
IT'S OKAY...
LOOK, I REALIZE YOU'RE GETTING TO THAT AGE... BUT I JUST WANT TO MAKE SURE THAT YOU TWO UNDERSTAND THE CONSEQUENCES OF YOUR ACTIONS.
I CAN'T ALWAYS BE THERE TO KEEP AN EYE ON YOU... ESPECIALLY YOU TWO. YOU COULD FLY OFF TO A DESERTED ISLAND FOR AN HOUR AND I'D NEVER EVEN KNOW.
I JUST--
MOM! WE'RE REALLY JUST FRIENDS!
HI, EVE... I DIDN'T KNOW YOU WERE HERE.
MARK... WE'VE GOT A FUNERAL TO ATTEND TOMORROW...
THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE ARE DEAD.

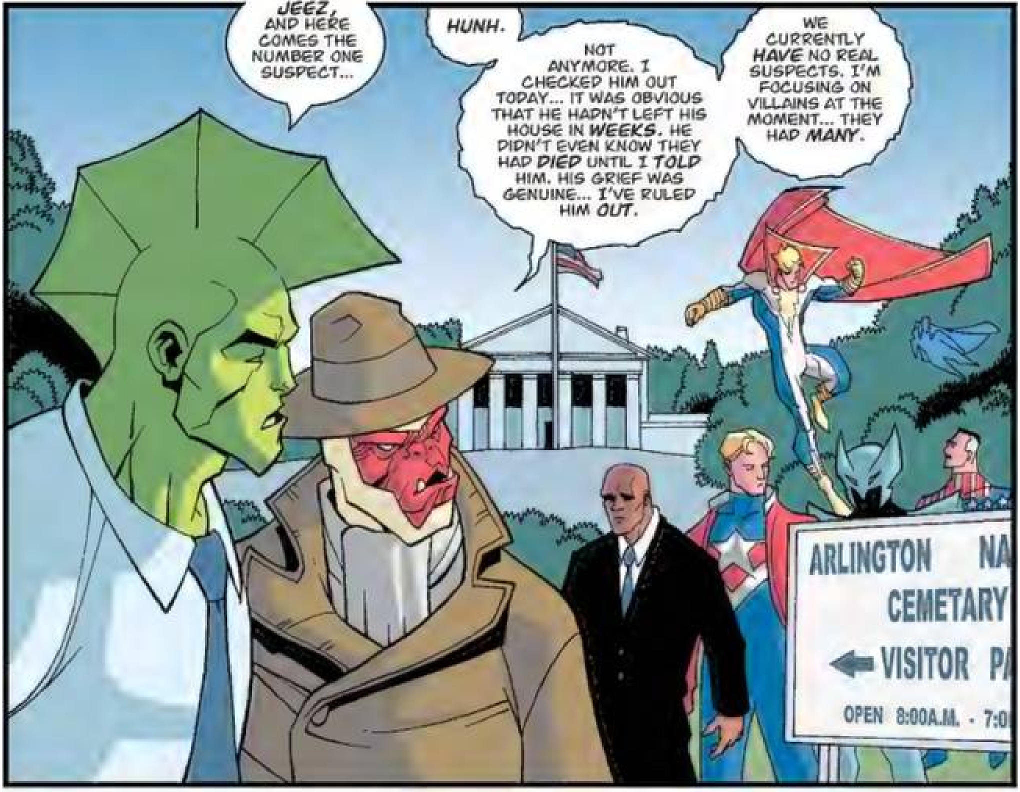

REGINALD VEL JOHNSON HIGH SCHOOL
HEY, MAN... WHAT'S GOING ON?
GETTING READY FOR PHYSICS. THIS NEW TEACHER WE'VE GOT IS KILLING US!
HEH... SEEMS TO BE A RECURRING PROBLEM WITH PHYSICS TEACHERS AT THIS SCHOOL. YOU GONNA BLOW THIS ONE UP TOO?
JEEZ, THAT'S NOT WHAT I MEANT... AND I DIDN'T BLOW UP MISTER HILES, HE BLEW HIMSELF UP-- AND KEEP IT DOWN. YOU WANT TO GIVE AWAY MY SECRET IDENTITY?
SORRY.
HERE.
...
OPEN IT LATER WHEN YOU GET HOME.
DID THAT JUST HAPPEN?
YEAH.. WOW.
HOLD THE PHONE...

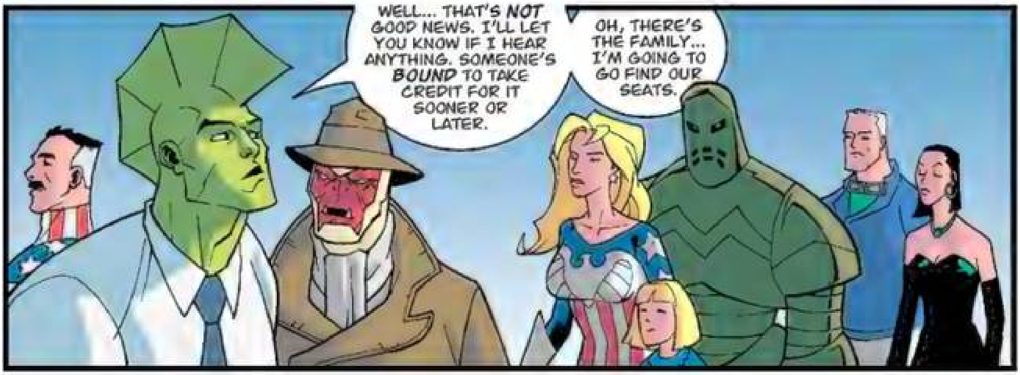

IS *THAT* WHO *I THINK* IT IS?
YEP-- DEREK SANDERS. I CAN'T *BELIEVE* YOU DIDN'T KNOW THIS WAS HIS FIRST DAY BACK. THE WHOLE *SCHOOL* IS TALKING ABOUT IT.
WHAT'S IT BEEN-- A MONTH-- MONTH AND A HALF? THE GUY HAD MOST OF HIS ORGANS *REARRANGED* AND TURNED INTO *BOMB TIMERS*... I FIGURED HE'D BE OUT THE REST OF THE *YEAR!*
I READ IN THE NEWSPAPER THAT ALL THE JUNK THAT WAS PUT IN HIM IS KEEPING HIM ALIVE. ALL THE BOMB STUFF WAS TAKEN OUT AND NOW HE'S PETTY MUCH BACK TO NORMAL... ASIDE FROM HAVING A METAL TORSO.
MAN... YOU SAVED HIS *LIFE* WHEN YOU STOPPED MISTER HILES. HE'S PROBABLY COMING OVER HERE TO *THANK* YOU.
HE DOESN'T KNOW WHO I *AM*, WILLIAM. JEEZ, WILL YOU KEEP IT DOWN!
HEY... WELCOME BACK, MAN.
THANKS.

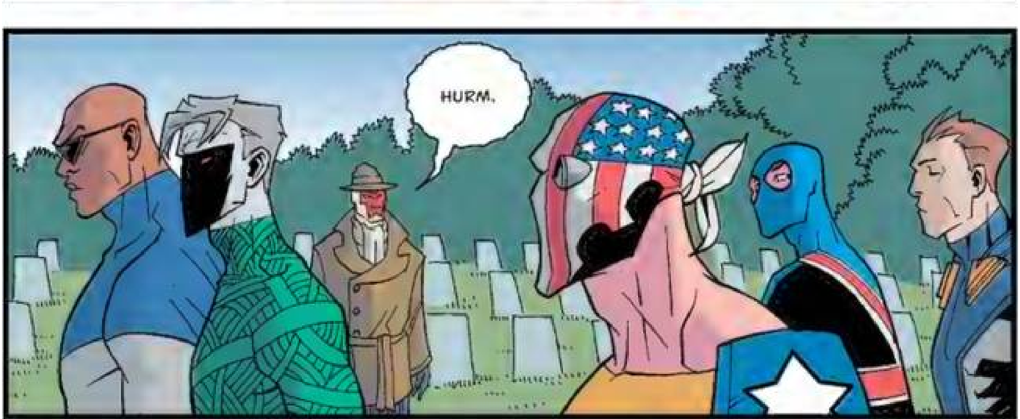

HMM. WASN'T EXPECTING THAT.
YEAH... HE ALWAYS WAS A BIT OF AN ASS.
YOU DOING ANYTHING TODAY? CHAD AND I WERE GOING TO HIT THE BURGER MART AFTER SCHOOL.
I CAN'T, MAN... I'VE GOT A FUNERAL TO GO TO LATER TODAY.
NO CRAP?! THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE THING, RIGHT? I GUESS YOU GOT INVITED BECAUSE OF YOUR DAD...
KEEP IT DOWN, MAN! HOW MANY TIMES DO I HAVE TO TELL YOU?!
CRAP.
SORRY.
WAS THAT DEREK?
YEP.
WOW.
WELL, MARK... I NEED TO GET GOING OR I'M GOING TO BE LATE FOR MY CLASS.
HAVE FUN AT THE... THING TONIGHT.
I'M ON MY WAY TO THE LITTLE GIRLS ROOM BEFORE I HEAD OFF TO PHYSICS...
I JUST WANTED TO THANK YOU FOR TALKING TO ME ABOUT THAT... STUFF.
⇉SIGH⇇

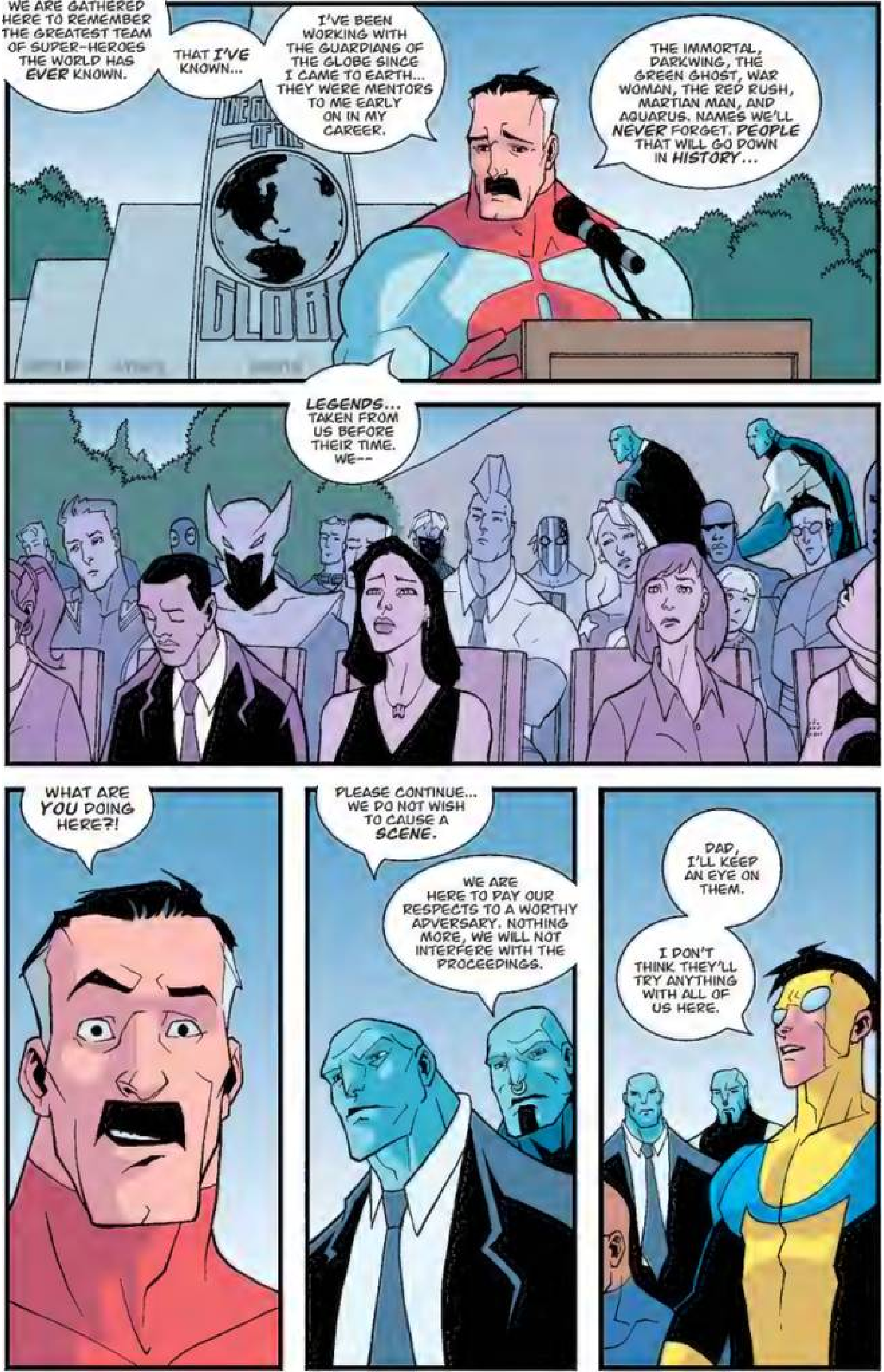

POW!
HA! YOU WEREN'T HALF AS TOUGH AS YOU CLAIMED TO BE!
SON! WHAT ARE YOU DOING? WE NEED TO BE GOING! WE'RE SUPPOSED TO BE THERE SOON.
SORRY. I GOT SIDETRACKED ON MY WAY HOME FROM SCHOOL.

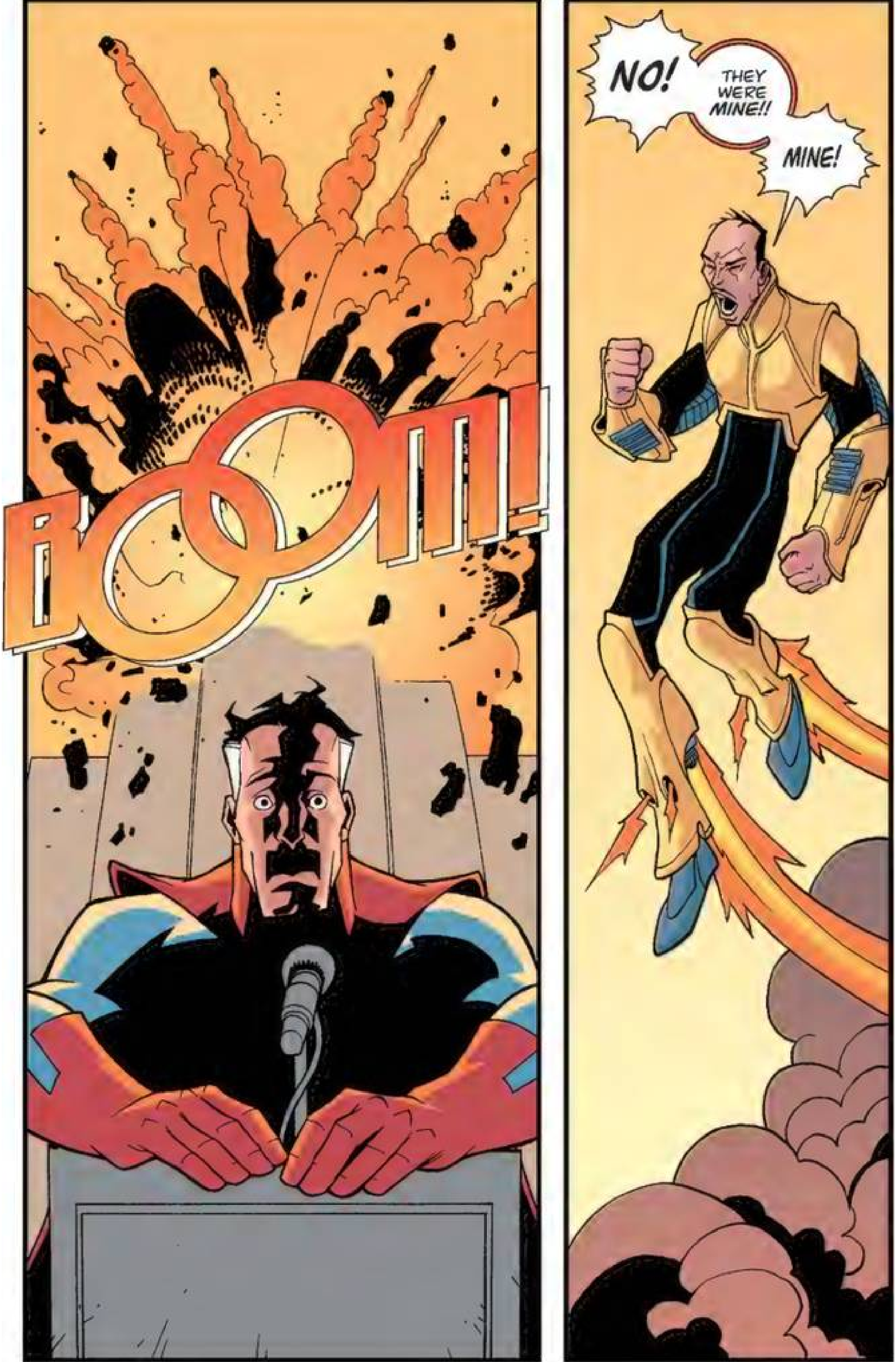

OH! HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN HOME?
ABOUT A MINUTE OR SO. MARK'S GETTING READY TOO. WE NEED TO LEAVE IN A BIT.
THE FUNERAL IS TODAY?
YEAH...
HEY... HAVE YOU THOUGHT ABOUT WHAT WE'RE GOING TO DO FOR MARK'S BIRTHDAY THIS YEAR?
MARK'S BIRTHDAY?
YEAH... YOU KNOW MARK... OUR SON. HIS BIRTHDAY IS NEXT WEEK. DON'T TELL ME YOU FORGOT!
I GUESS SO... WITH ALL THAT'S GOING ON...
OH, JEEZ, HON'. I'M SO SORRY... I DIDN'T REALIZE THIS WAS HITTING YOU SO HARD.

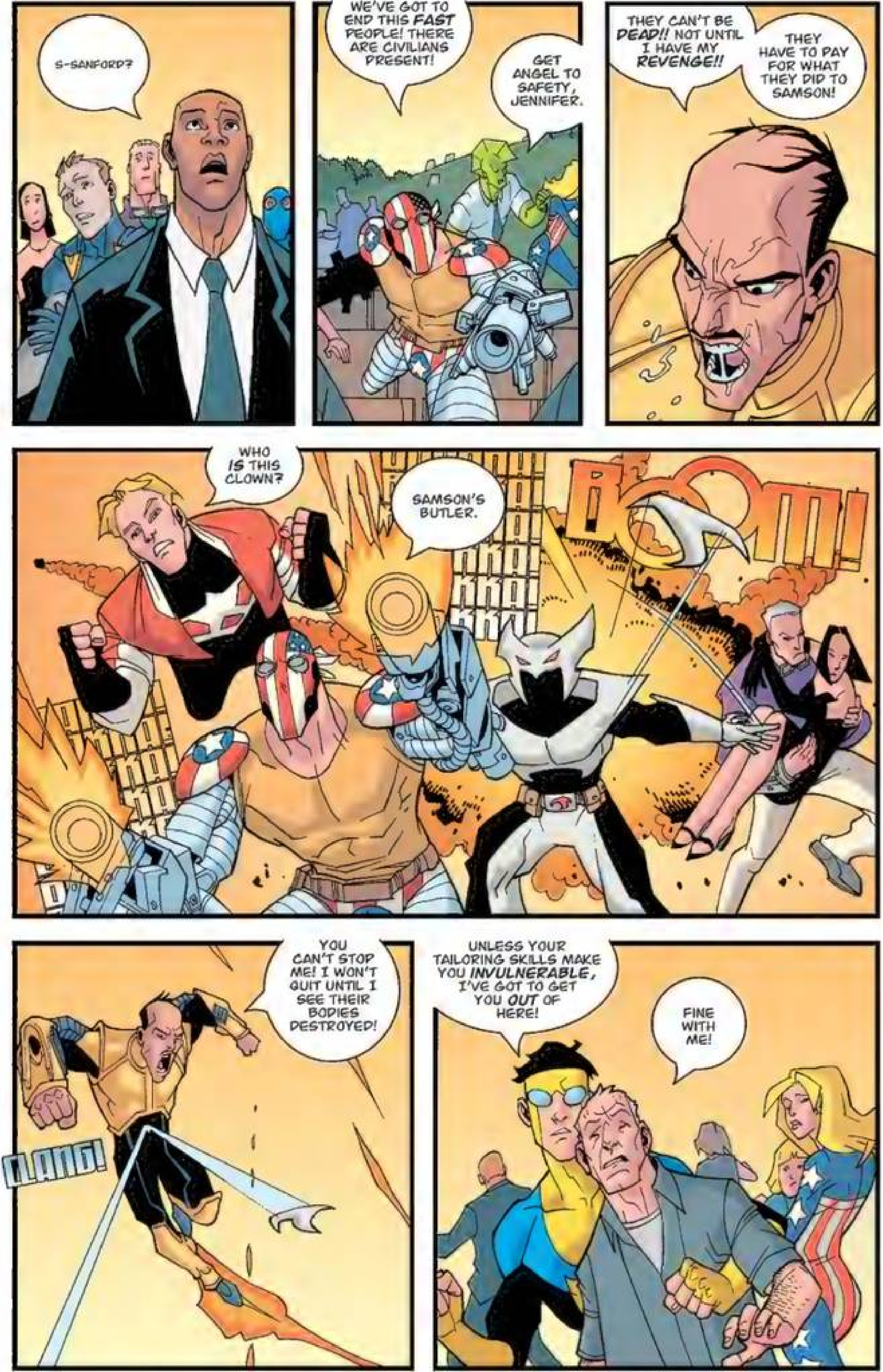

JEEZ, AND HERE COMES THE NUMBER ONE SUSPECT...
HUNH.
NOT ANYMORE. I CHECKED HIM OUT TODAY... IT WAS OBVIOUS THAT HE HADN'T LEFT HIS HOUSE IN **WEEKS**. HE DIDN'T EVEN KNOW THEY HAD **DIED** UNTIL I **TOLD** HIM. HIS GRIEF WAS GENUINE... I'VE RULED HIM **OUT**.
WE CURRENTLY **HAVE** NO REAL SUSPECTS. I'M FOCUSING ON VILLAINS AT THE MOMENT... THEY HAD **MANY**.
ARLINGTON NA
CEMETARY
VISITOR PA
OPEN 8:00A.M. - 7:0

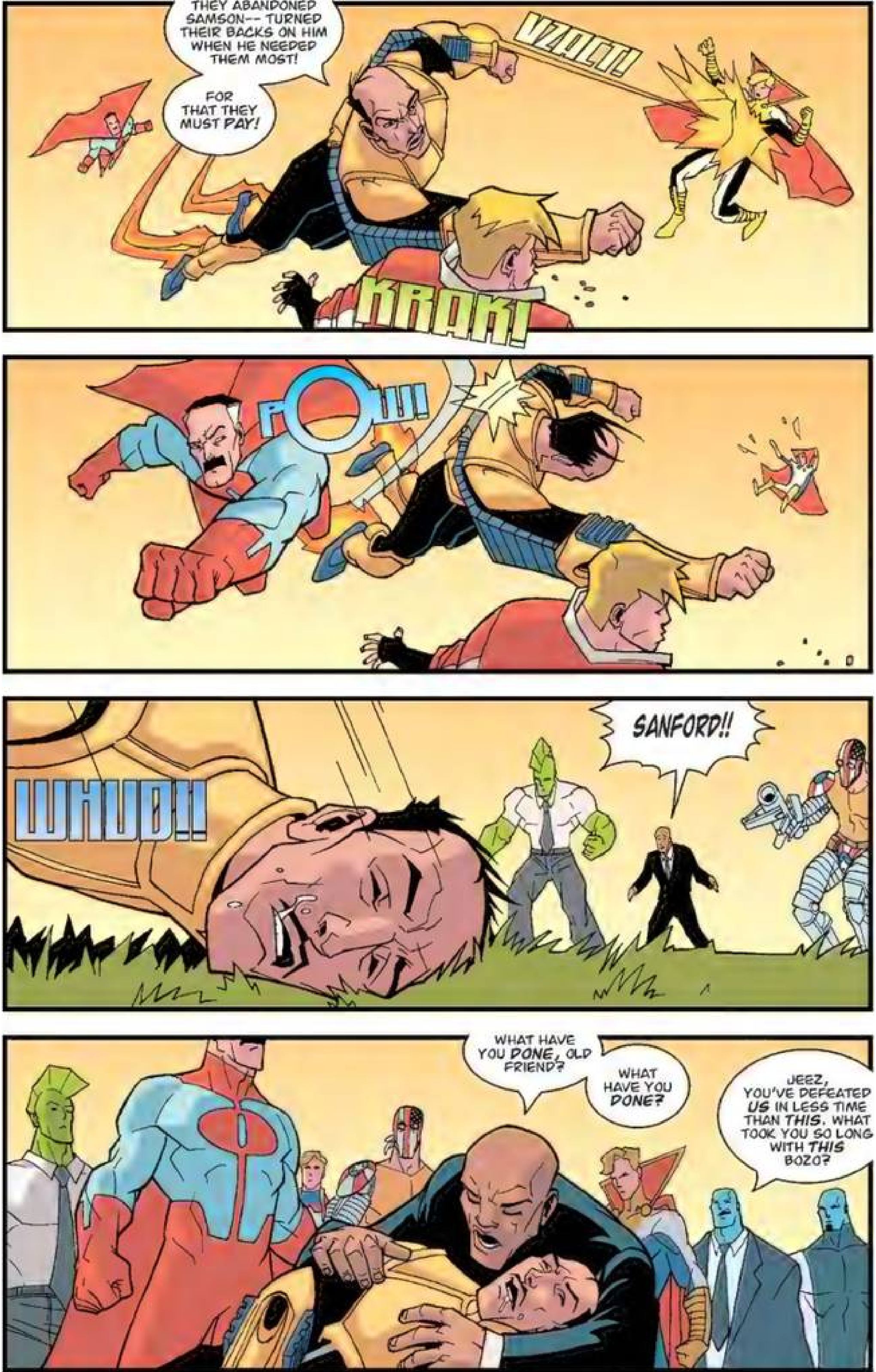

WELL... THAT'S **NOT** GOOD NEWS. I'LL LET YOU KNOW IF I HEAR ANYTHING. SOMEONE'S **BOUND** TO TAKE CREDIT FOR IT SOONER OR LATER.
OH, THERE'S THE FAMILY... I'M GOING TO GO FIND OUR SEATS.

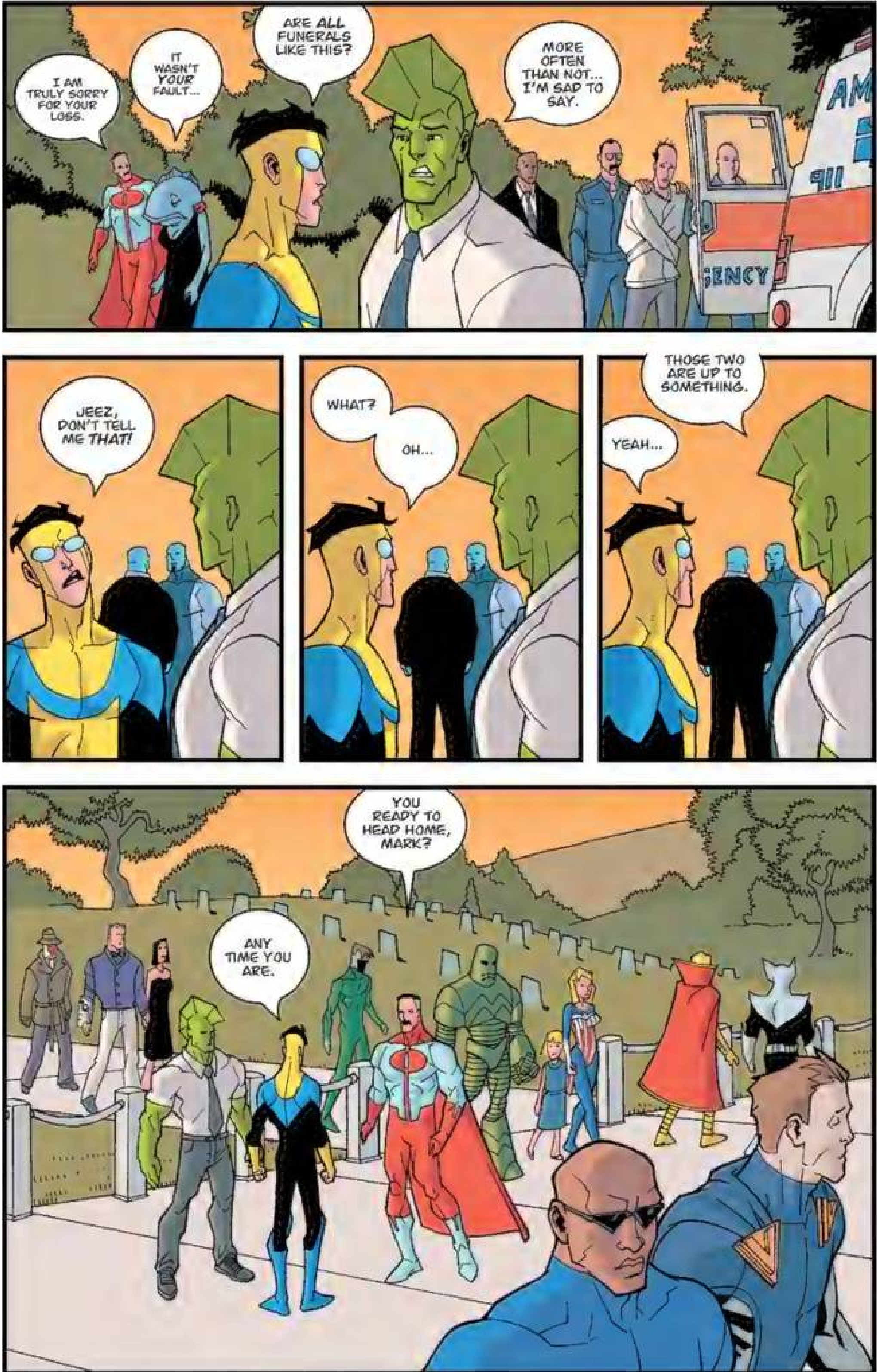

HURM.

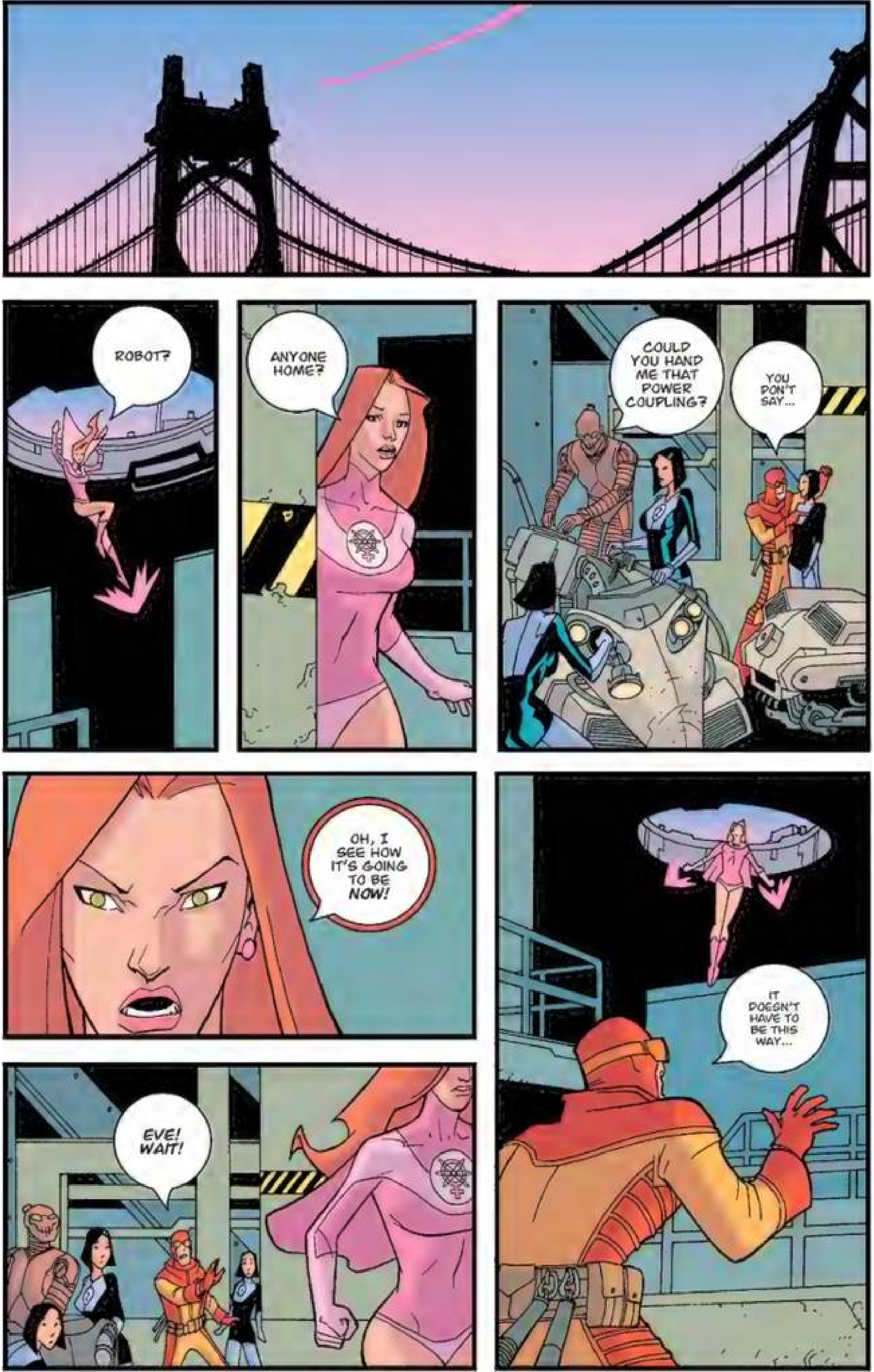

WE ARE GATHERED HERE TO REMEMBER THE GREATEST TEAM OF SUPER-HEROES THE WORLD HAS **EVER** KNOWN.
THAT **I'VE** KNOWN...
I'VE BEEN WORKING WITH THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE SINCE I CAME TO EARTH... THEY WERE MENTORS TO ME EARLY ON IN MY CAREER.
THE IMMORTAL, DARKWING, THE GREEN GHOST, WAR WOMAN, THE RED RUSH, MARTIAN MAN, AND AQUARUS. NAMES WE'LL **NEVER** FORGET. **PEOPLE** THAT WILL GO DOWN IN **HISTORY**...
GLOB
LEGENDS... TAKEN FROM US BEFORE THEIR TIME. WE--
WHAT ARE **YOU** DOING HERE?!
PLEASE CONTINUE... WE DO NOT WISH TO CAUSE A **SCENE**.
WE ARE HERE TO PAY OUR RESPECTS TO A WORTHY ADVERSARY. NOTHING MORE, WE WILL NOT INTERFERE WITH THE PROCEEDINGS.
DAD, I'LL KEEP AN EYE ON THEM.
I DON'T THINK THEY'LL TRY ANYTHING WITH ALL OF US HERE.

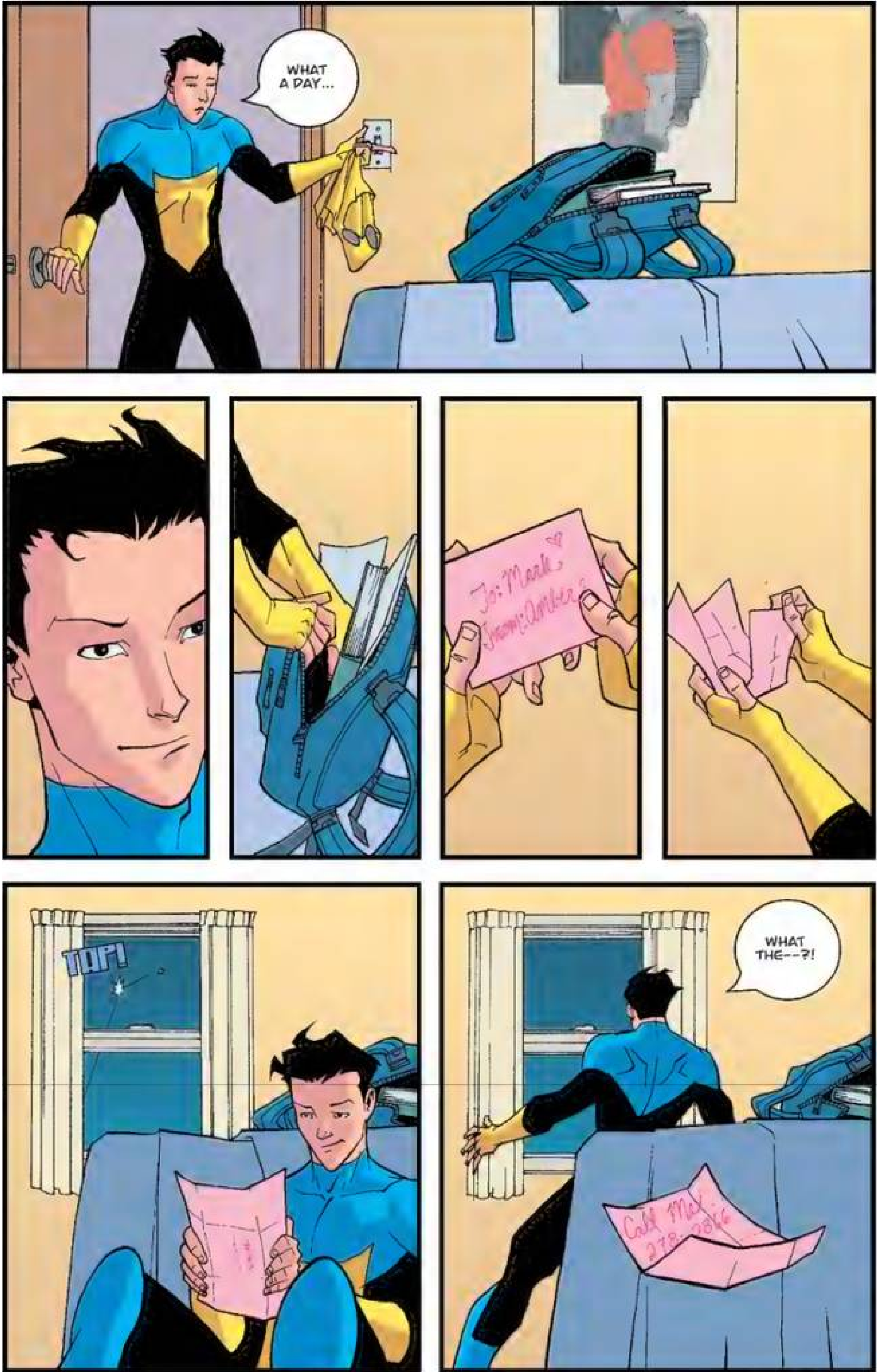

BOOM!!
NO!
THEY WERE MINE!!
MINE!

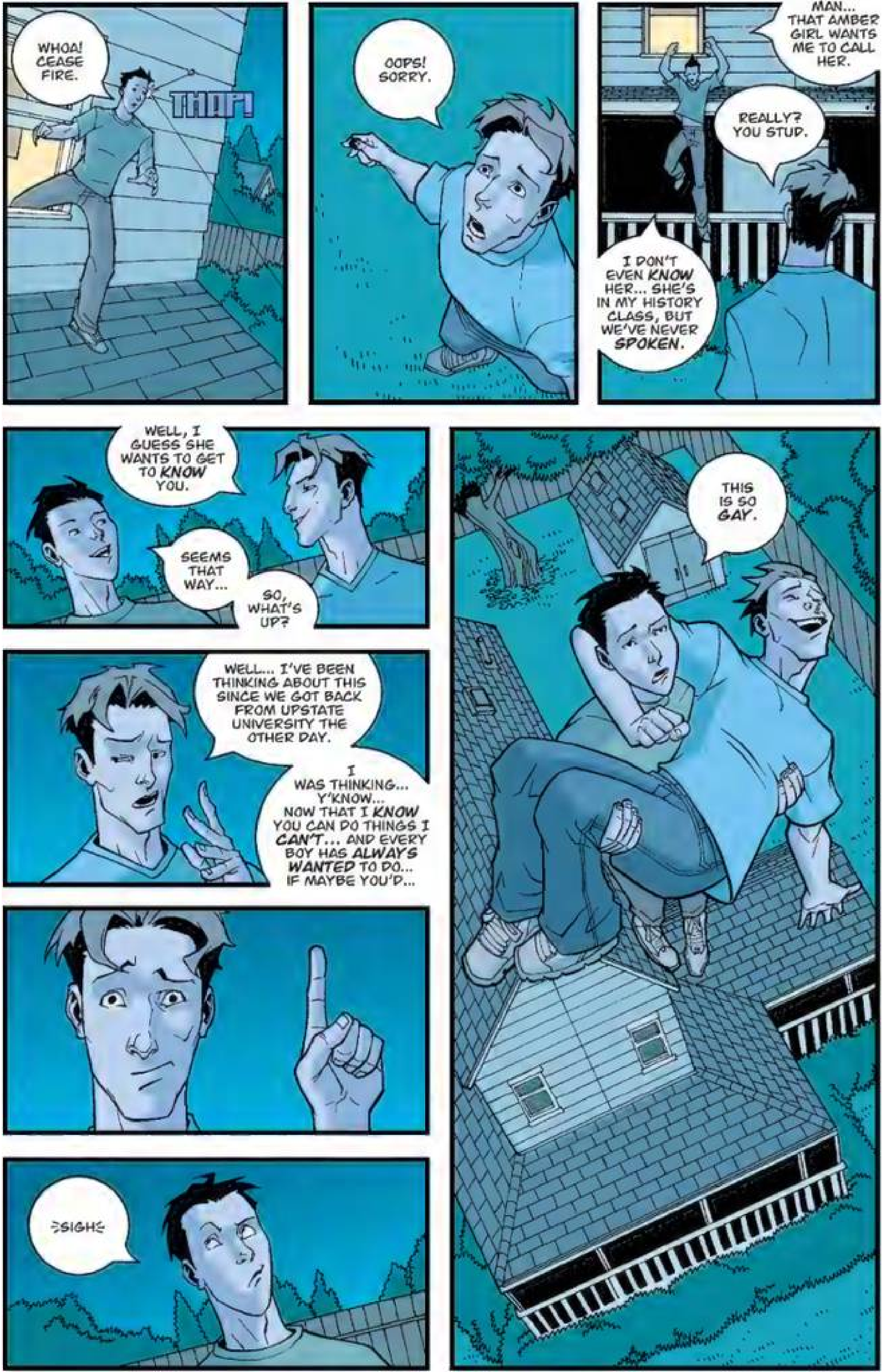

S-SANFORD?
WE'VE GOT TO END THIS *FAST* PEOPLE! THERE ARE CIVILIANS PRESENT!
GET ANGEL TO SAFETY, JENNIFER.
THEY CAN'T BE *DEAD!!* NOT UNTIL I HAVE MY *REVENGE!!*
THEY HAVE TO PAY FOR WHAT THEY DID TO SAMSON!
WHO *IS* THIS CLOWN?
SAMSON'S BUTLER.
BOOM!
KRA!
YOU CAN'T STOP ME! I WON'T QUIT UNTIL I SEE THEIR BODIES DESTROYED!
CLANG!
UNLESS YOUR TAILORING SKILLS MAKE YOU *INVULNERABLE*, I'VE GOT TO GET YOU *OUT* OF HERE!
FINE WITH ME!

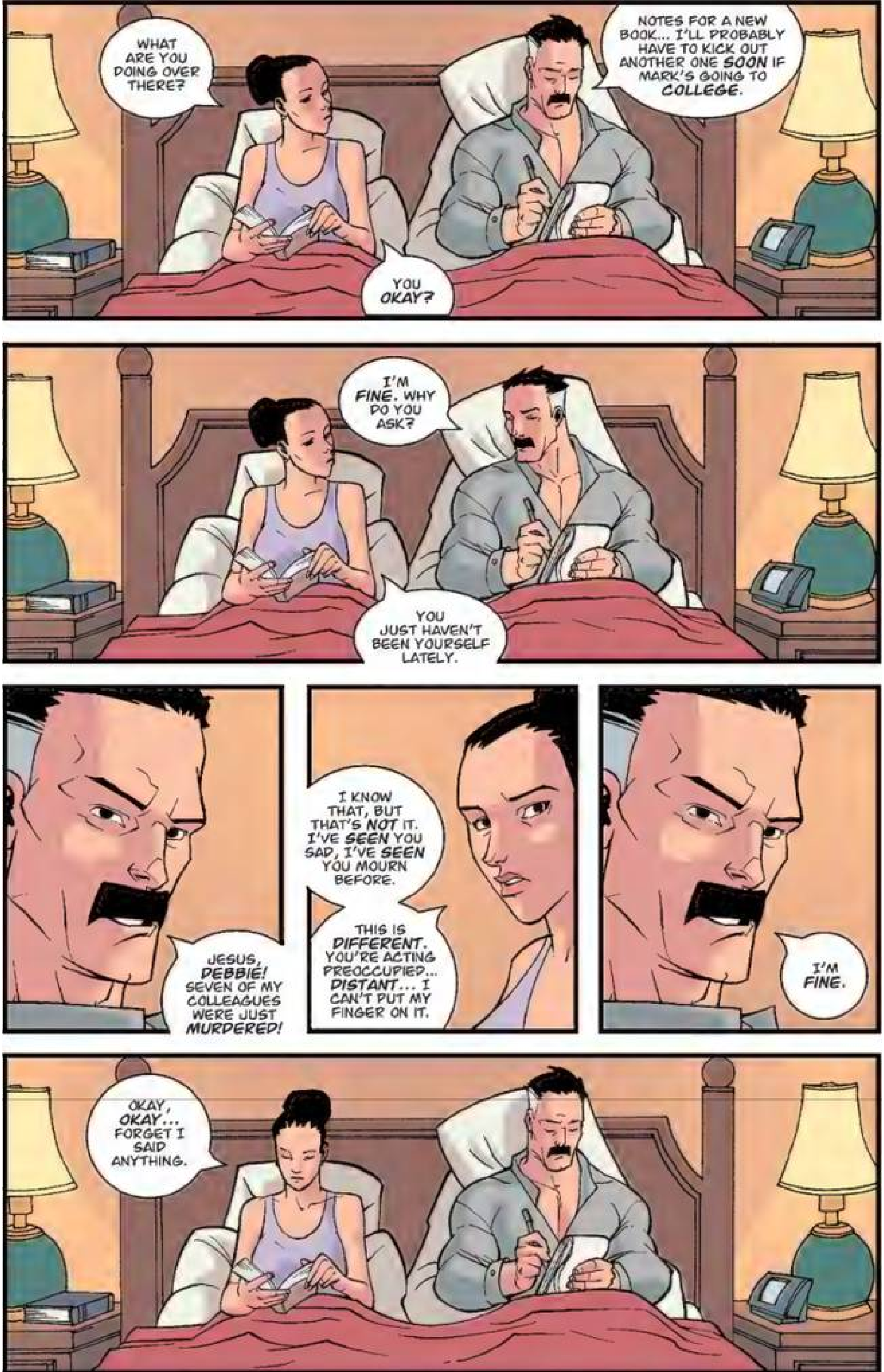

THEY ABANDONED SAMSON-- TURNED THEIR BACKS ON HIM WHEN HE NEEDED THEM MOST!
FOR THAT THEY MUST PAY!
VZOLT!
KRAK!
POW!
WHUD!!
SANFORD!!
WHAT HAVE YOU DONE, OLD FRIEND?
WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?
JEEZ, YOU'VE DEFEATED US IN LESS TIME THAN THIS. WHAT TOOK YOU SO LONG WITH THIS BOZO?

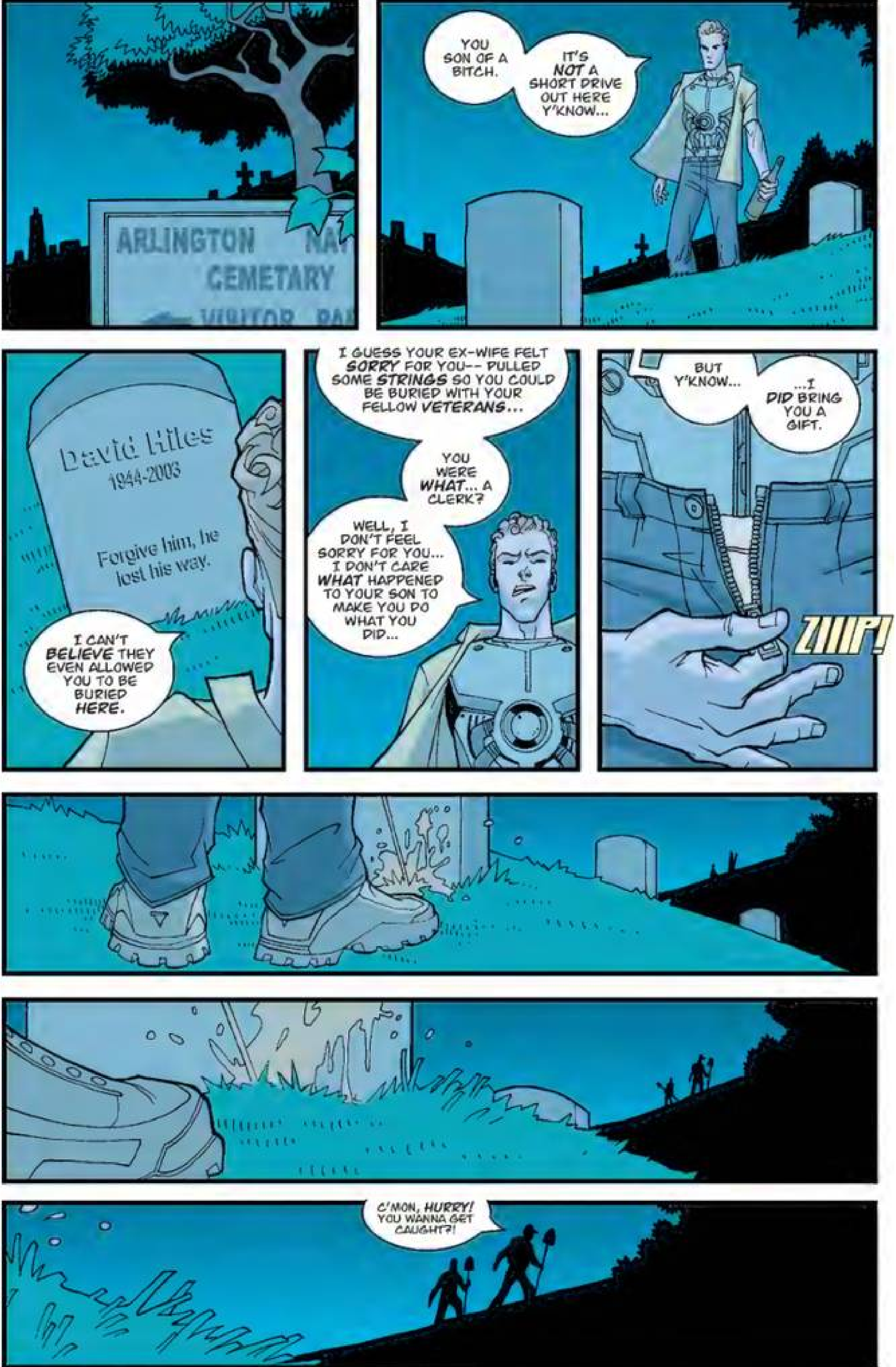

I AM TRULY SORRY FOR YOUR LOSS.
IT WASN'T *YOUR* FAULT...
ARE *ALL* FUNERALS LIKE THIS?
MORE OFTEN THAN NOT... I'M SAD TO SAY.
AM
911
GENCY
JEEZ, DON'T TELL ME *THAT!*
WHAT?
OH...
THOSE TWO ARE UP TO SOMETHING.
YEAH...
YOU READY TO HEAD HOME, MARK?
ANY TIME YOU ARE.

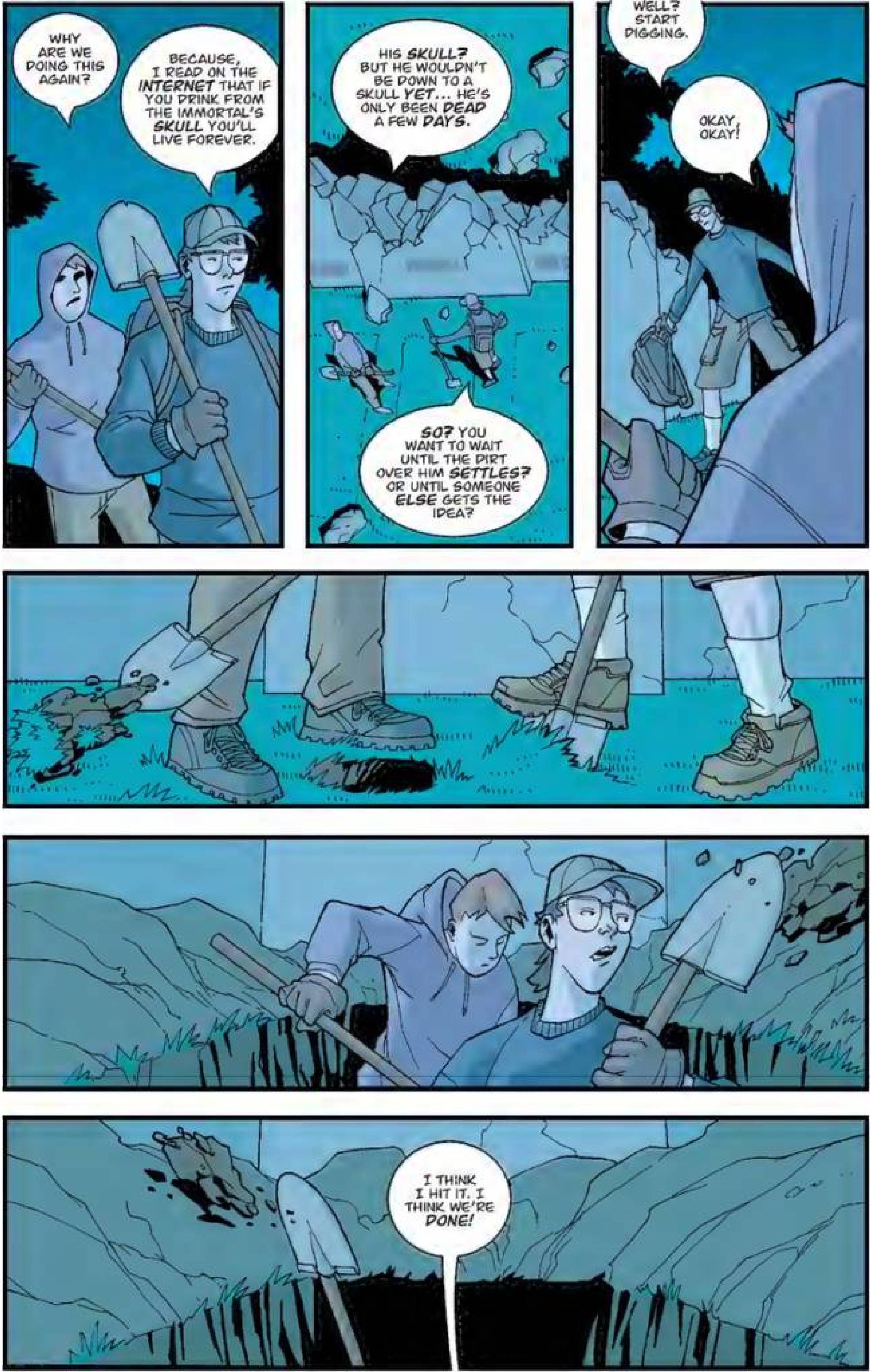

ROBOT?
ANYONE HOME?
COULD YOU HAND ME THAT POWER COUPLING?
YOU DON'T SAY...
OH, I SEE HOW IT'S GOING TO BE *NOW!*
EVE! WAIT!
IT DOESN'T HAVE TO BE THIS WAY...

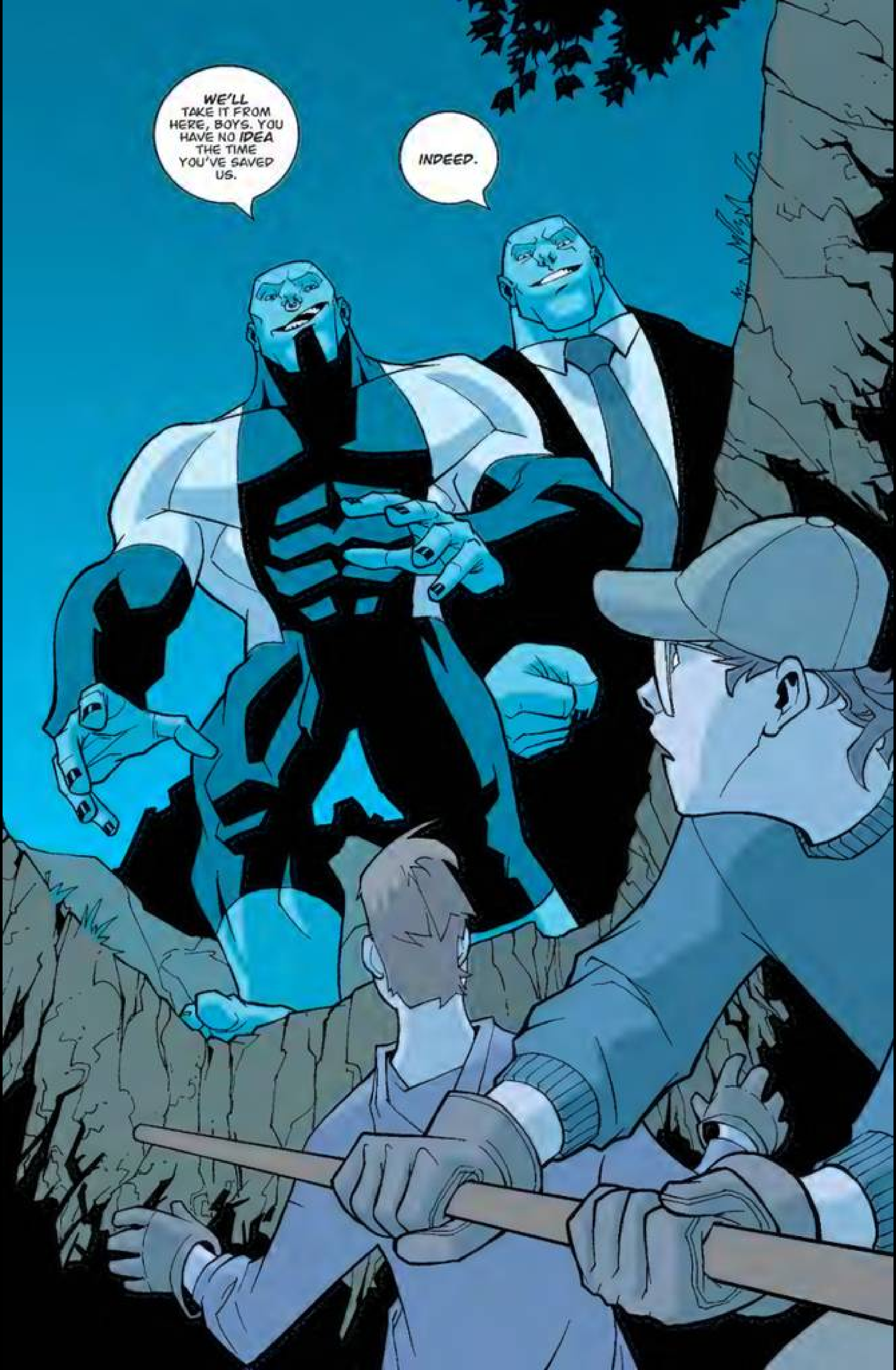

WHAT A DAY...
To: Mark
From: Amber
TAP!
WHAT THE--?!
Call Me!
278-2866

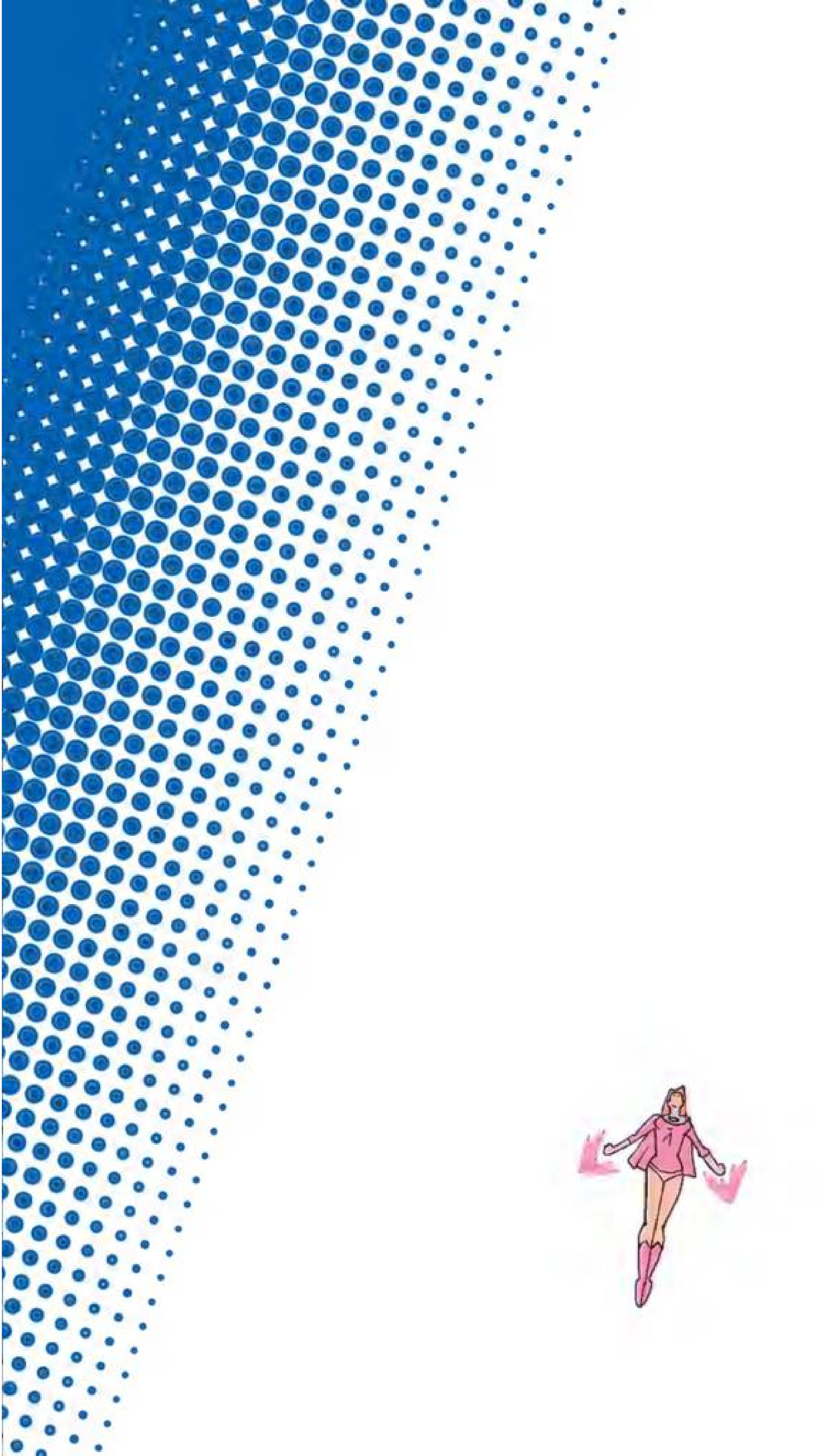

WHOA! CEASE FIRE.
THAP!
OOPS! SORRY.
MAN... THAT AMBER GIRL WANTS ME TO CALL HER.
REALLY? YOU STUD.
I DON'T EVEN KNOW HER... SHE'S IN MY HISTORY CLASS, BUT WE'VE NEVER SPOKEN.
WELL, I GUESS SHE WANTS TO GET TO KNOW YOU.
SEEMS THAT WAY...
SO, WHAT'S UP?
WELL... I'VE BEEN THINKING ABOUT THIS SINCE WE GOT BACK FROM UPSTATE UNIVERSITY THE OTHER DAY.
I WAS THINKING... Y'KNOW... NOW THAT I KNOW YOU CAN DO THINGS I CAN'T... AND EVERY BOY HAS ALWAYS WANTED TO DO... IF MAYBE YOU'D...
SIGH
THIS IS SO GAY.


WHAT ARE YOU DOING OVER THERE?
NOTES FOR A NEW BOOK... I'LL PROBABLY HAVE TO KICK OUT ANOTHER ONE **SOON** IF MARK'S GOING TO **COLLEGE**.
YOU **OKAY?**
I'M **FINE**. WHY DO YOU ASK?
YOU JUST HAVEN'T BEEN YOURSELF LATELY.
JESUS, **DEBBIE!** SEVEN OF MY COLLEAGUES WERE JUST **MURDERED!**
I KNOW THAT, BUT THAT'S **NOT** IT. I'VE **SEEN** YOU SAD, I'VE **SEEN** YOU MOURN BEFORE.
THIS IS **DIFFERENT**. YOU'RE ACTING PREOCCUPIED... **DISTANT**... I CAN'T PUT MY FINGER ON IT.
I'M **FINE**.
OKAY, **OKAY**... FORGET I SAID ANYTHING.

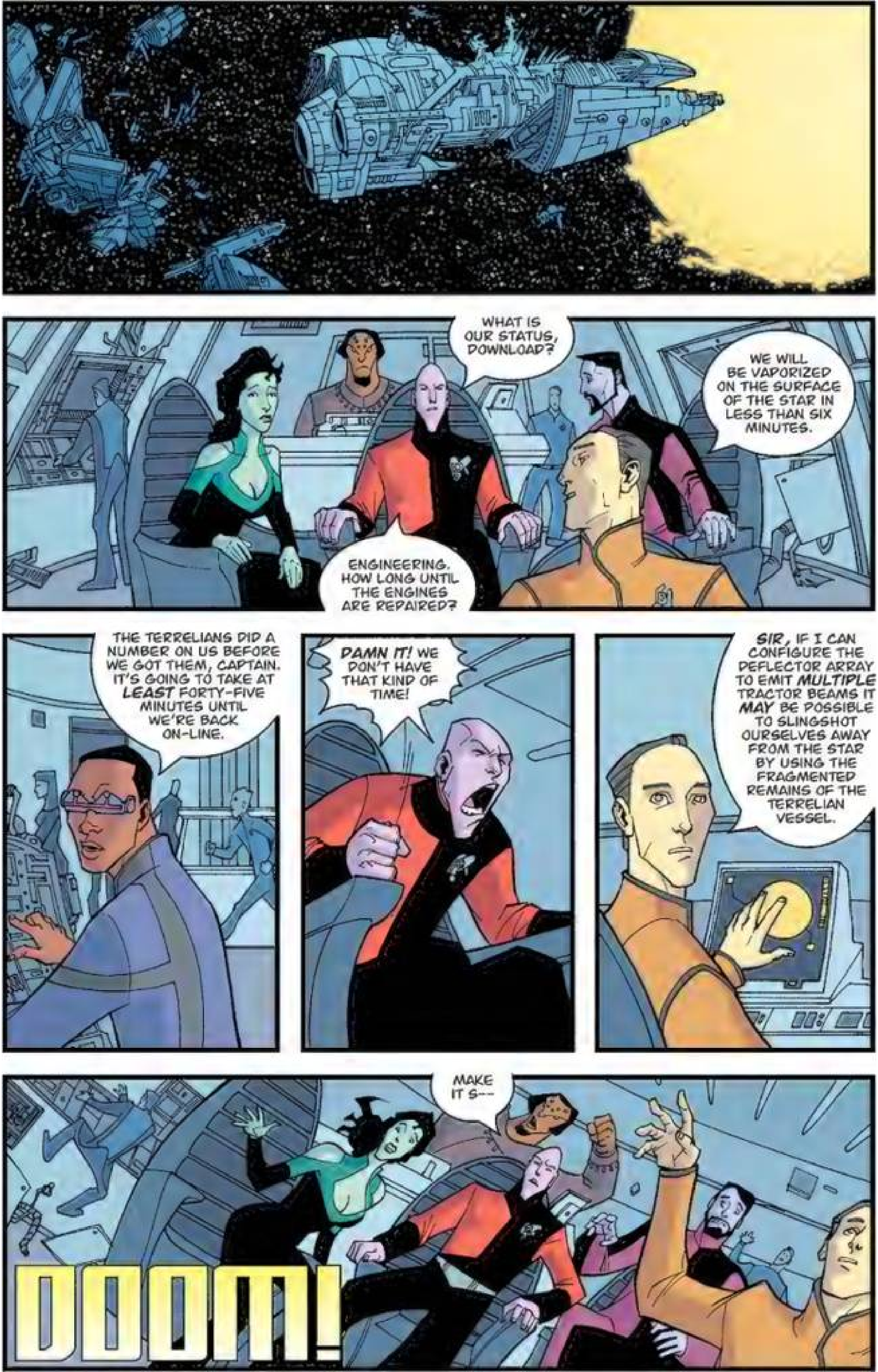

ARLINGTON
CEMETARY
VISITOR
YOU SON OF A BITCH.
IT'S *NOT* A SHORT DRIVE OUT HERE Y'KNOW...
David Hiles
1944-2003
Forgive him, he lost his way.
I CAN'T **BELIEVE** THEY EVEN ALLOWED YOU TO BE BURIED **HERE.**
I GUESS YOUR EX-WIFE FELT **SORRY** FOR YOU-- PULLED SOME **STRINGS** SO YOU COULD BE BURIED WITH YOUR FELLOW **VETERANS...**
YOU WERE **WHAT...** A CLERK?
WELL, I DON'T FEEL SORRY FOR YOU... I DON'T CARE **WHAT** HAPPENED TO YOUR SON TO MAKE YOU DO WHAT YOU DID...
BUT Y'KNOW...
...I **DID** BRING YOU A GIFT.
ZIIIP!
C'MON, **HURRY!** YOU WANNA GET CAUGHT?!

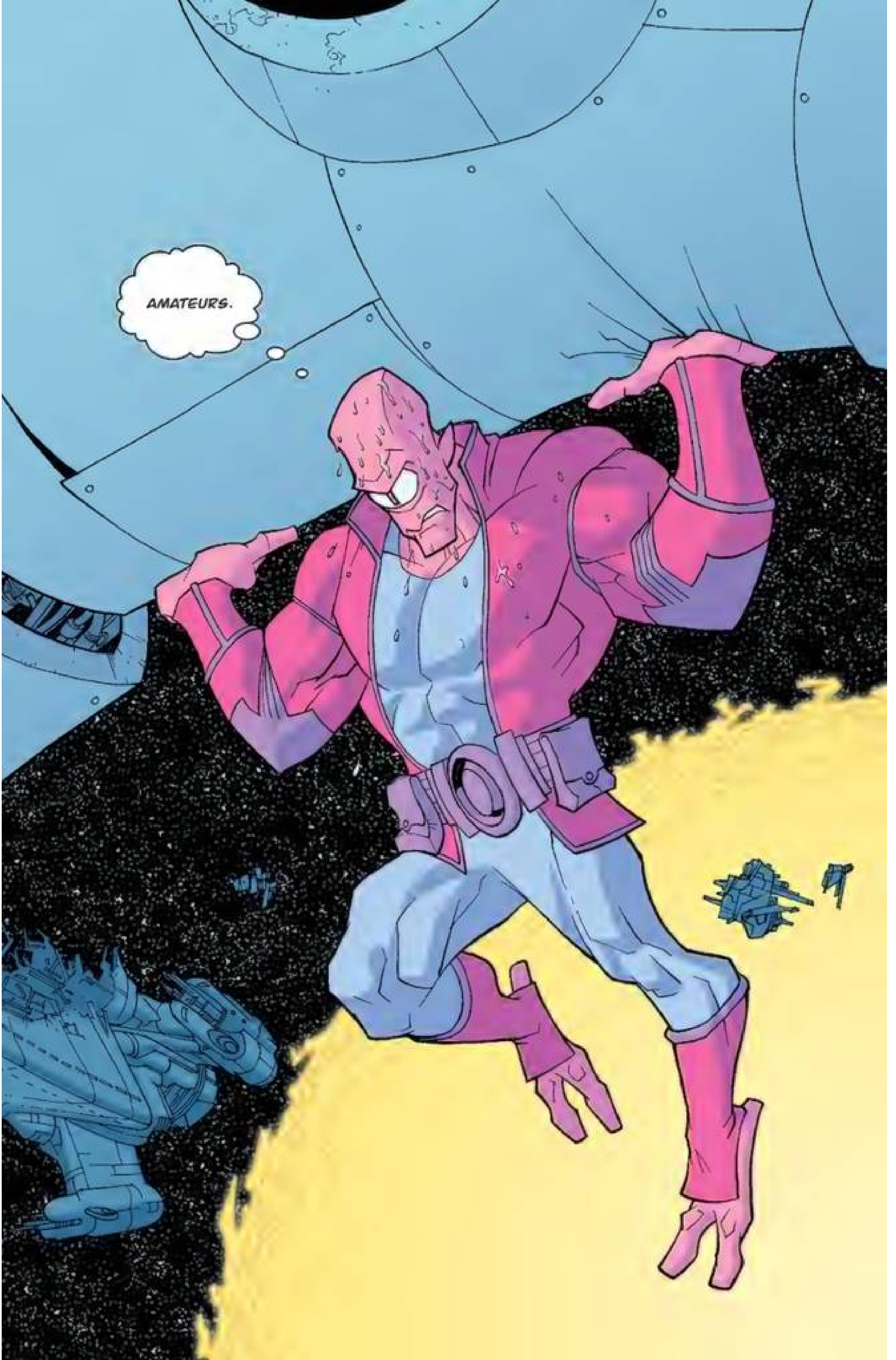

WHY ARE WE DOING THIS AGAIN?
BECAUSE, I READ ON THE INTERNET THAT IF YOU DRINK FROM THE IMMORTAL'S SKULL YOU'LL LIVE FOREVER.
HIS SKULL? BUT HE WOULDN'T BE DOWN TO A SKULL YET... HE'S ONLY BEEN DEAD A FEW DAYS.
SO? YOU WANT TO WAIT UNTIL THE DIRT OVER HIM SETTLES? OR UNTIL SOMEONE ELSE GETS THE IDEA?
WELL? START DIGGING.
OKAY, OKAY!
I THINK I HIT IT. I THINK WE'RE DONE!

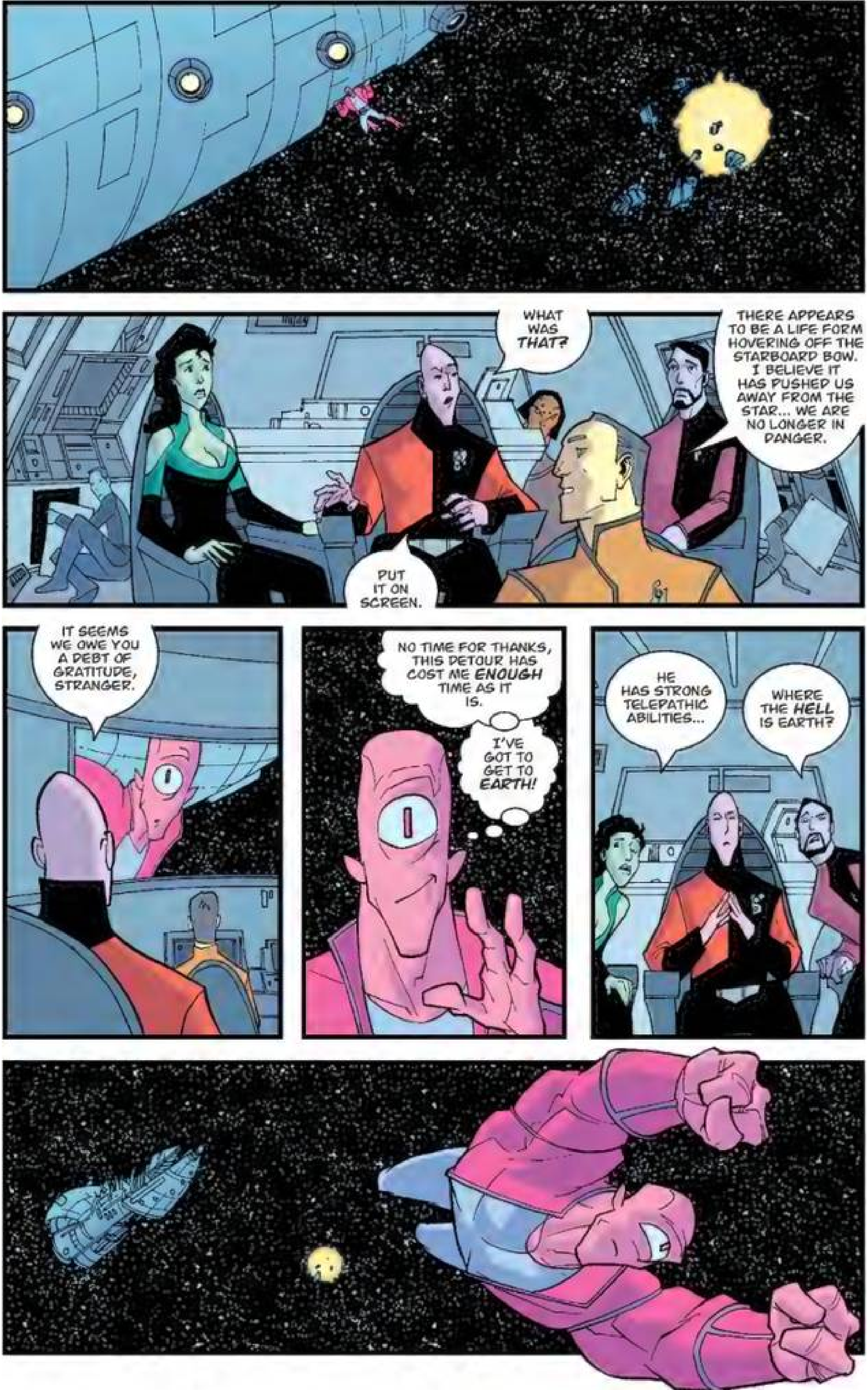

WE'LL TAKE IT FROM HERE, BOYS. YOU HAVE NO IDEA THE TIME YOU'VE SAVED US.
INDEED.

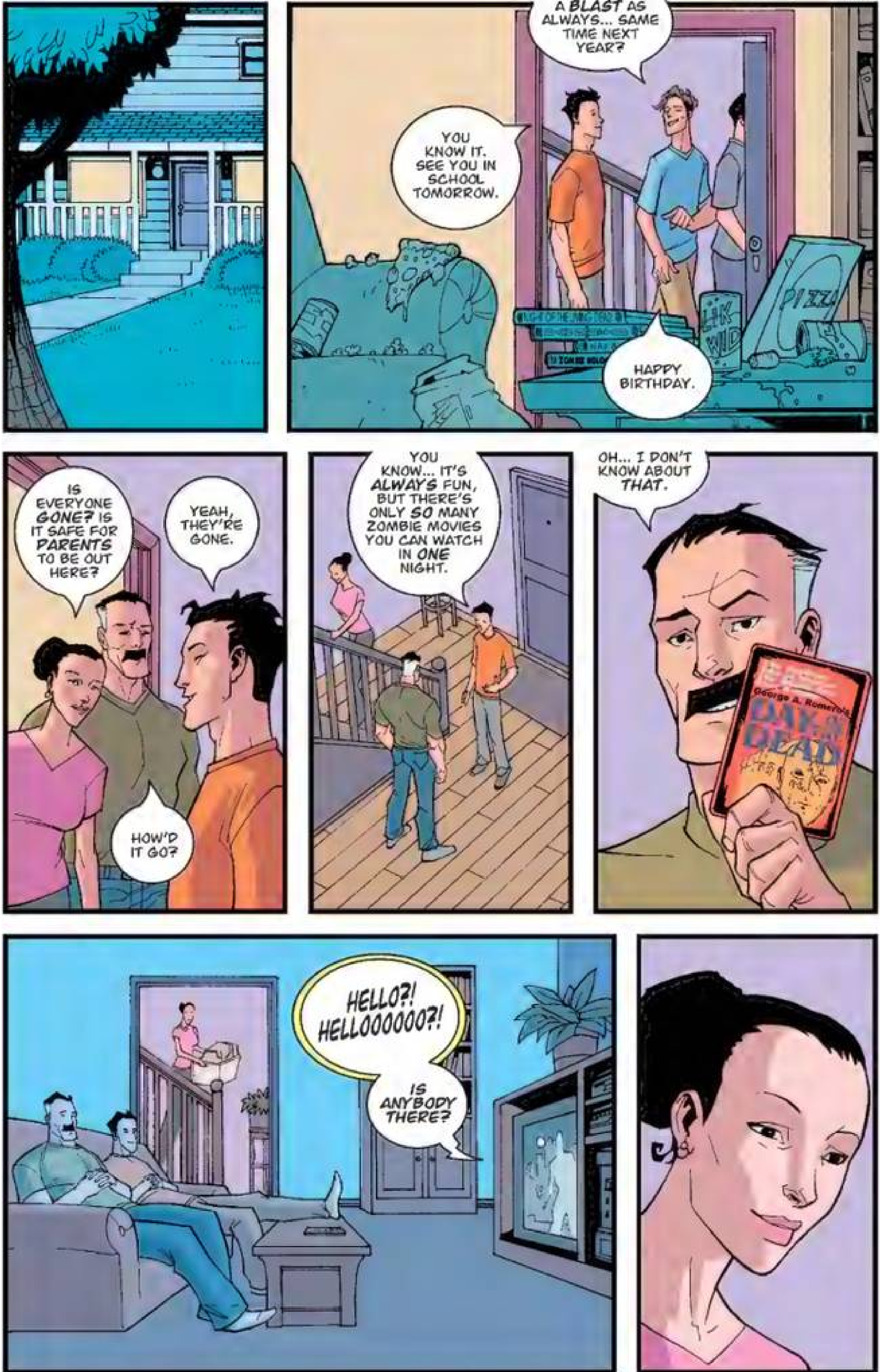


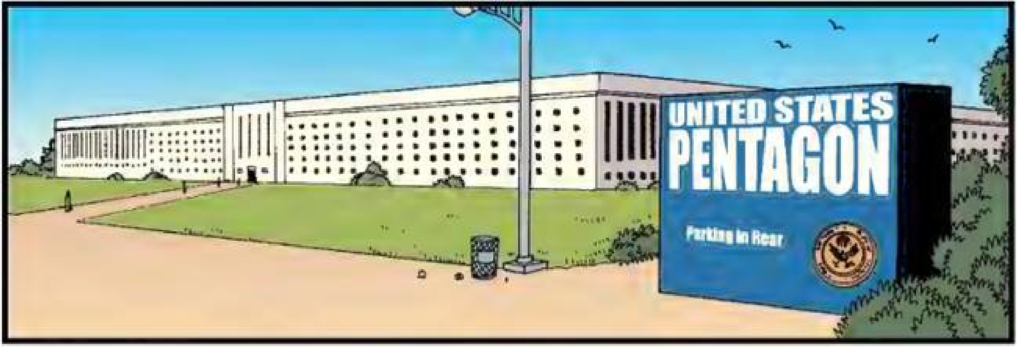
ISSUE NINE

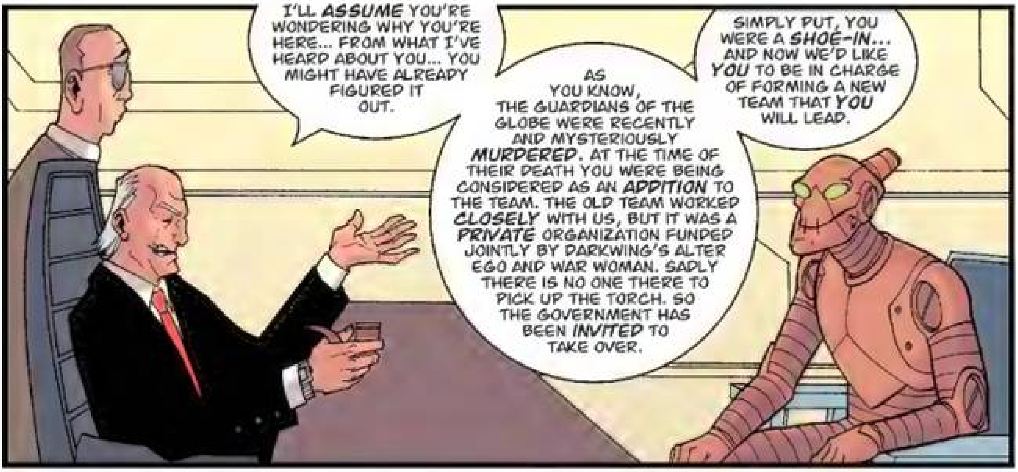

WHAT IS OUR STATUS, DOWNLOAD?
WE WILL BE VAPORIZED ON THE SURFACE OF THE STAR IN LESS THAN SIX MINUTES.
ENGINEERING. HOW LONG UNTIL THE ENGINES ARE REPAIRED?
THE TERRELIANS DID A NUMBER ON US BEFORE WE GOT THEM, CAPTAIN. IT'S GOING TO TAKE AT *LEAST* FORTY-FIVE MINUTES UNTIL WE'RE BACK ON-LINE.
DAMN IT! WE DON'T HAVE THAT KIND OF TIME!
SIR, IF I CAN CONFIGURE THE DEFLECTOR ARRAY TO EMIT *MULTIPLE* TRACTOR BEAMS IT *MAY* BE POSSIBLE TO SLINGSHOT OURSELVES AWAY FROM THE STAR BY USING THE FRAGMENTED REMAINS OF THE TERRELIAN VESSEL.
MAKE IT S--
DOOM!

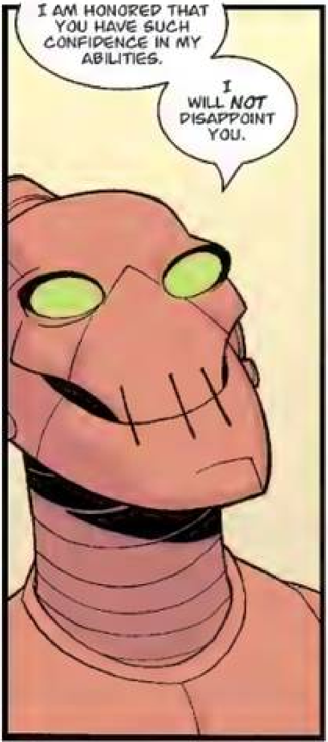

AMATEURS.

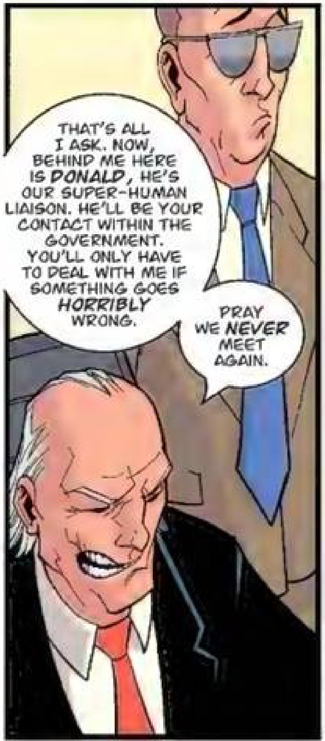

WHAT WAS *THAT?*
THERE APPEARS TO BE A LIFE FORM HOVERING OFF THE STARBOARD BOW. I BELIEVE IT HAS PUSHED US AWAY FROM THE STAR... WE ARE NO LONGER IN DANGER.
PUT IT ON SCREEN.
IT SEEMS WE OWE YOU A DEBT OF GRATITUDE, STRANGER.
NO TIME FOR THANKS, THIS DETOUR HAS COST ME *ENOUGH* TIME AS IT IS.
I'VE GOT TO GET TO *EARTH!*
HE HAS STRONG TELEPATHIC ABILITIES...
WHERE THE *HELL* IS EARTH?

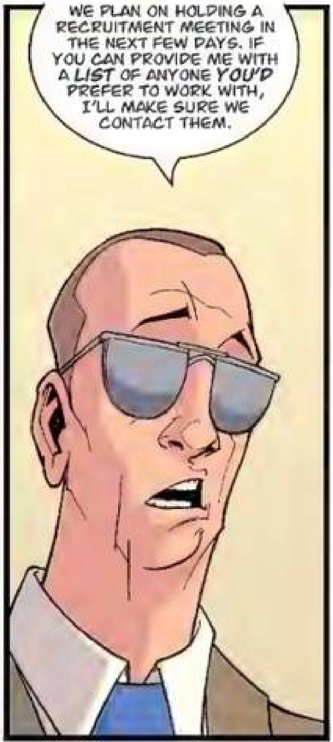

A BLAST AS ALWAYS... SAME TIME NEXT YEAR?
YOU KNOW IT. SEE YOU IN SCHOOL TOMORROW.
PIZZA
HAPPY BIRTHDAY.
IS EVERYONE GONE? IS IT SAFE FOR PARENTS TO BE OUT HERE?
YEAH, THEY'RE GONE.
HOW'D IT GO?
YOU KNOW... IT'S ALWAYS FUN, BUT THERE'S ONLY SO MANY ZOMBIE MOVIES YOU CAN WATCH IN ONE NIGHT.
OH... I DON'T KNOW ABOUT THAT.
George A. Romero's DAY of the DEAD
HELLO?! HELLOOOOOO?!
IS ANYBODY THERE?

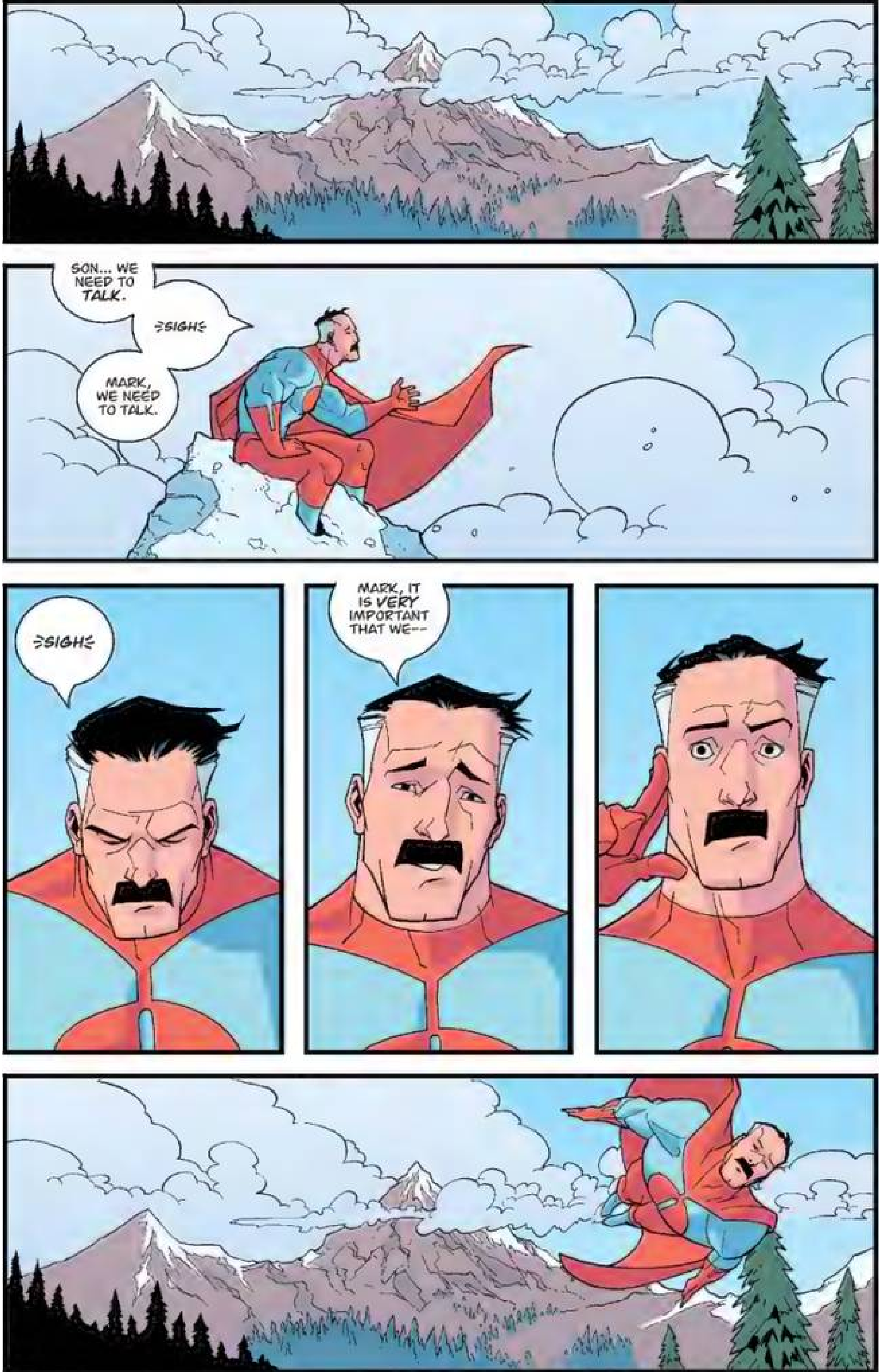

UNITED STATES
PENTAGON
Parking in Rear

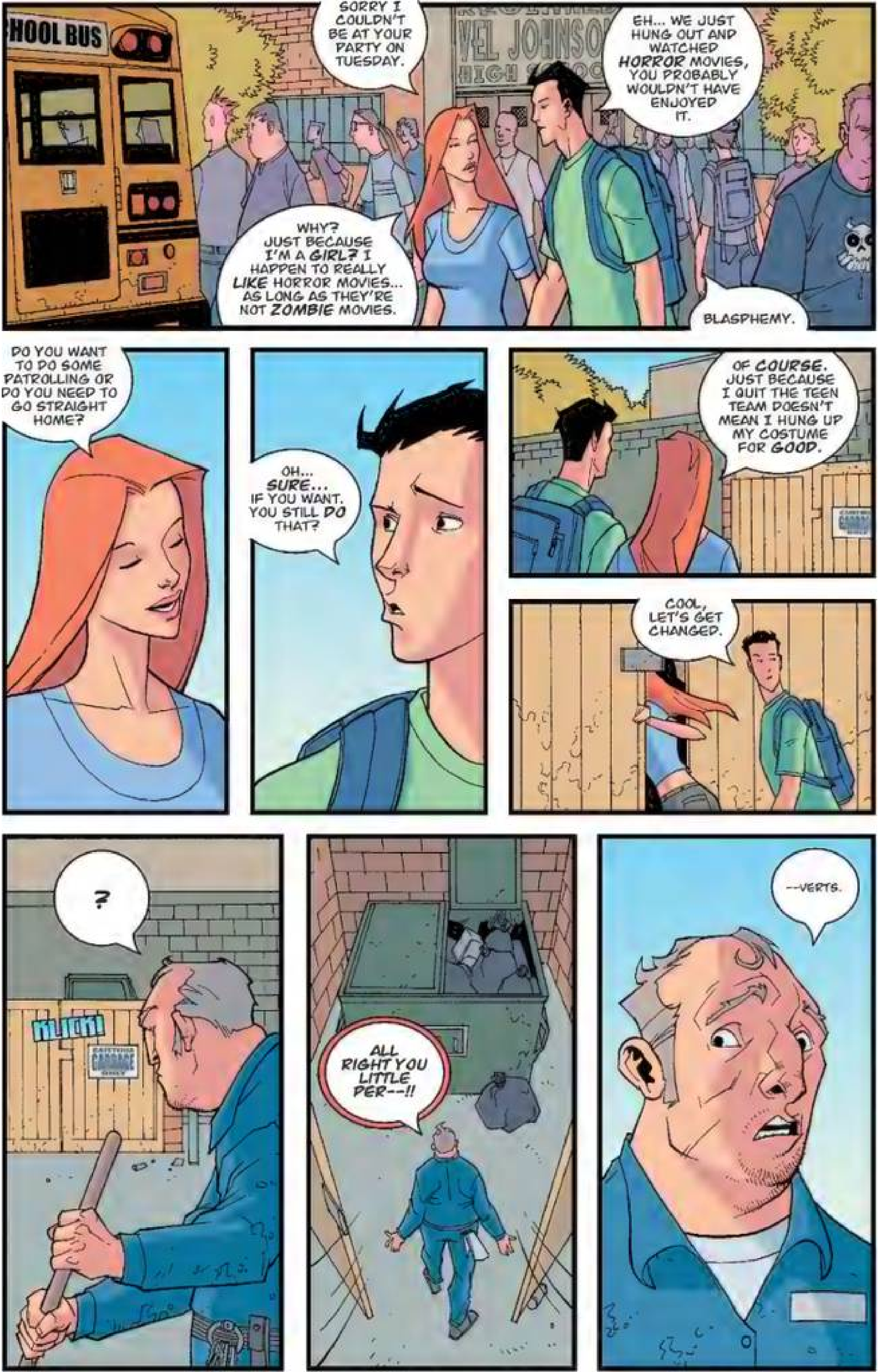

I'LL ASSUME YOU'RE WONDERING WHY YOU'RE HERE... FROM WHAT I'VE HEARD ABOUT YOU... YOU MIGHT HAVE ALREADY FIGURED IT OUT.
AS YOU KNOW, THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE WERE RECENTLY AND MYSTERIOUSLY MURDERED. AT THE TIME OF THEIR DEATH YOU WERE BEING CONSIDERED AS AN ADDITION TO THE TEAM. THE OLD TEAM WORKED CLOSELY WITH US, BUT IT WAS A PRIVATE ORGANIZATION FUNDED JOINTLY BY DARKWING'S ALTER EGO AND WAR WOMAN. SADLY THERE IS NO ONE THERE TO PICK UP THE TORCH. SO THE GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN INVITED TO TAKE OVER.
SIMPLY PUT, YOU WERE A SHOE-IN... AND NOW WE'D LIKE YOU TO BE IN CHARGE OF FORMING A NEW TEAM THAT YOU WILL LEAD.

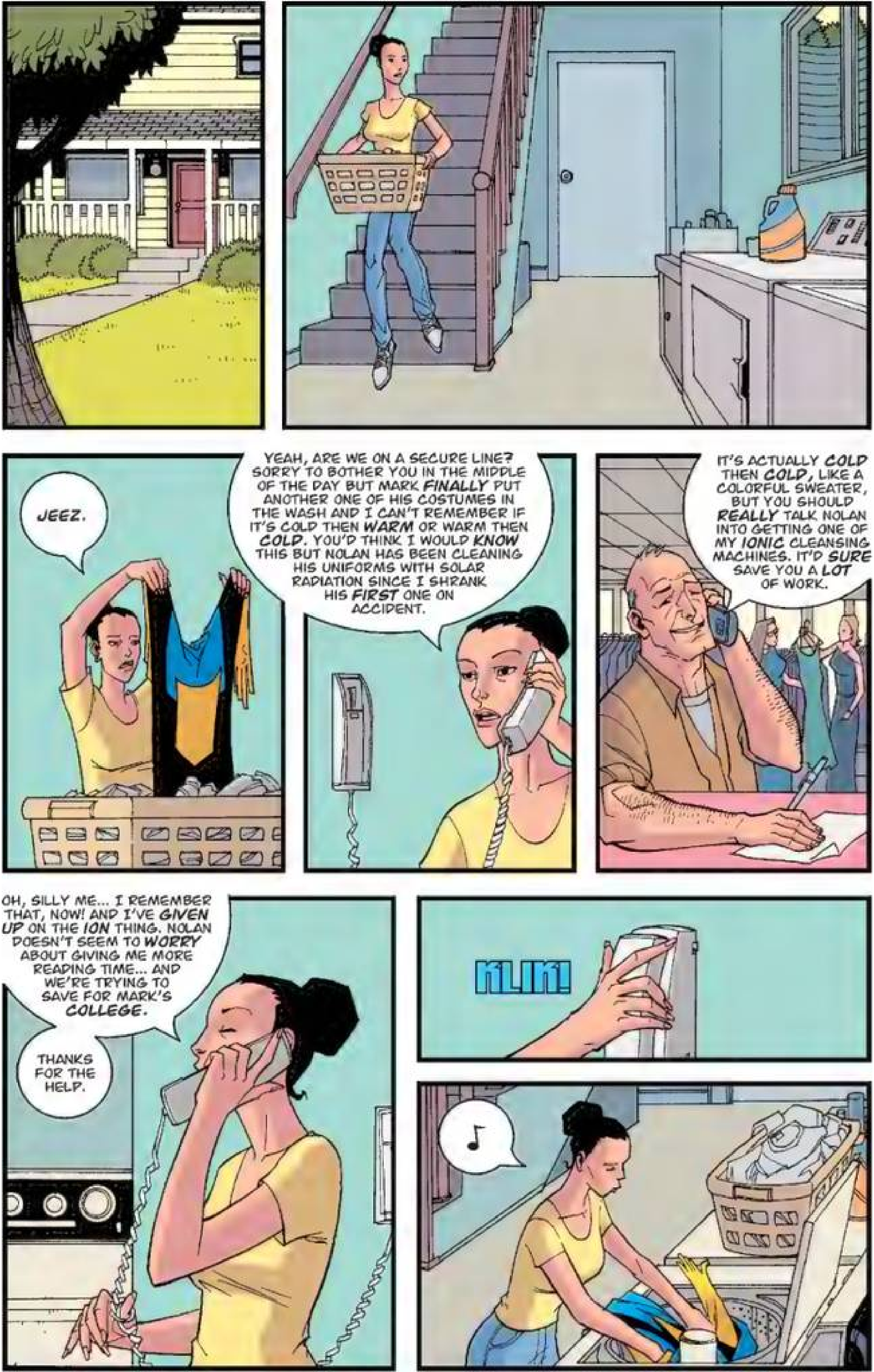

I AM HONORED THAT YOU HAVE SUCH CONFIDENCE IN MY ABILITIES.
I WILL NOT DISAPPOINT YOU.

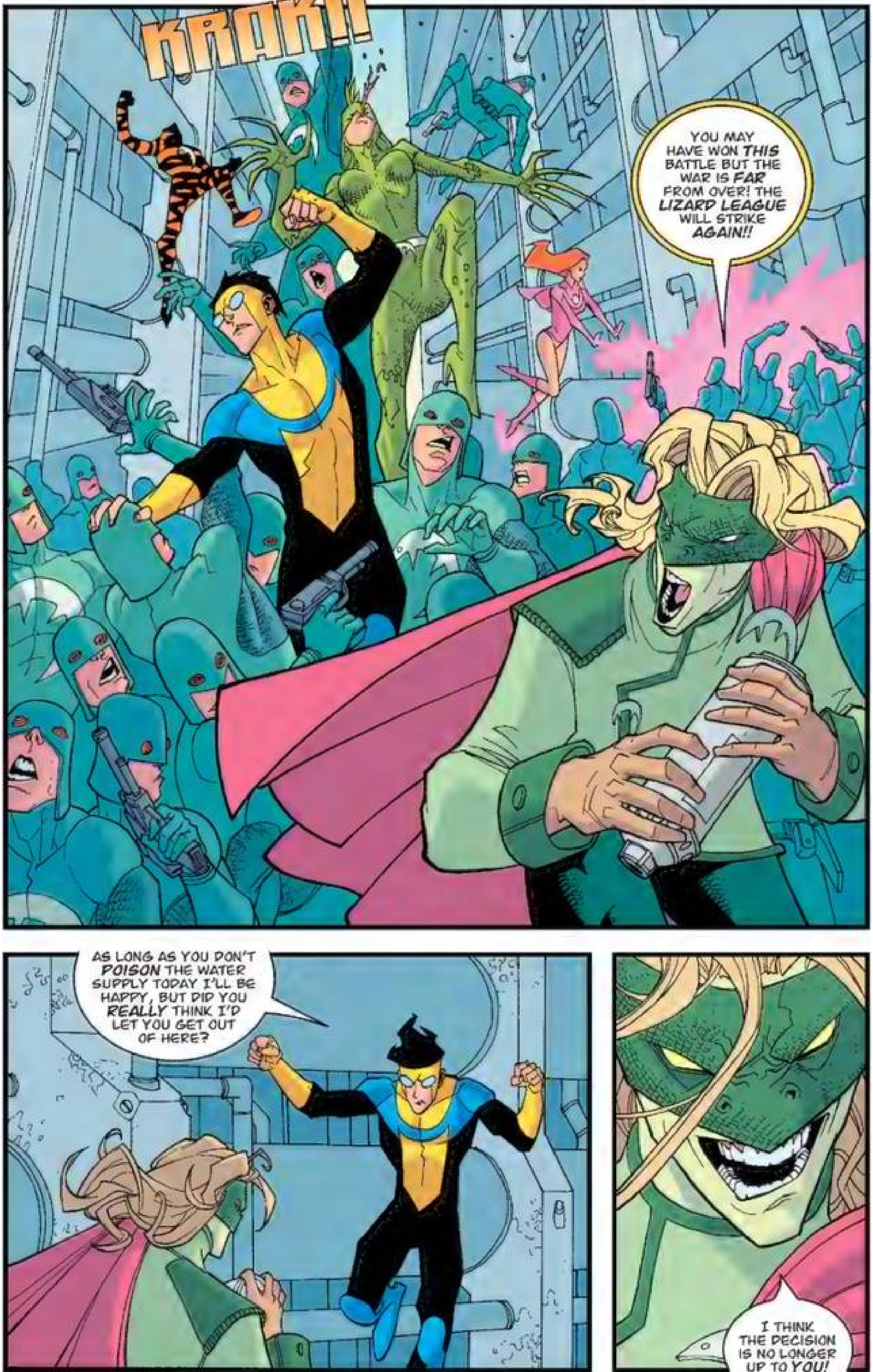

THAT'S ALL I ASK. NOW, BEHIND ME HERE IS DONALD, HE'S OUR SUPER-HUMAN LIAISON. HE'LL BE YOUR CONTACT WITHIN THE GOVERNMENT. YOU'LL ONLY HAVE TO DEAL WITH ME IF SOMETHING GOES HORRIBLY WRONG.
PRAY WE NEVER MEET AGAIN.

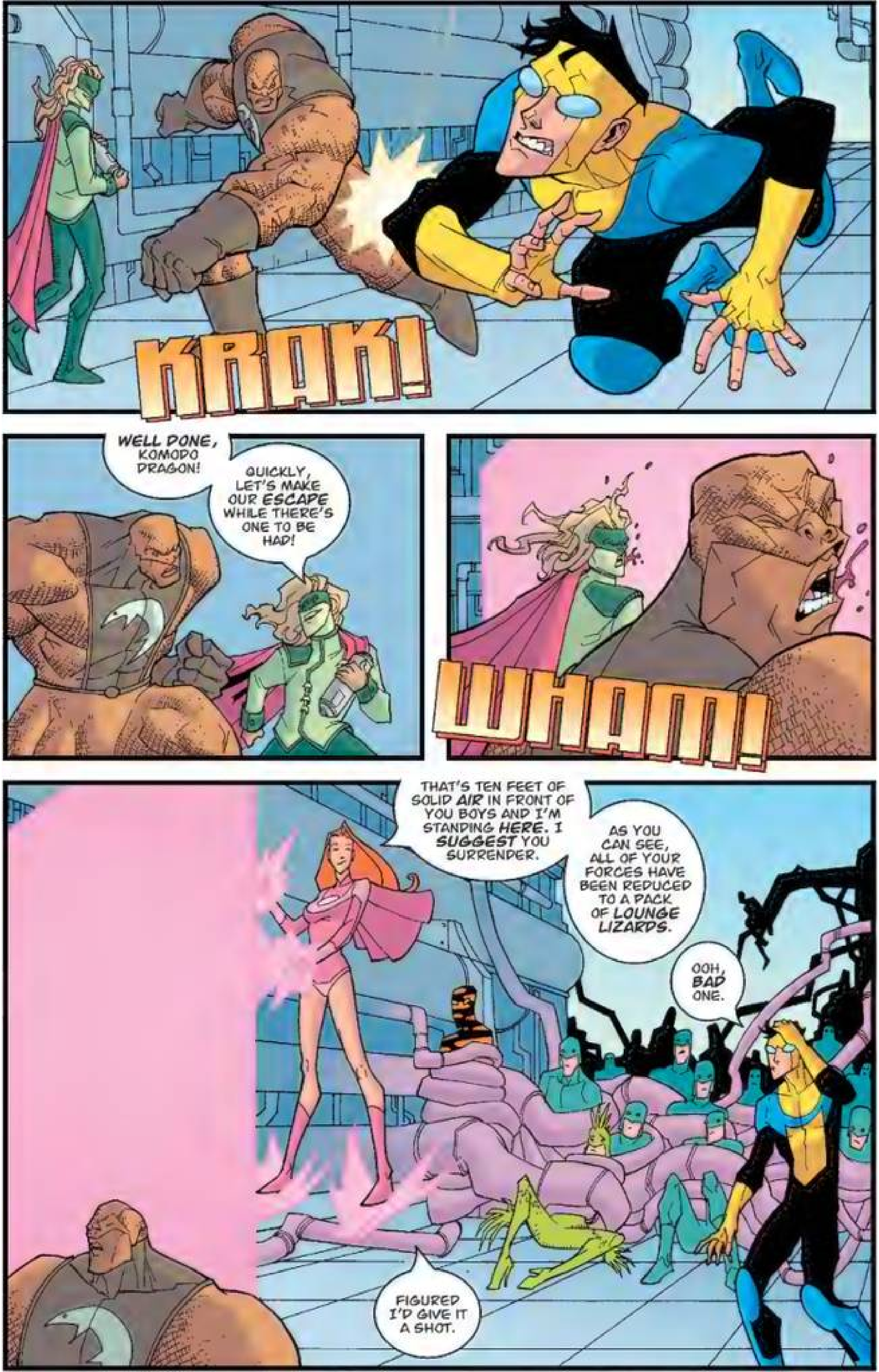

WE PLAN ON HOLDING A RECRUITMENT MEETING IN THE NEXT FEW DAYS. IF YOU CAN PROVIDE ME WITH A LIST OF ANYONE YOU'D PREFER TO WORK WITH, I'LL MAKE SURE WE CONTACT THEM.

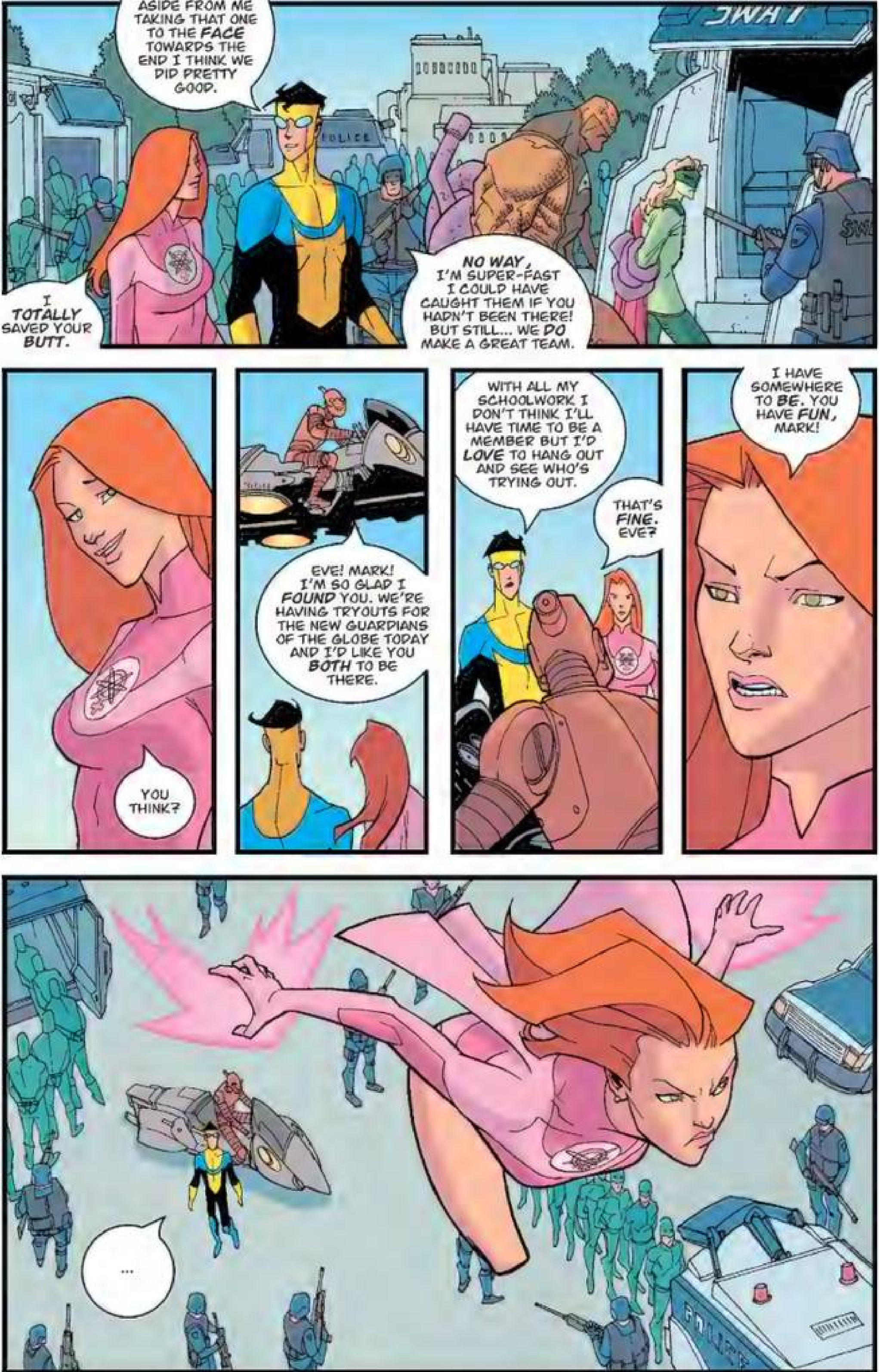

SON... WE NEED TO *TALK*.
≡SIGH≡
MARK, WE NEED TO TALK.
≡SIGH≡
MARK, IT IS *VERY* IMPORTANT THAT WE--

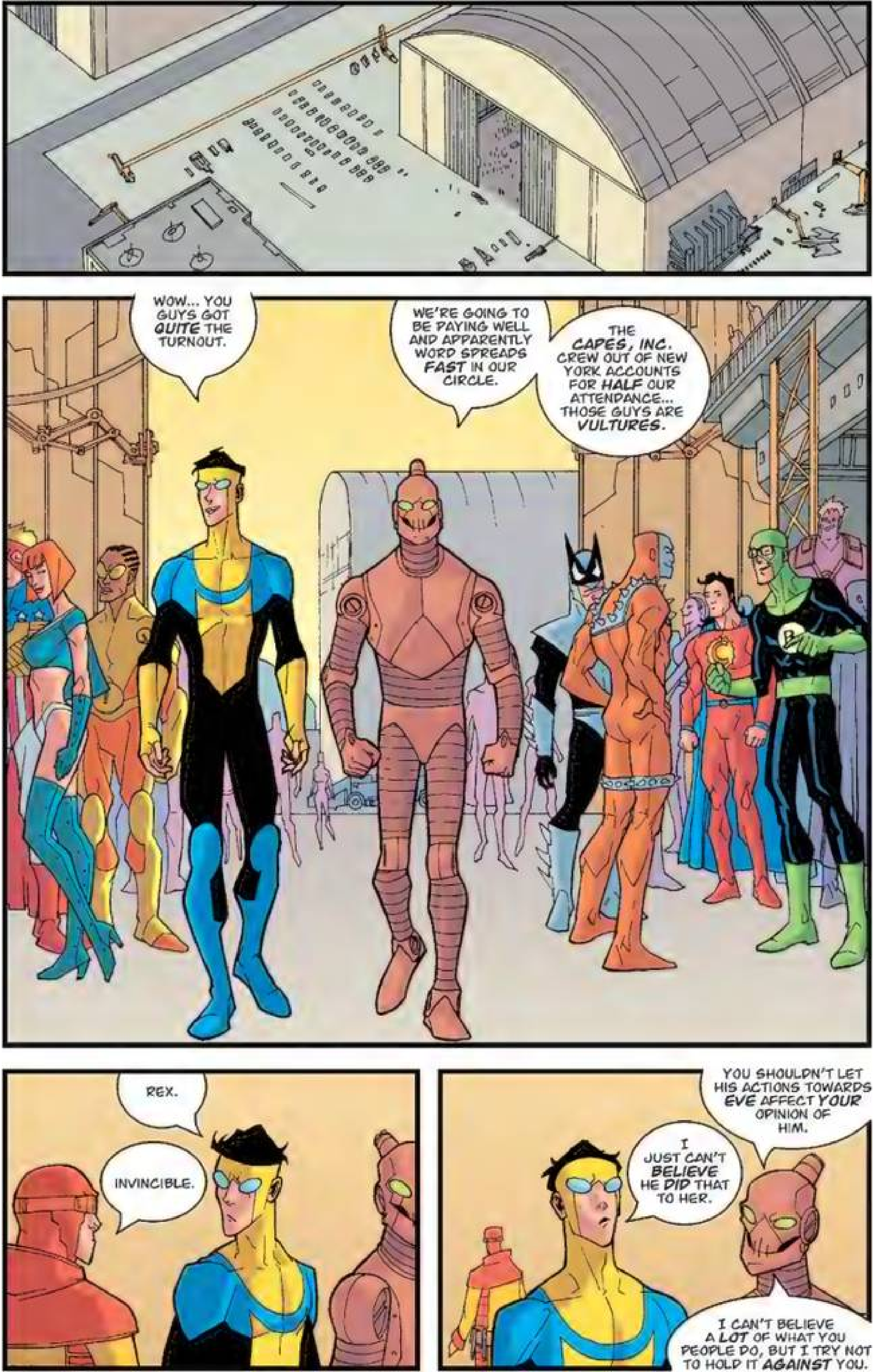

HOOL BUS
VEL JOHNSO
SORRY I COULDN'T BE AT YOUR PARTY ON TUESDAY.
EH... WE JUST HUNG OUT AND WATCHED **HORROR** MOVIES, YOU PROBABLY WOULDN'T HAVE ENJOYED IT.
WHY? JUST BECAUSE I'M A **GIRL?** I HAPPEN TO REALLY **LIKE** HORROR MOVIES... AS LONG AS THEY'RE NOT **ZOMBIE** MOVIES.
BLASPHEMY.
DO YOU WANT TO DO SOME PATROLLING OR DO YOU NEED TO GO STRAIGHT HOME?
OH... **SURE...** IF YOU WANT. YOU STILL **DO** THAT?
OF **COURSE.** JUST BECAUSE I QUIT THE TEEN TEAM DOESN'T MEAN I HUNG UP MY COSTUME FOR **GOOD.**
COOL, LET'S GET CHANGED.
?
ALL RIGHT YOU LITTLE PER--!!
--VERTS.

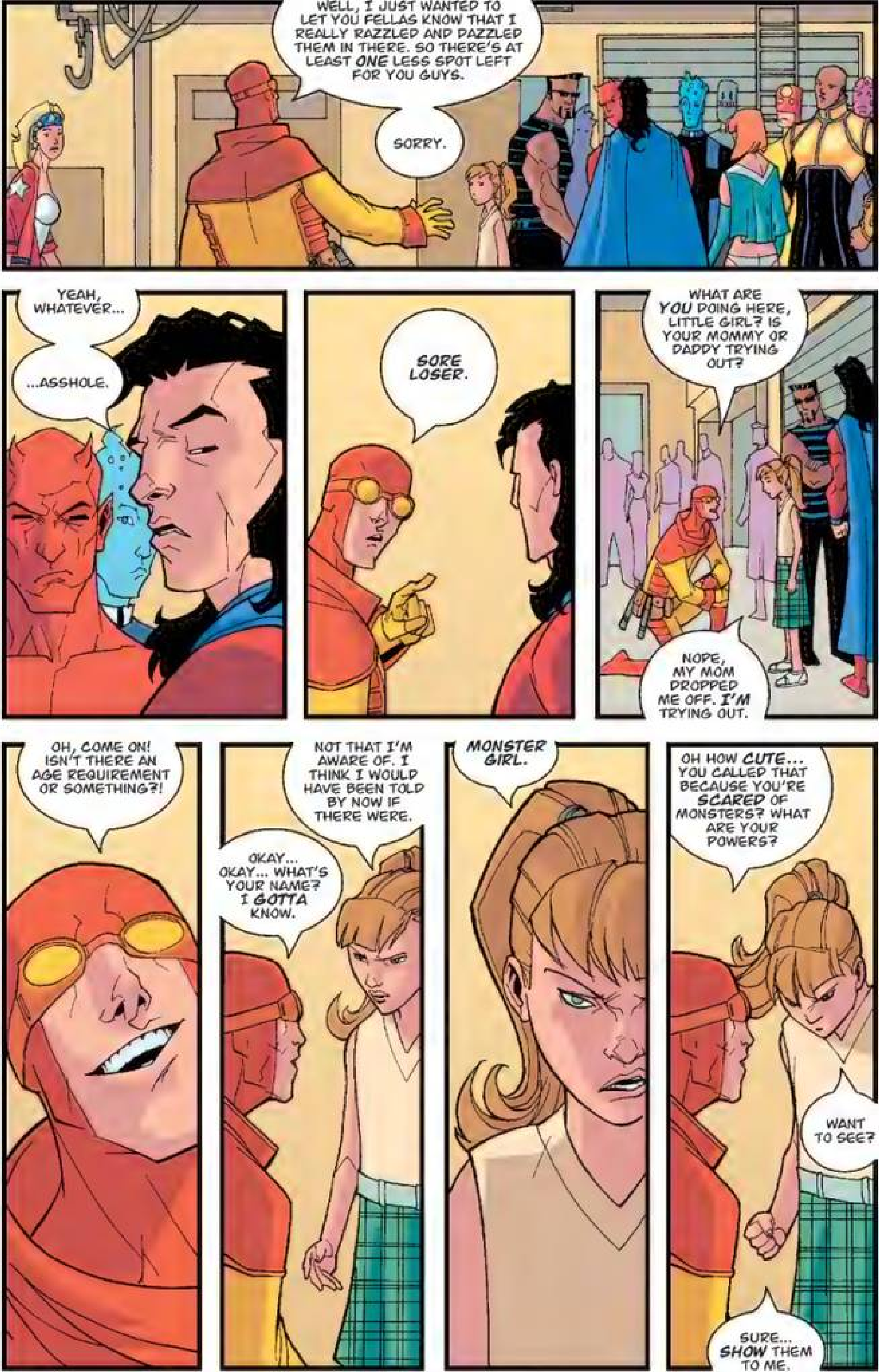

JEEZ.
YEAH, ARE WE ON A SECURE LINE? SORRY TO BOTHER YOU IN THE MIDDLE OF THE DAY BUT MARK FINALLY PUT ANOTHER ONE OF HIS COSTUMES IN THE WASH AND I CAN'T REMEMBER IF IT'S COLD THEN WARM OR WARM THEN COLD. YOU'D THINK I WOULD KNOW THIS BUT NOLAN HAS BEEN CLEANING HIS UNIFORMS WITH SOLAR RADIATION SINCE I SHRANK HIS FIRST ONE ON ACCIDENT.
IT'S ACTUALLY COLD THEN COLD, LIKE A COLORFUL SWEATER, BUT YOU SHOULD REALLY TALK NOLAN INTO GETTING ONE OF MY IONIC CLEANSING MACHINES. IT'D SURE SAVE YOU A LOT OF WORK.
OH, SILLY ME... I REMEMBER THAT, NOW! AND I'VE GIVEN UP ON THE ION THING. NOLAN DOESN'T SEEM TO WORRY ABOUT GIVING ME MORE READING TIME... AND WE'RE TRYING TO SAVE FOR MARK'S COLLEGE.
THANKS FOR THE HELP.
KLIK!
♪

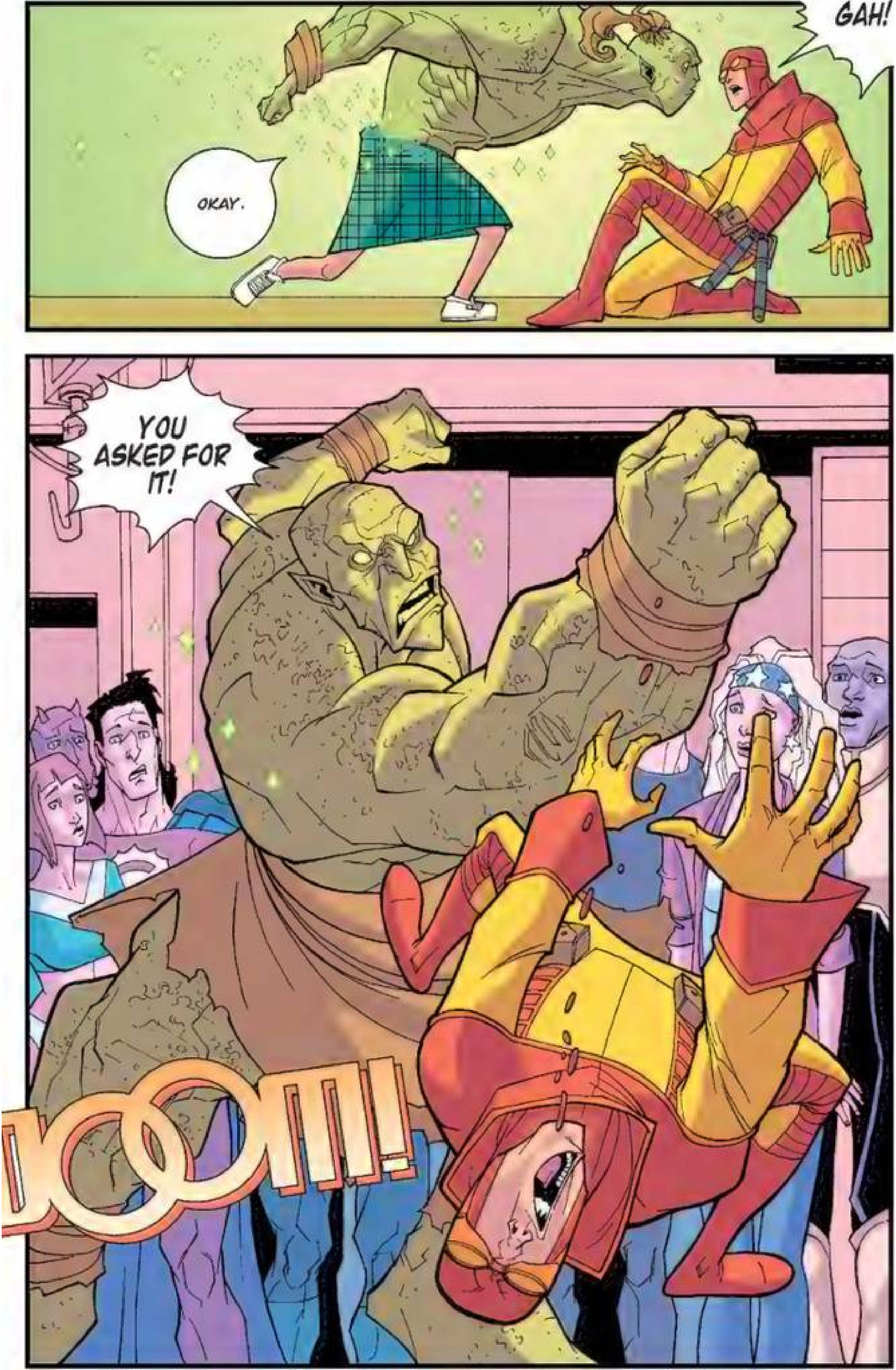

KRAK!!
YOU MAY HAVE WON THIS BATTLE BUT THE WAR IS FAR FROM OVER! THE LIZARD LEAGUE WILL STRIKE AGAIN!!
AS LONG AS YOU DON'T POISON THE WATER SUPPLY TODAY I'LL BE HAPPY, BUT DID YOU REALLY THINK I'D LET YOU GET OUT OF HERE?
I THINK THE DECISION IS NO LONGER UP TO YOU!

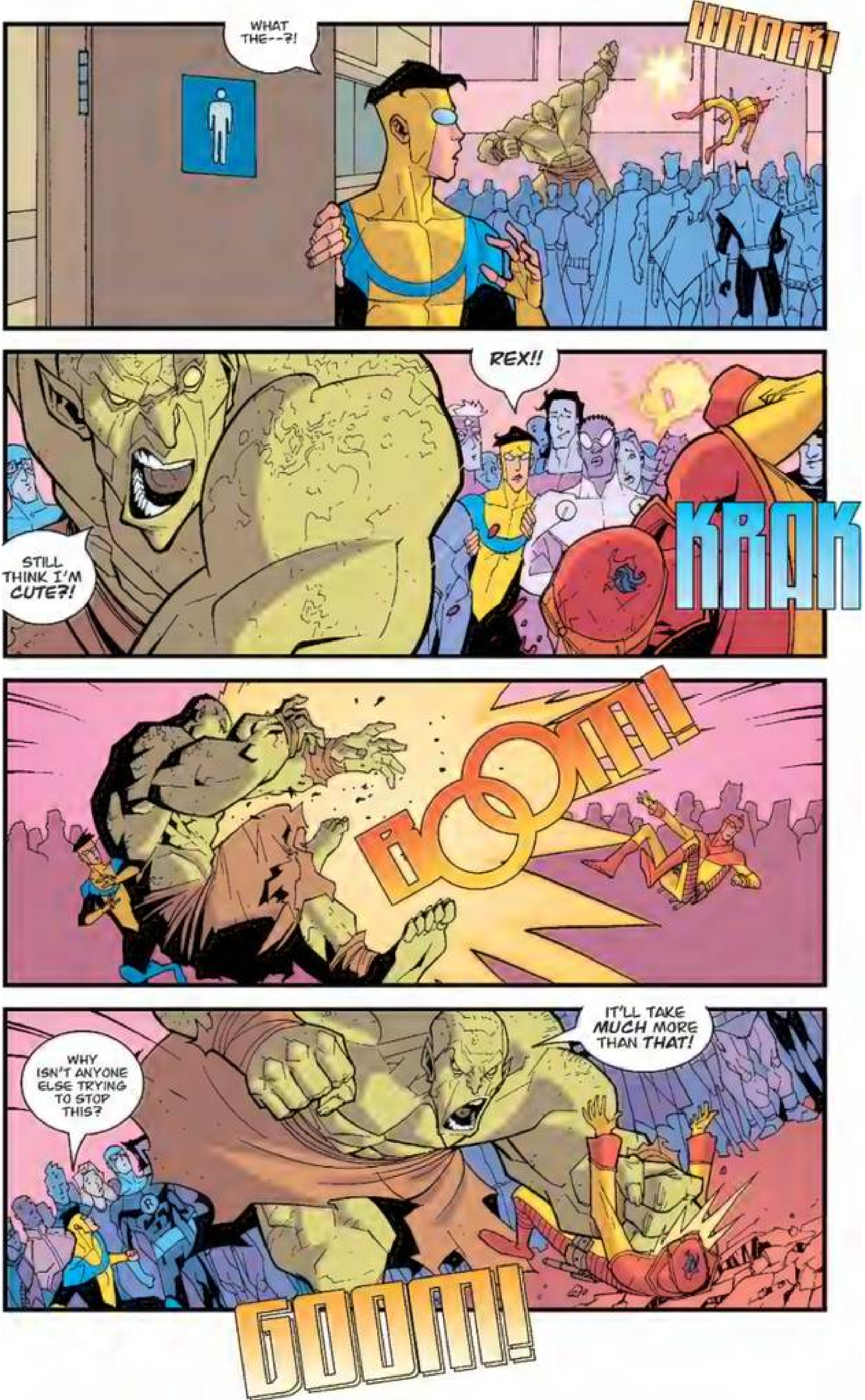

KRAK!
WELL DONE, KOMODO DRAGON!
QUICKLY, LET'S MAKE OUR ESCAPE WHILE THERE'S ONE TO BE HAD!
WHAM!
THAT'S TEN FEET OF SOLID AIR IN FRONT OF YOU BOYS AND I'M STANDING HERE. I SUGGEST YOU SURRENDER.
AS YOU CAN SEE, ALL OF YOUR FORCES HAVE BEEN REDUCED TO A PACK OF LOUNGE LIZARDS.
OOH, BAD ONE.
FIGURED I'D GIVE IT A SHOT.

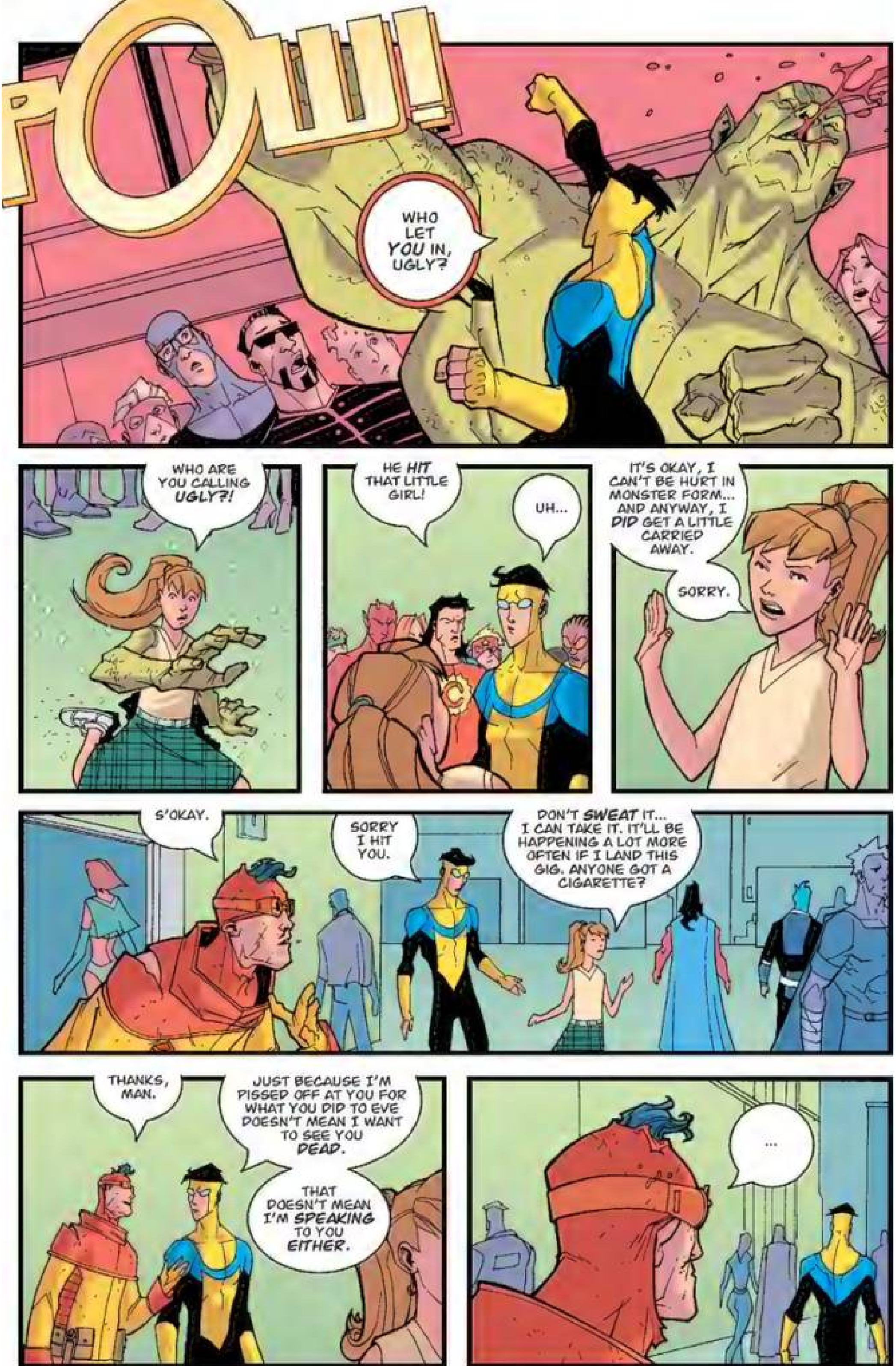

SWAT
POLICE
ASIDE FROM ME TAKING THAT ONE TO THE FACE TOWARDS THE END I THINK WE DID PRETTY GOOD.
I TOTALLY SAVED YOUR BUTT.
NO WAY, I'M SUPER-FAST I COULD HAVE CAUGHT THEM IF YOU HADN'T BEEN THERE! BUT STILL... WE DO MAKE A GREAT TEAM.
SWAT
YOU THINK?
EVE! MARK! I'M SO GLAD I FOUND YOU. WE'RE HAVING TRYOUTS FOR THE NEW GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE TODAY AND I'D LIKE YOU BOTH TO BE THERE.
WITH ALL MY SCHOOLWORK I DON'T THINK I'LL HAVE TIME TO BE A MEMBER BUT I'D LOVE TO HANG OUT AND SEE WHO'S TRYING OUT.
THAT'S FINE. EVE?
I HAVE SOMEWHERE TO BE. YOU HAVE FUN, MARK!
...
POLICE

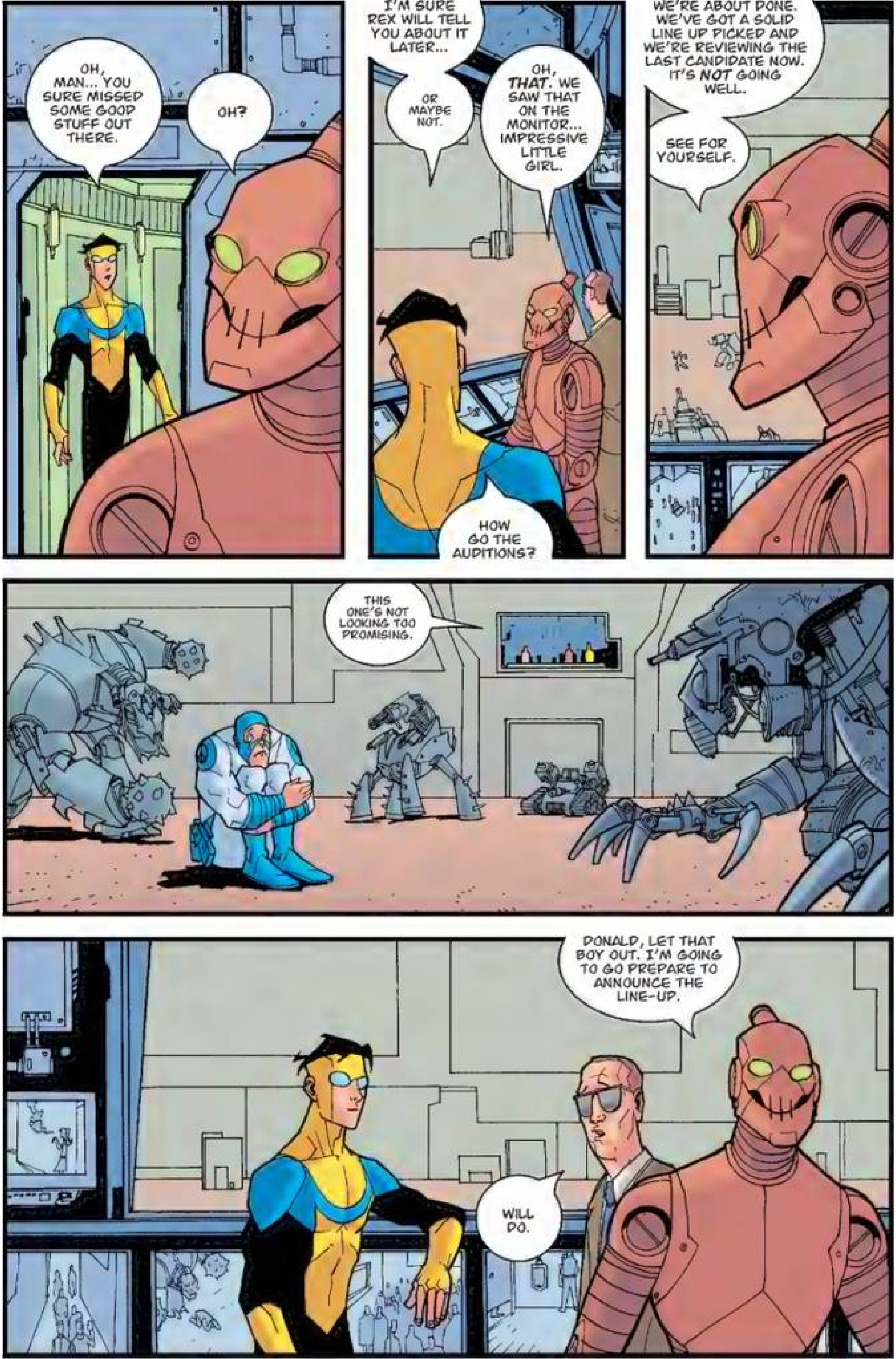

WOW... YOU GUYS GOT *QUITE* THE TURNOUT.
WE'RE GOING TO BE PAYING WELL AND APPARENTLY WORD SPREADS *FAST* IN OUR CIRCLE.
THE *CAPES, INC.* CREW OUT OF NEW YORK ACCOUNTS FOR *HALF* OUR ATTENDANCE... THOSE GUYS ARE *VULTURES*.
REX.
INVINCIBLE.
YOU SHOULDN'T LET HIS ACTIONS TOWARDS *EVE* AFFECT *YOUR* OPINION OF HIM.
I JUST CAN'T *BELIEVE* HE *DID* THAT TO HER.
I CAN'T BELIEVE A *LOT* OF WHAT YOU PEOPLE DO, BUT I TRY NOT TO HOLD IT *AGAINST* YOU.

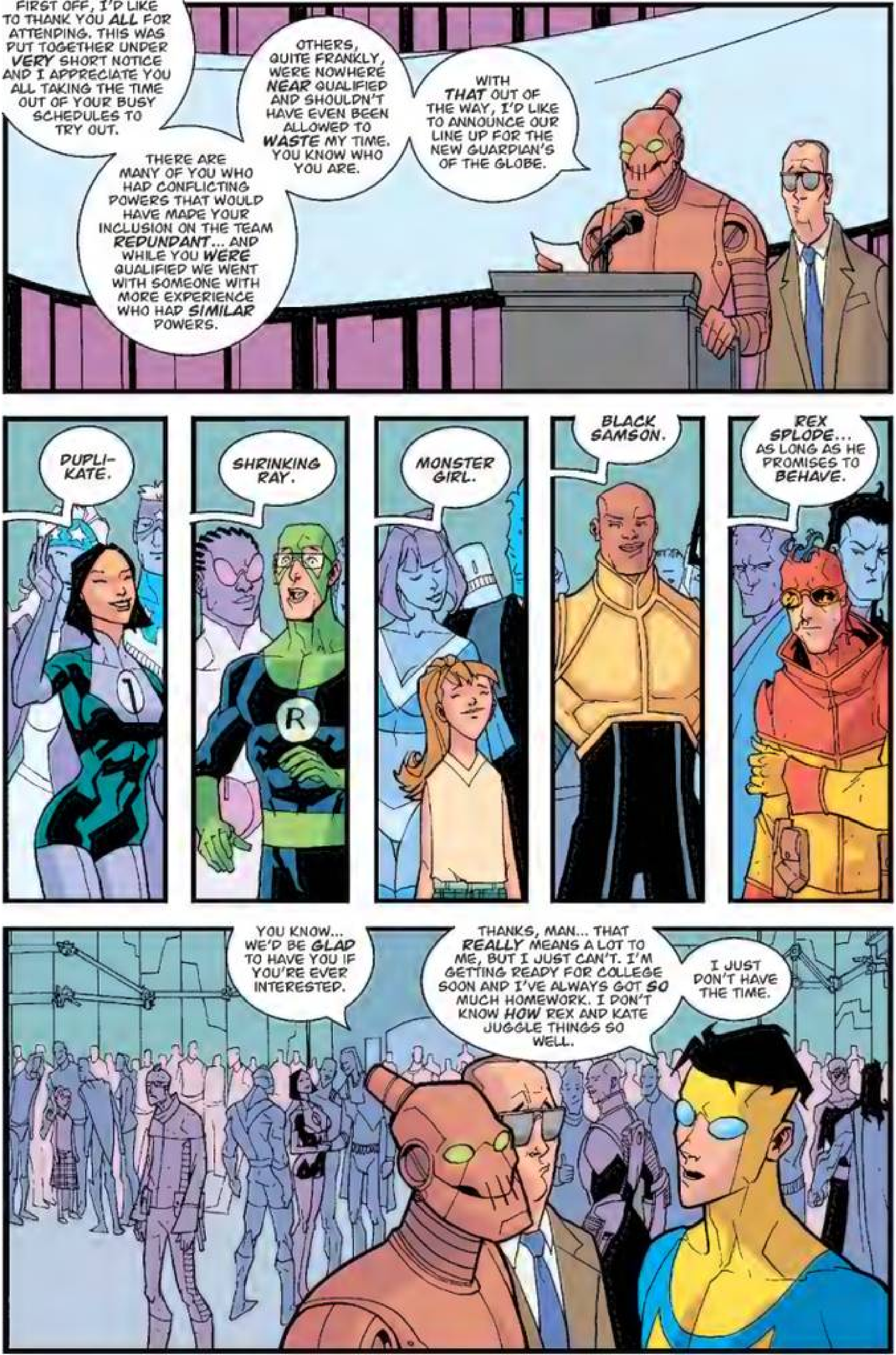

WELL, I JUST WANTED TO LET YOU FELLAS KNOW THAT I REALLY RAZZLED AND DAZZLED THEM IN THERE. SO THERE'S AT LEAST ONE LESS SPOT LEFT FOR YOU GUYS.
SORRY.
YEAH, WHATEVER...
...ASSHOLE.
SORE LOSER.
WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE, LITTLE GIRL? IS YOUR MOMMY OR DADDY TRYING OUT?
NOPE, MY MOM DROPPED ME OFF. I'M TRYING OUT.
OH, COME ON! ISN'T THERE AN AGE REQUIREMENT OR SOMETHING?!
NOT THAT I'M AWARE OF. I THINK I WOULD HAVE BEEN TOLD BY NOW IF THERE WERE.
OKAY... OKAY... WHAT'S YOUR NAME? I GOTTA KNOW.
MONSTER GIRL.
OH HOW CUTE... YOU CALLED THAT BECAUSE YOU'RE SCARED OF MONSTERS? WHAT ARE YOUR POWERS?
WANT TO SEE?
SURE... SHOW THEM TO ME.

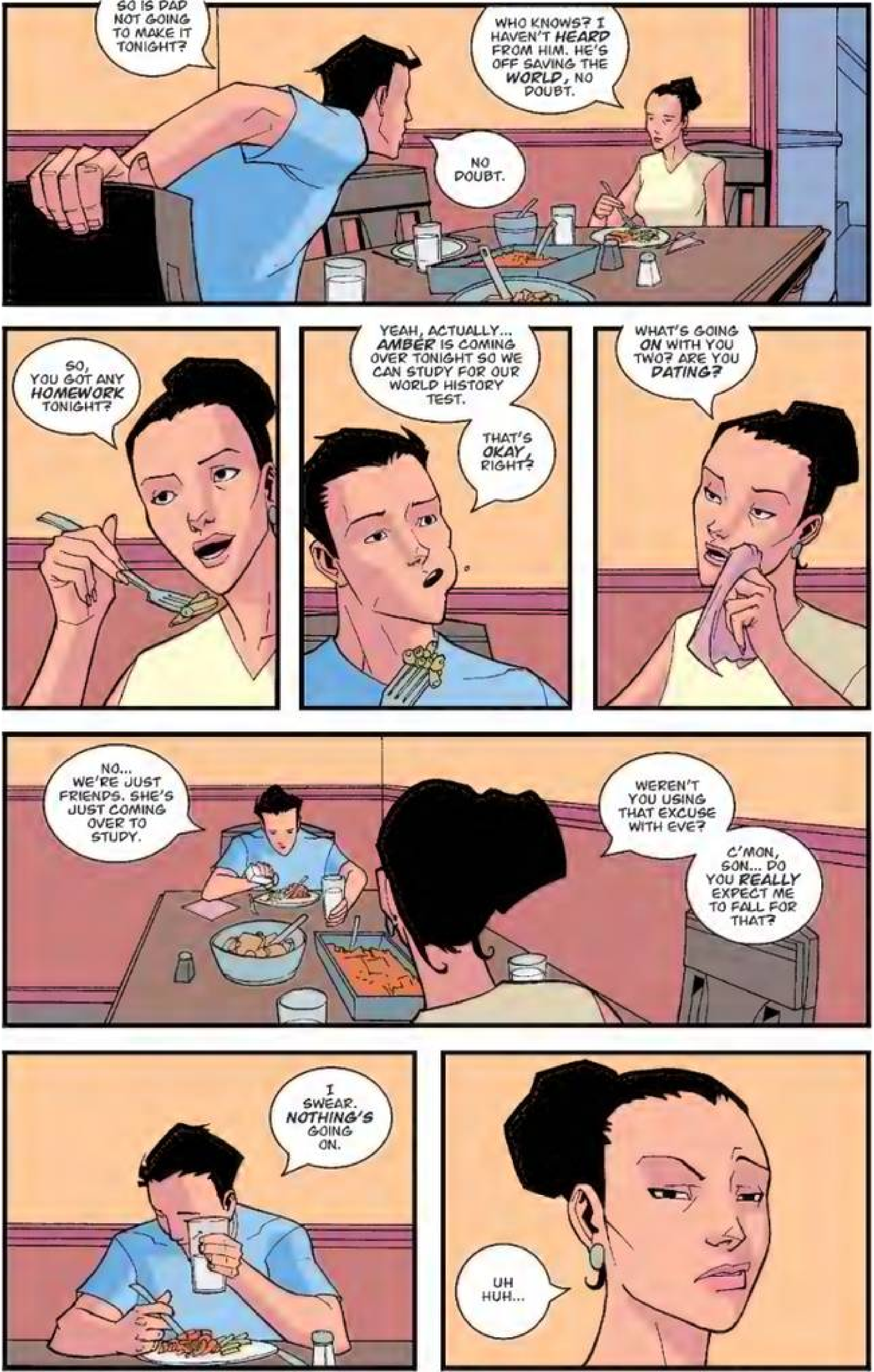

GAH!
OKAY.
YOU ASKED FOR IT!
OOM!!

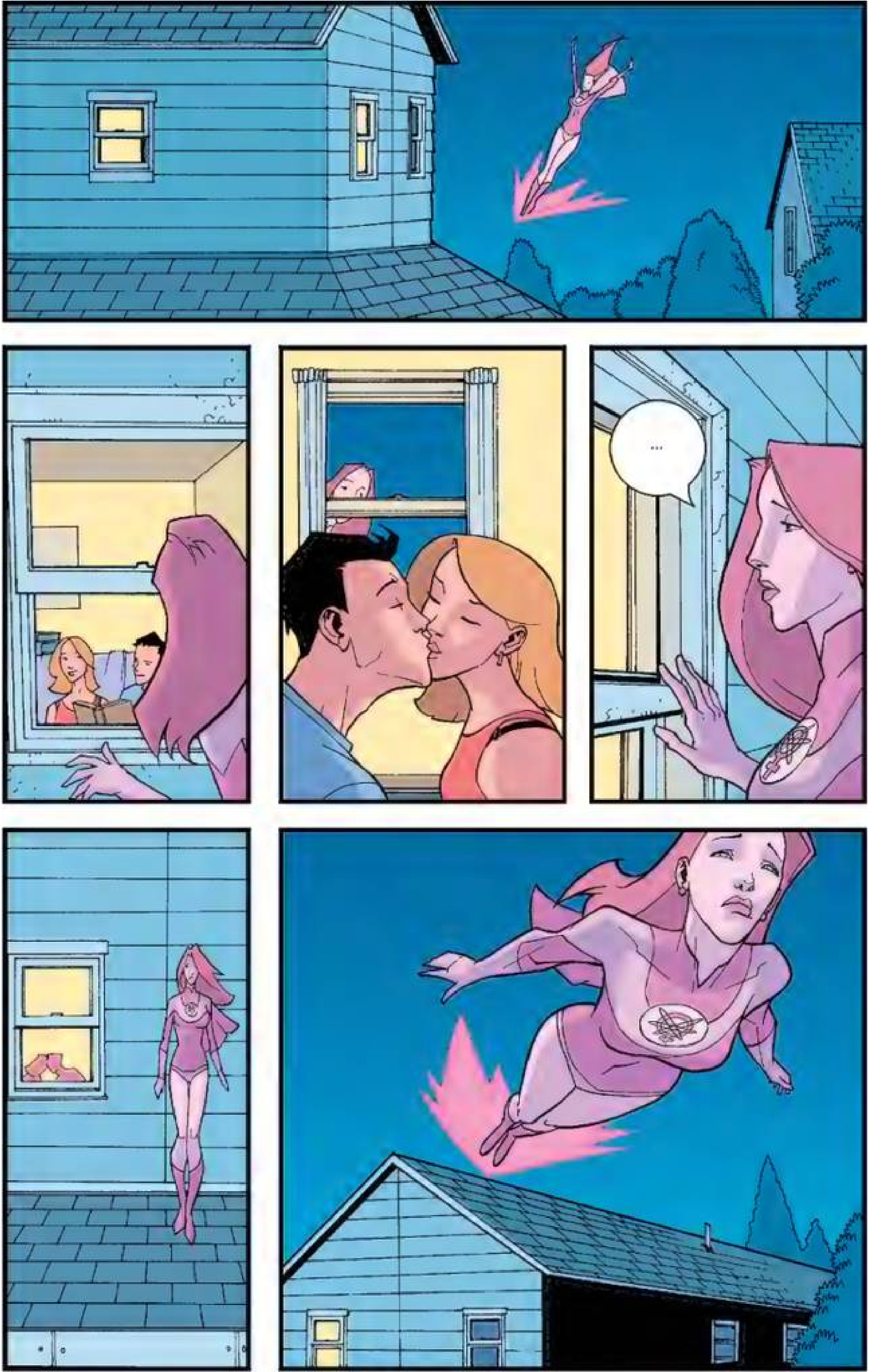

WHAT THE--?!
WHACK!
REX!!
STILL THINK I'M CUTE?!
KRAK
BOOM!!
WHY ISN'T ANYONE ELSE TRYING TO STOP THIS?
IT'LL TAKE MUCH MORE THAN THAT!
GOOM!

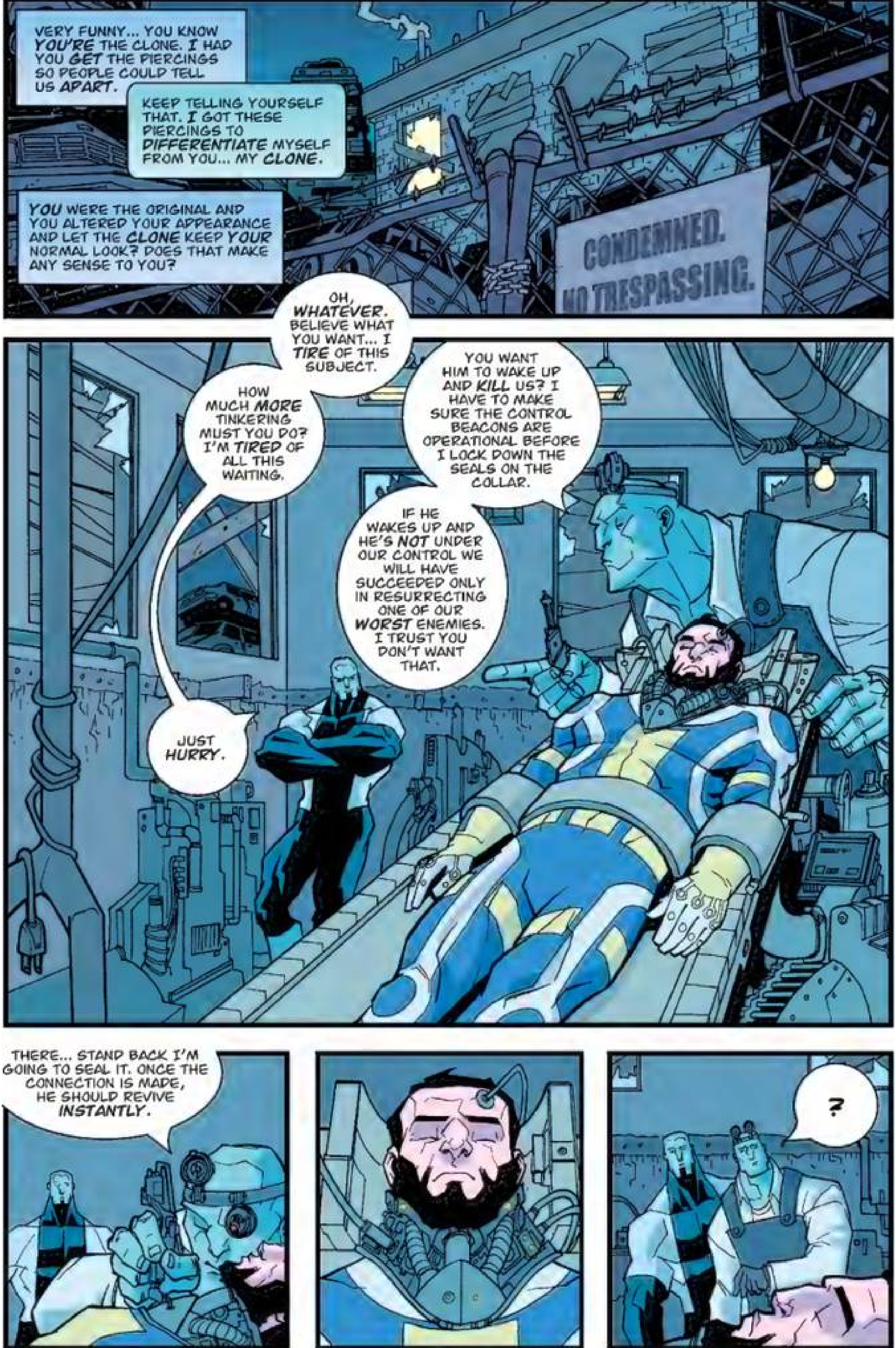

POW!
WHO LET *YOU* IN, UGLY?
WHO ARE YOU CALLING **UGLY?!**
HE *HIT* THAT LITTLE GIRL!
UH...
IT'S OKAY, I CAN'T BE HURT IN MONSTER FORM... AND ANYWAY, I *DID* GET A LITTLE CARRIED AWAY.
SORRY.
S'OKAY.
SORRY I HIT YOU.
DON'T **SWEAT** IT... I CAN TAKE IT. IT'LL BE HAPPENING A LOT MORE OFTEN IF I LAND THIS GIG. ANYONE GOT A CIGARETTE?
THANKS, MAN.
JUST BECAUSE I'M PISSED OFF AT YOU FOR WHAT YOU DID TO EVE DOESN'T MEAN I WANT TO SEE YOU **DEAD.**
THAT DOESN'T MEAN I'M **SPEAKING** TO YOU **EITHER.**
...

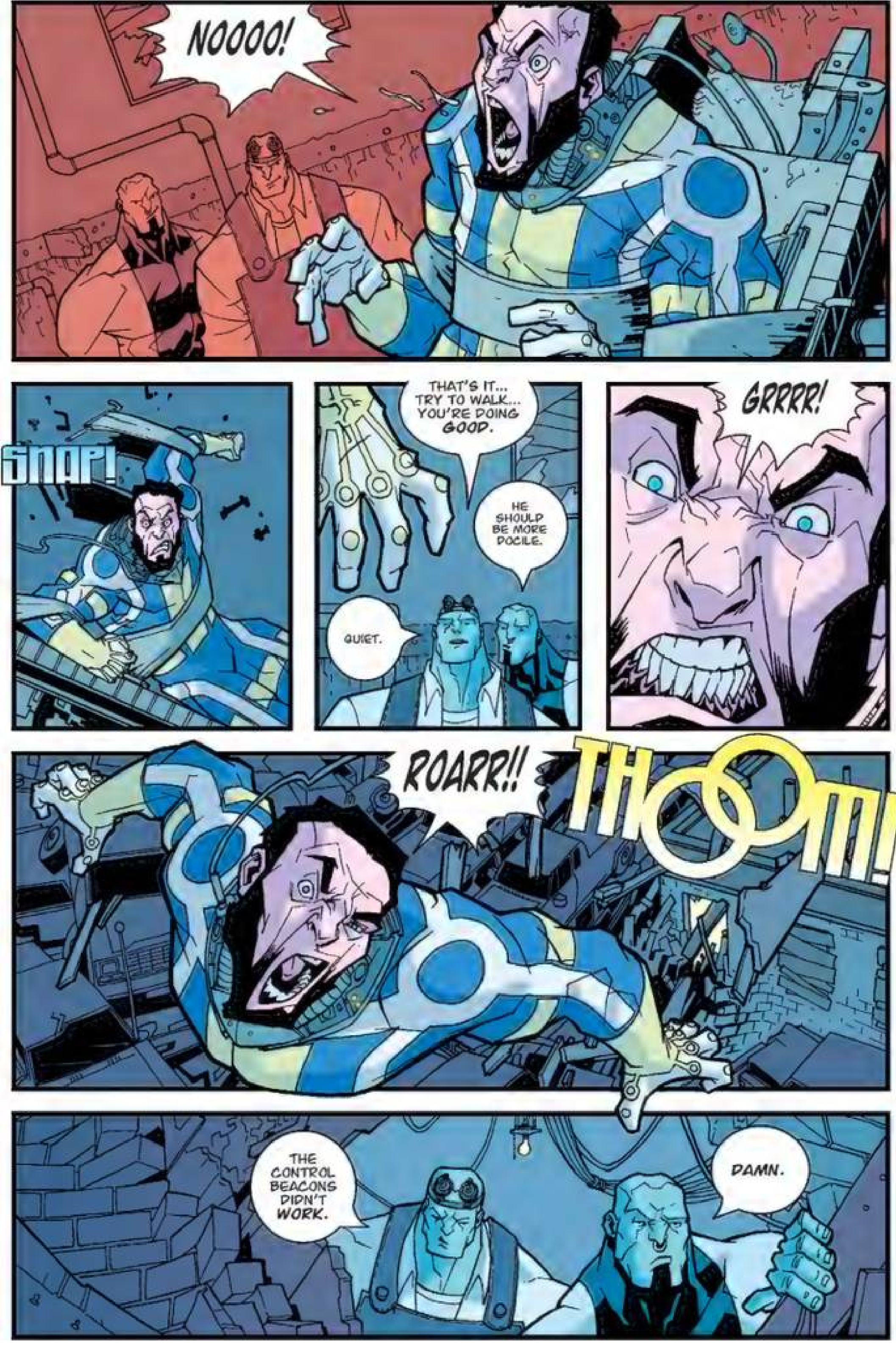

OH, MAN... YOU SURE MISSED SOME GOOD STUFF OUT THERE.
OH?
I'M SURE REX WILL TELL YOU ABOUT IT LATER...
OR MAYBE NOT.
OH, *THAT.* WE SAW THAT ON THE MONITOR... IMPRESSIVE LITTLE GIRL.
HOW GO THE AUDITIONS?
WE'RE ABOUT DONE. WE'VE GOT A SOLID LINE UP PICKED AND WE'RE REVIEWING THE LAST CANDIDATE NOW. IT'S *NOT* GOING WELL.
SEE FOR YOURSELF.
THIS ONE'S NOT LOOKING TOO PROMISING.
DONALD, LET THAT BOY OUT. I'M GOING TO GO PREPARE TO ANNOUNCE THE LINE-UP.
WILL DO.


FIRST OFF, I'D LIKE TO THANK YOU **ALL** FOR ATTENDING. THIS WAS PUT TOGETHER UNDER **VERY** SHORT NOTICE AND I APPRECIATE YOU ALL TAKING THE TIME OUT OF YOUR BUSY SCHEDULES TO TRY OUT.
THERE ARE MANY OF YOU WHO HAD CONFLICTING POWERS THAT WOULD HAVE MADE YOUR INCLUSION ON THE TEAM **REDUNDANT**... AND WHILE YOU **WERE** QUALIFIED WE WENT WITH SOMEONE WITH MORE EXPERIENCE WHO HAD **SIMILAR** POWERS.
OTHERS, QUITE FRANKLY, WERE NOWHERE **NEAR** QUALIFIED AND SHOULDN'T HAVE EVEN BEEN ALLOWED TO **WASTE** MY TIME. YOU KNOW WHO YOU ARE.
WITH **THAT** OUT OF THE WAY, I'D LIKE TO ANNOUNCE OUR LINE UP FOR THE NEW GUARDIAN'S OF THE GLOBE.
DUPLI-KATE.
SHRINKING RAY.
MONSTER GIRL.
BLACK SAMSON.
REX SPLODE... AS LONG AS HE PROMISES TO **BEHAVE**.
YOU KNOW... WE'D BE **GLAD** TO HAVE YOU IF YOU'RE EVER INTERESTED.
THANKS, MAN... THAT **REALLY** MEANS A LOT TO ME, BUT I JUST CAN'T. I'M GETTING READY FOR COLLEGE SOON AND I'VE ALWAYS GOT **SO** MUCH HOMEWORK. I DON'T KNOW **HOW** REX AND KATE JUGGLE THINGS SO WELL.
I JUST DON'T HAVE THE TIME.

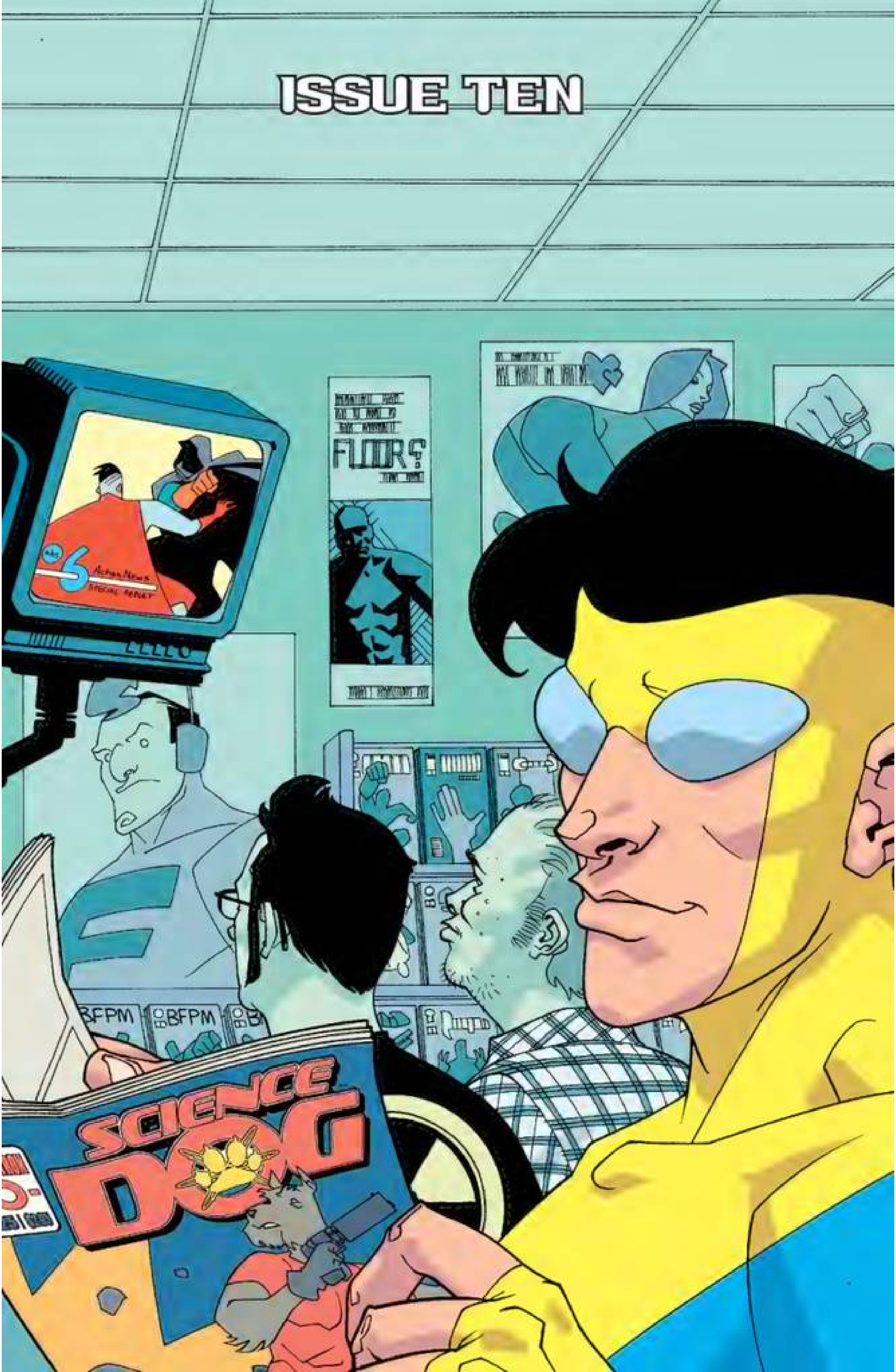

SO IS DAD NOT GOING TO MAKE IT TONIGHT?
WHO KNOWS? I HAVEN'T **HEARD** FROM HIM. HE'S OFF SAVING THE **WORLD**, NO DOUBT.
NO DOUBT.
SO, YOU GOT ANY **HOMEWORK** TONIGHT?
YEAH, ACTUALLY... **AMBER** IS COMING OVER TONIGHT SO WE CAN STUDY FOR OUR WORLD HISTORY TEST.
THAT'S **OKAY**, RIGHT?
WHAT'S GOING **ON** WITH YOU TWO? ARE YOU **DATING?**
NO... WE'RE JUST FRIENDS. SHE'S JUST COMING OVER TO STUDY.
WEREN'T YOU USING THAT EXCUSE WITH EVE?
C'MON, SON... DO YOU **REALLY** EXPECT ME TO FALL FOR THAT?
I SWEAR. **NOTHING'S** GOING ON.
UH HUH...




VERY FUNNY... YOU KNOW *YOU'RE* THE CLONE. *I* HAD YOU *GET* THE PIERCINGS SO PEOPLE COULD TELL US *APART*.
KEEP TELLING YOURSELF THAT. *I* GOT THESE PIERCINGS TO *DIFFERENTIATE* MYSELF FROM YOU... MY *CLONE*.
YOU WERE THE ORIGINAL AND YOU ALTERED YOUR APPEARANCE AND LET THE *CLONE* KEEP *YOUR* NORMAL LOOK? DOES THAT MAKE ANY SENSE TO YOU?
CONDEMNED. NO TRESPASSING.
OH, *WHATEVER*. BELIEVE WHAT YOU WANT... I *TIRE* OF THIS SUBJECT.
HOW MUCH *MORE* TINKERING MUST YOU DO? I'M *TIRED* OF ALL THIS WAITING.
YOU WANT HIM TO WAKE UP AND *KILL* US? I HAVE TO MAKE SURE THE CONTROL BEACONS ARE OPERATIONAL BEFORE I LOCK DOWN THE SEALS ON THE COLLAR.
IF HE WAKES UP AND HE'S *NOT* UNDER OUR CONTROL WE WILL HAVE SUCCEEDED ONLY IN RESURRECTING ONE OF OUR *WORST* ENEMIES. I TRUST YOU DON'T WANT THAT.
JUST *HURRY*.
THERE... STAND BACK I'M GOING TO SEAL IT. ONCE THE CONNECTION IS MADE, HE SHOULD REVIVE *INSTANTLY*.
?


NOOOO!
SNAP!
THAT'S IT... TRY TO WALK... YOU'RE DOING GOOD.
HE SHOULD BE MORE DOCILE.
QUIET.
GRRRR!
ROARR!!
THOOM!
THE CONTROL BEACONS DIDN'T WORK.
DAMN.

ISSUE TEN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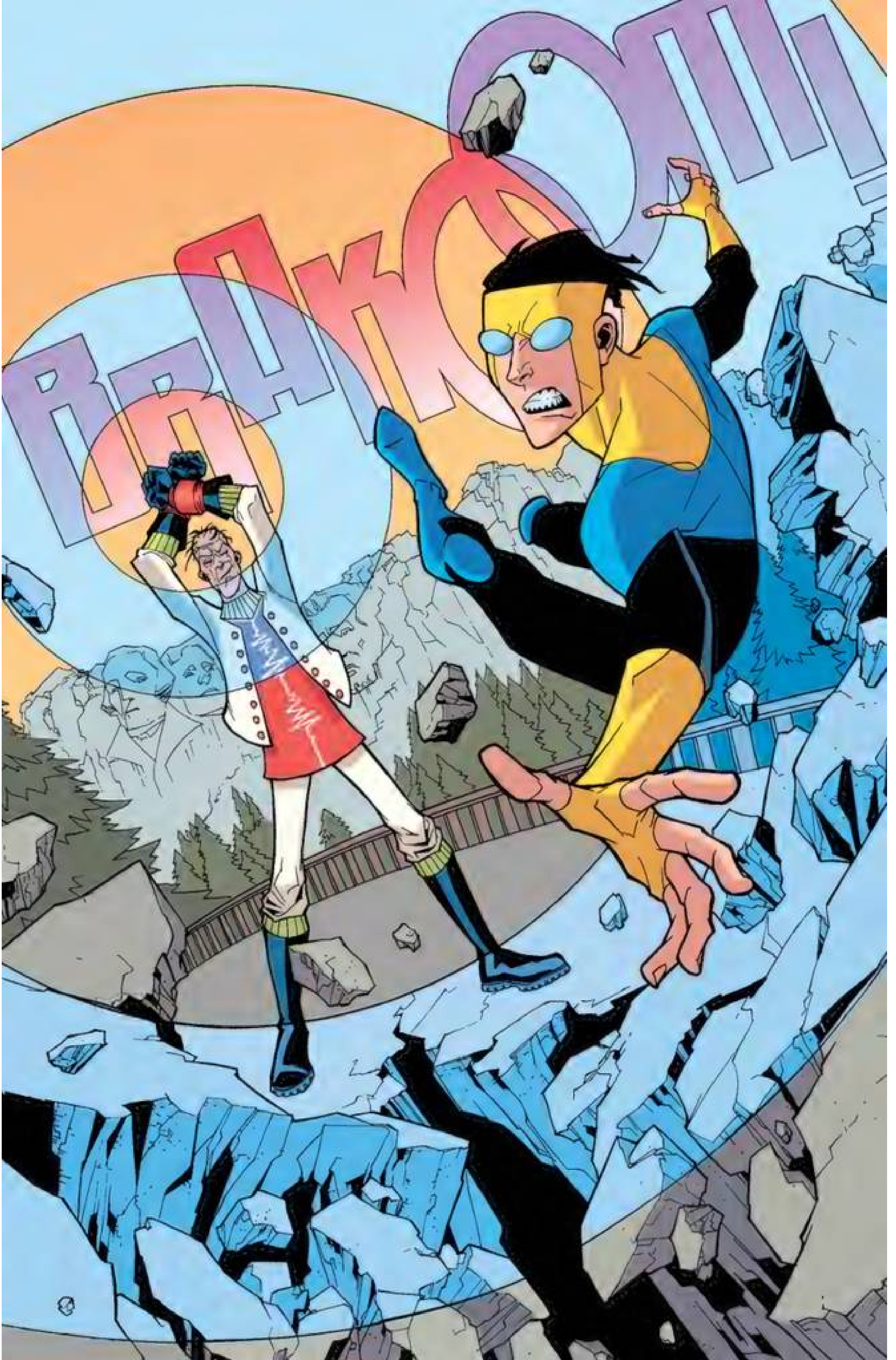
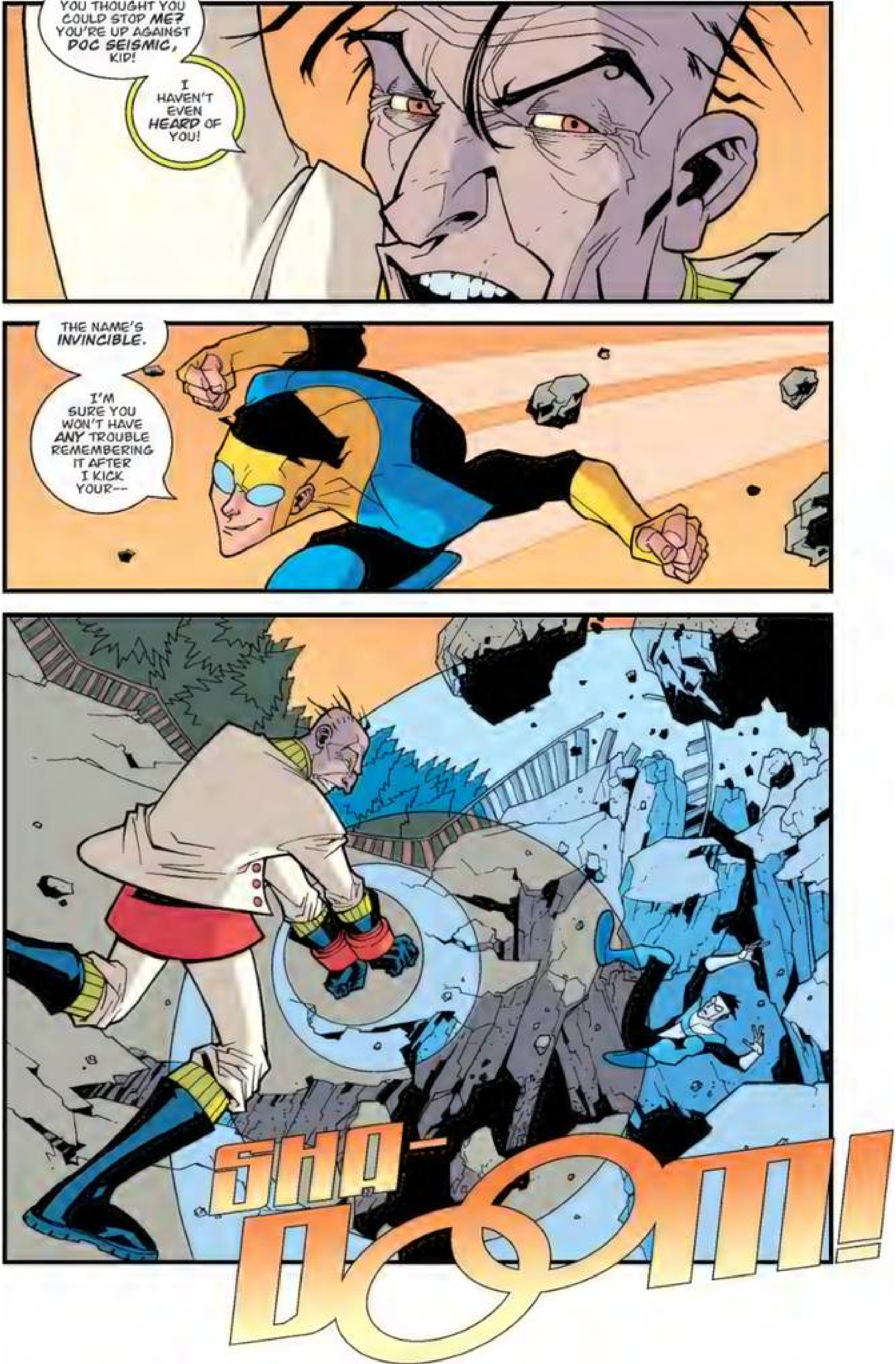
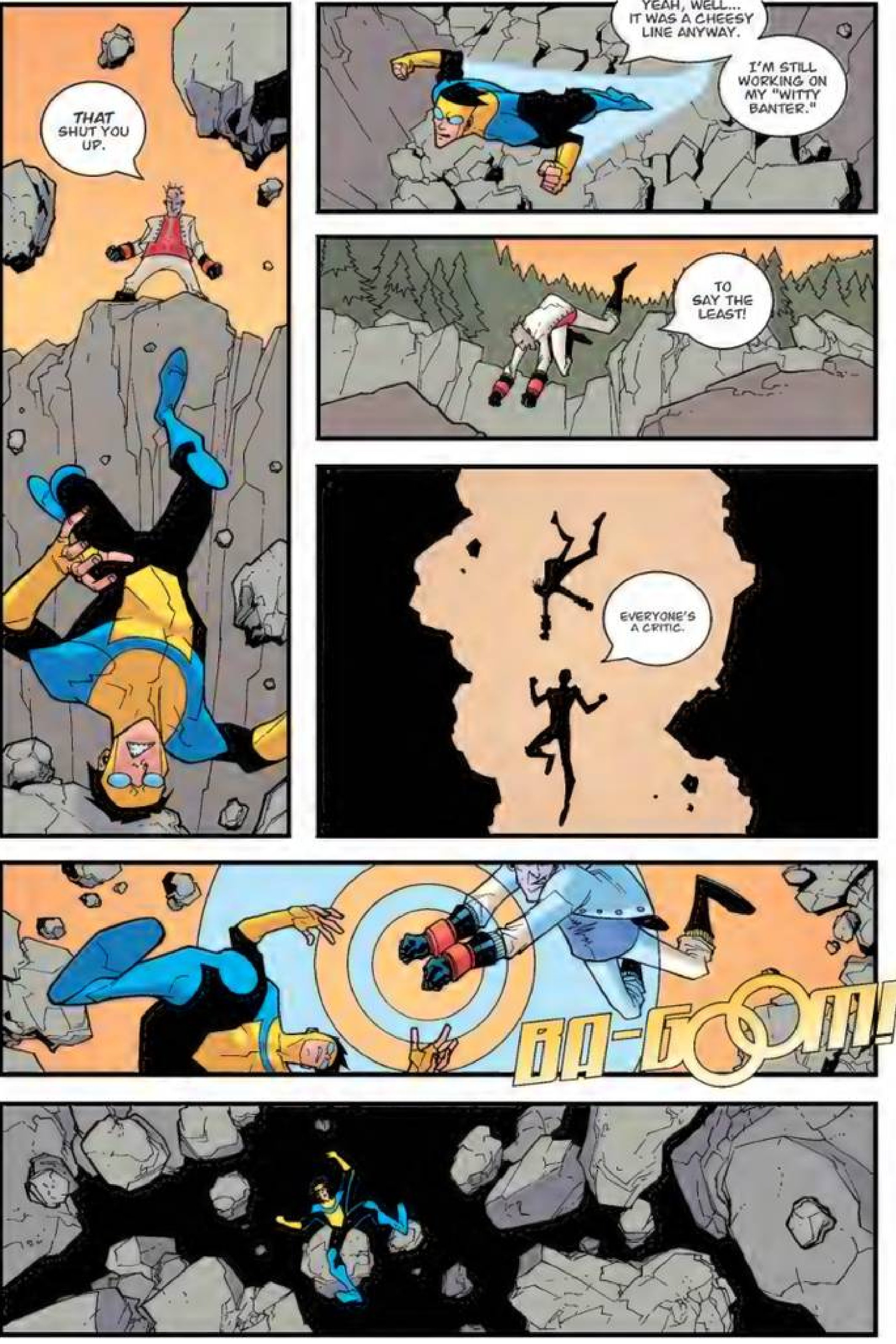
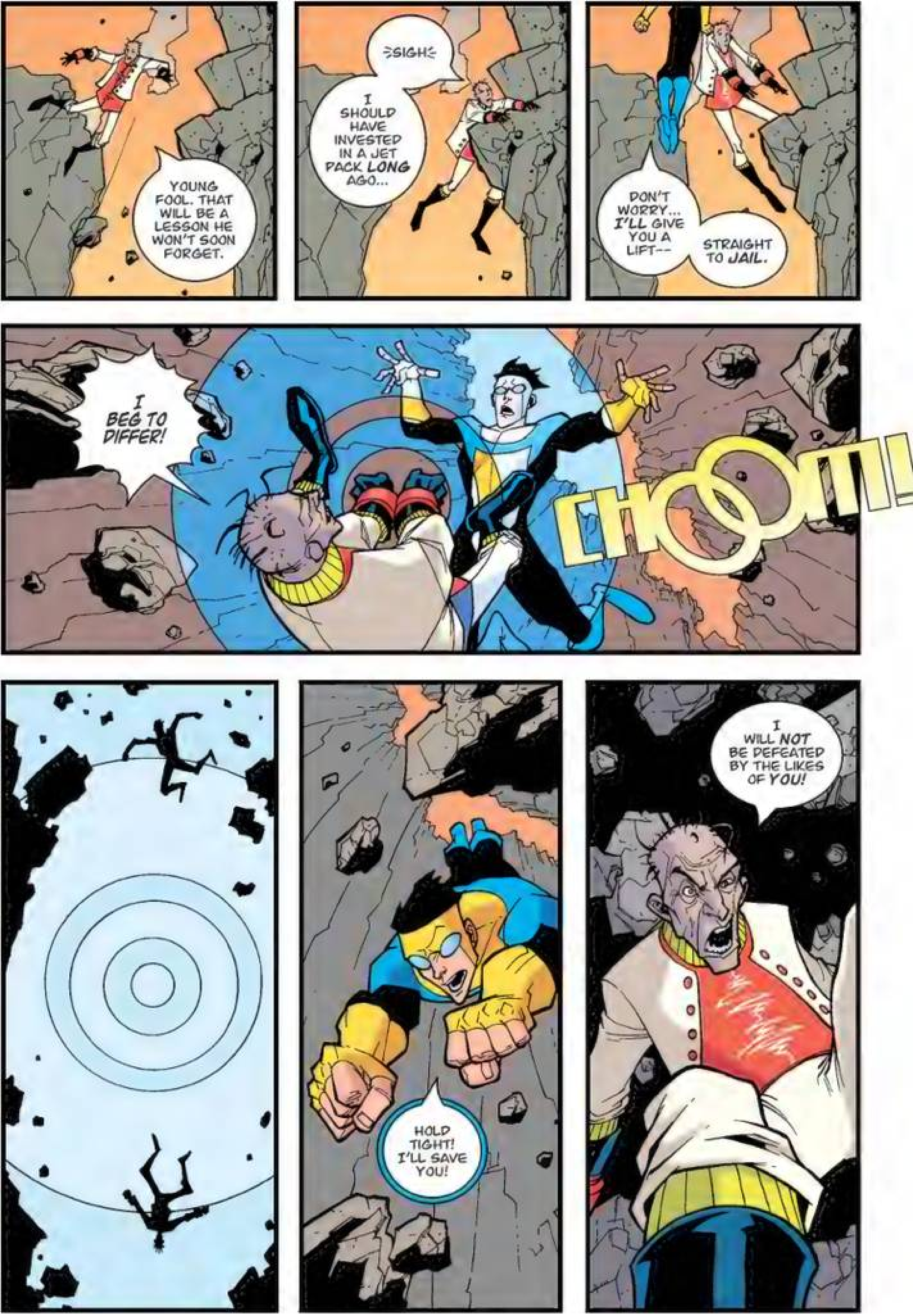
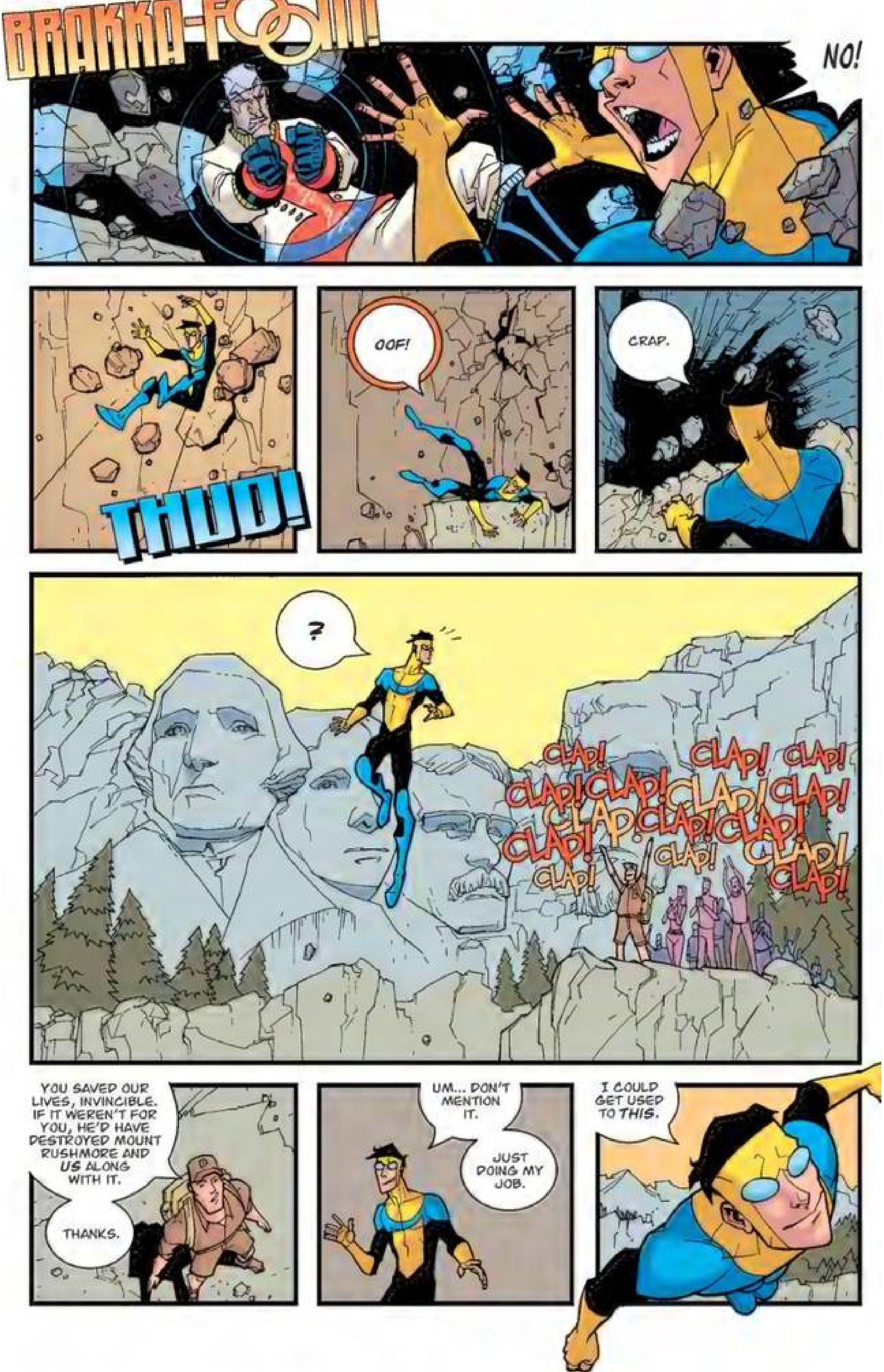
Action News
SPECIAL REPORT
FLOORS?
BFPM
BFPM
SCIENCE DOG

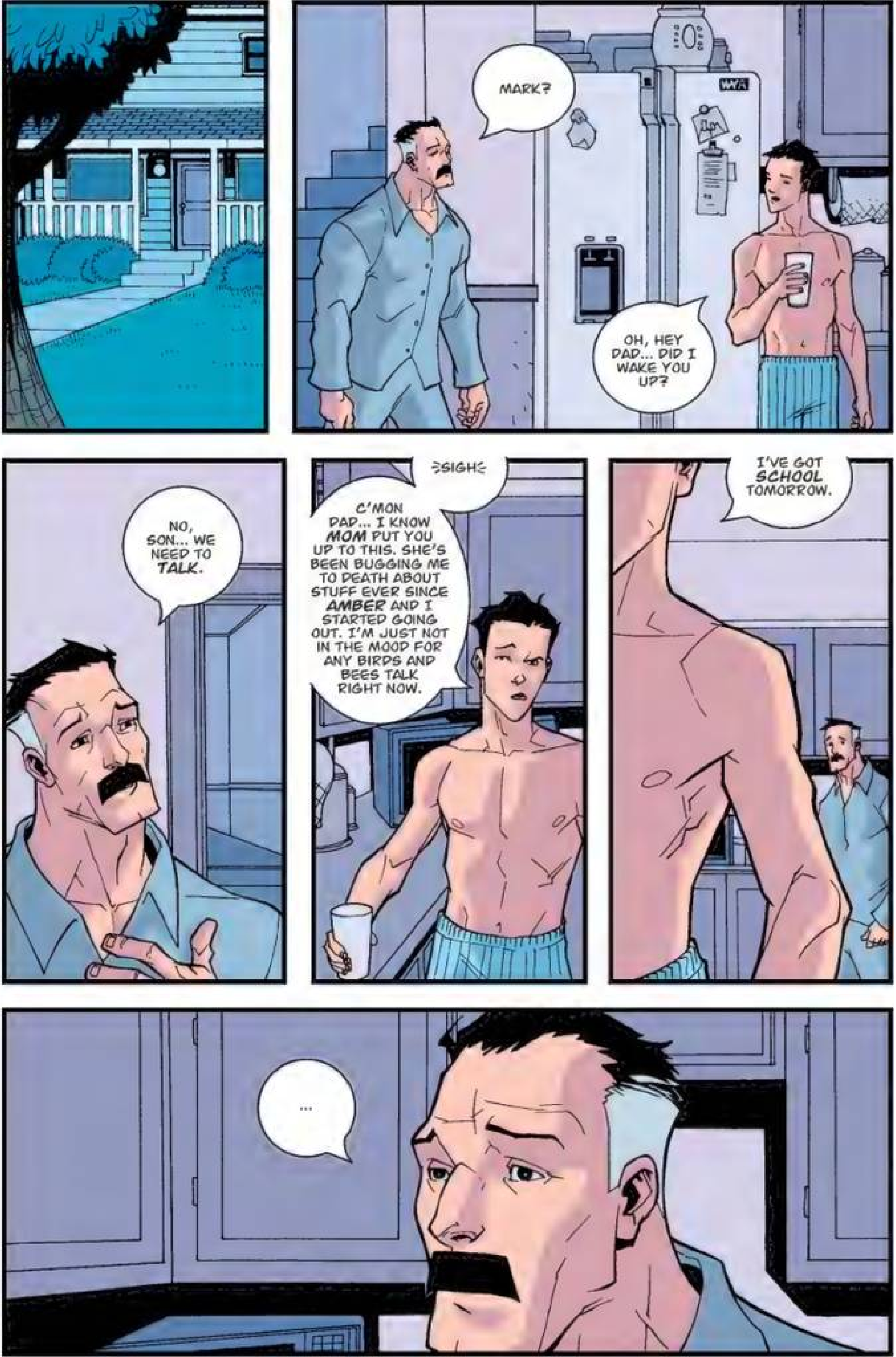

BRAKOOM!

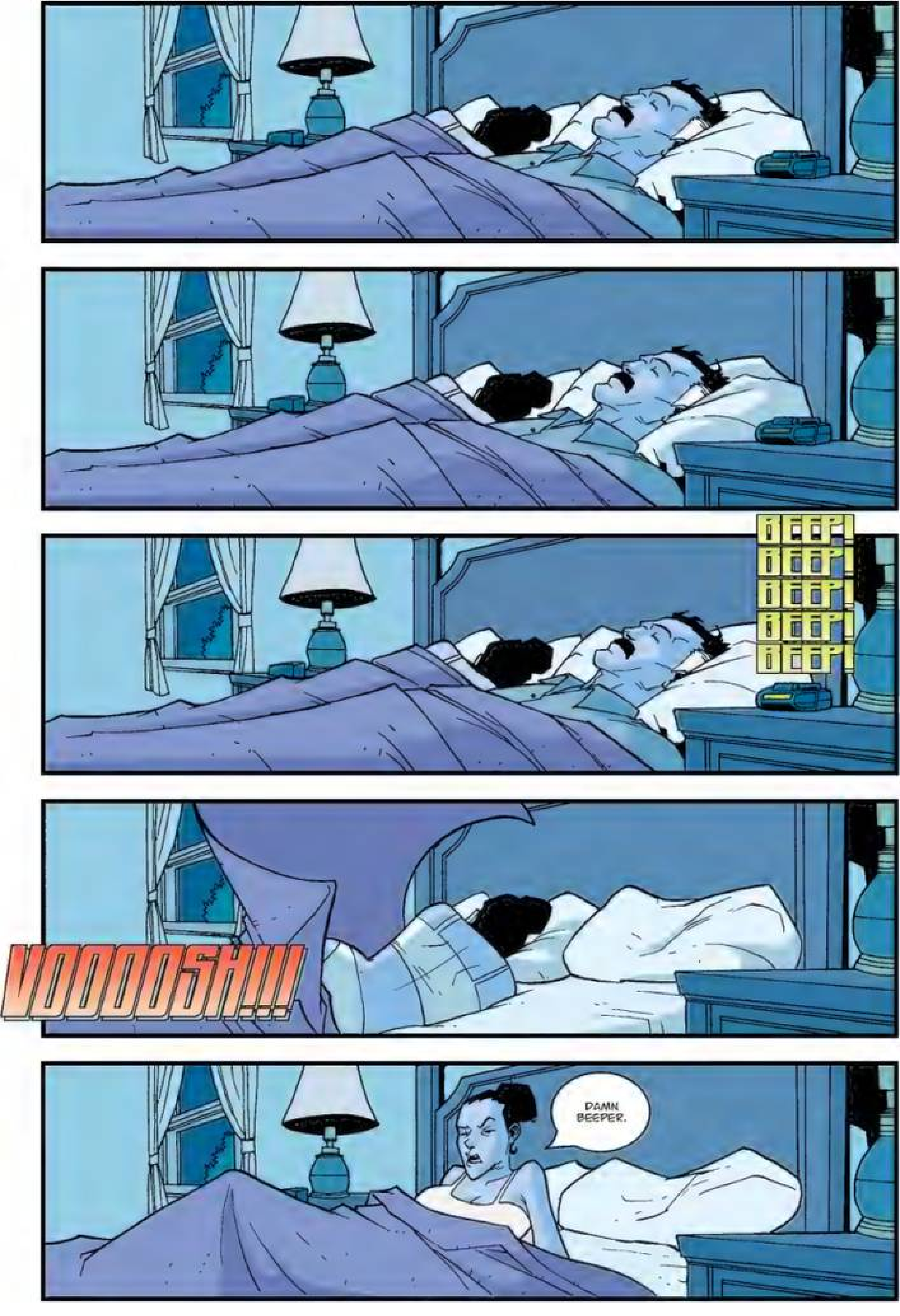

YOU THOUGHT YOU COULD STOP *ME?* YOU'RE UP AGAINST **DOC SEISMIC,** KID!
I HAVEN'T EVEN *HEARD* OF YOU!
THE NAME'S *INVINCIBLE.*
I'M SURE YOU WON'T HAVE *ANY* TROUBLE REMEMBERING IT AFTER I KICK YOUR--
SHA-DOOM!

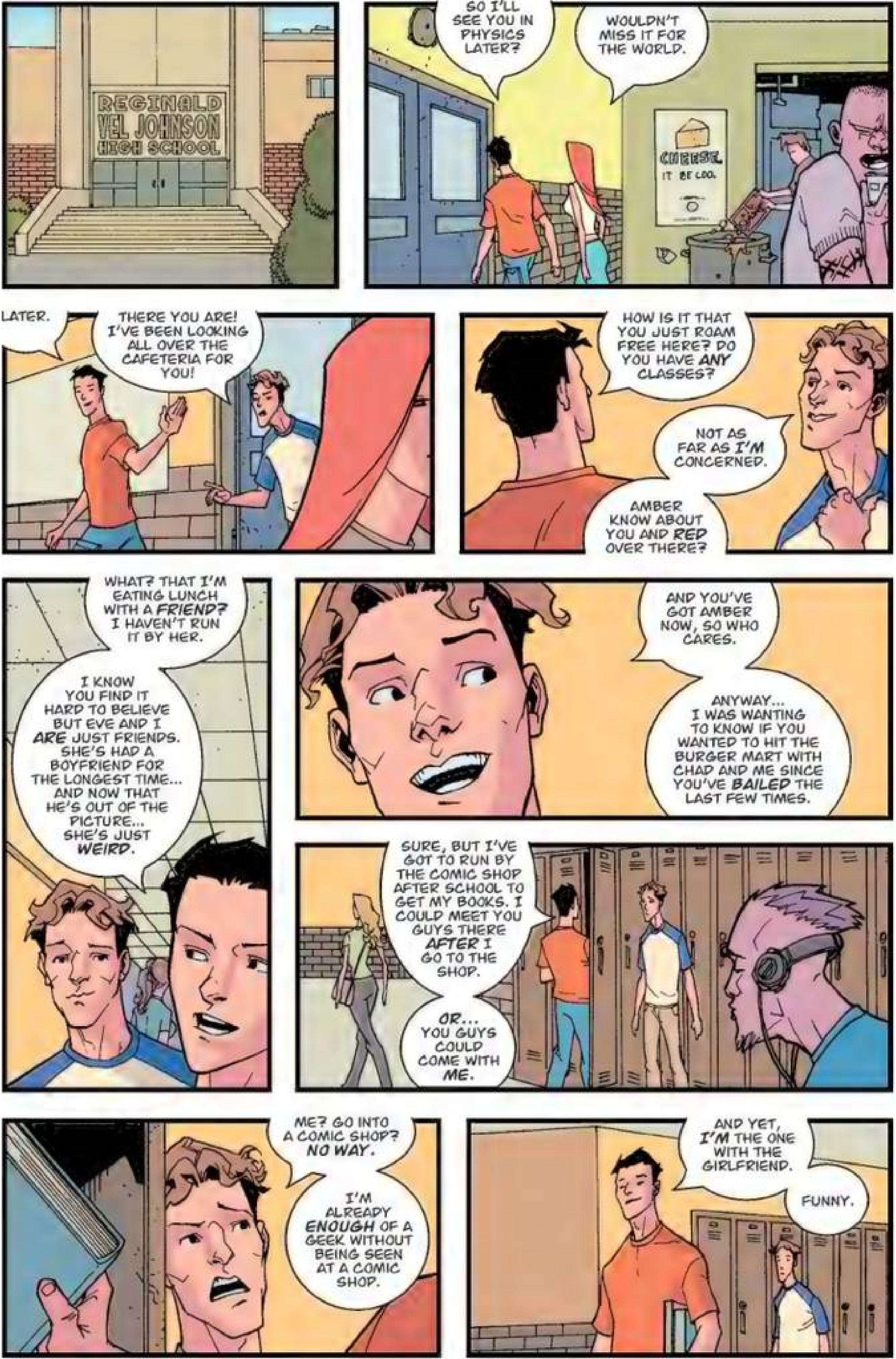

THAT SHUT YOU UP.
YEAH, WELL... IT WAS A CHEESY LINE ANYWAY.
I'M STILL WORKING ON MY "WITTY BANTER."
TO SAY THE LEAST!
EVERYONE'S A CRITIC.
BA-BOOM!

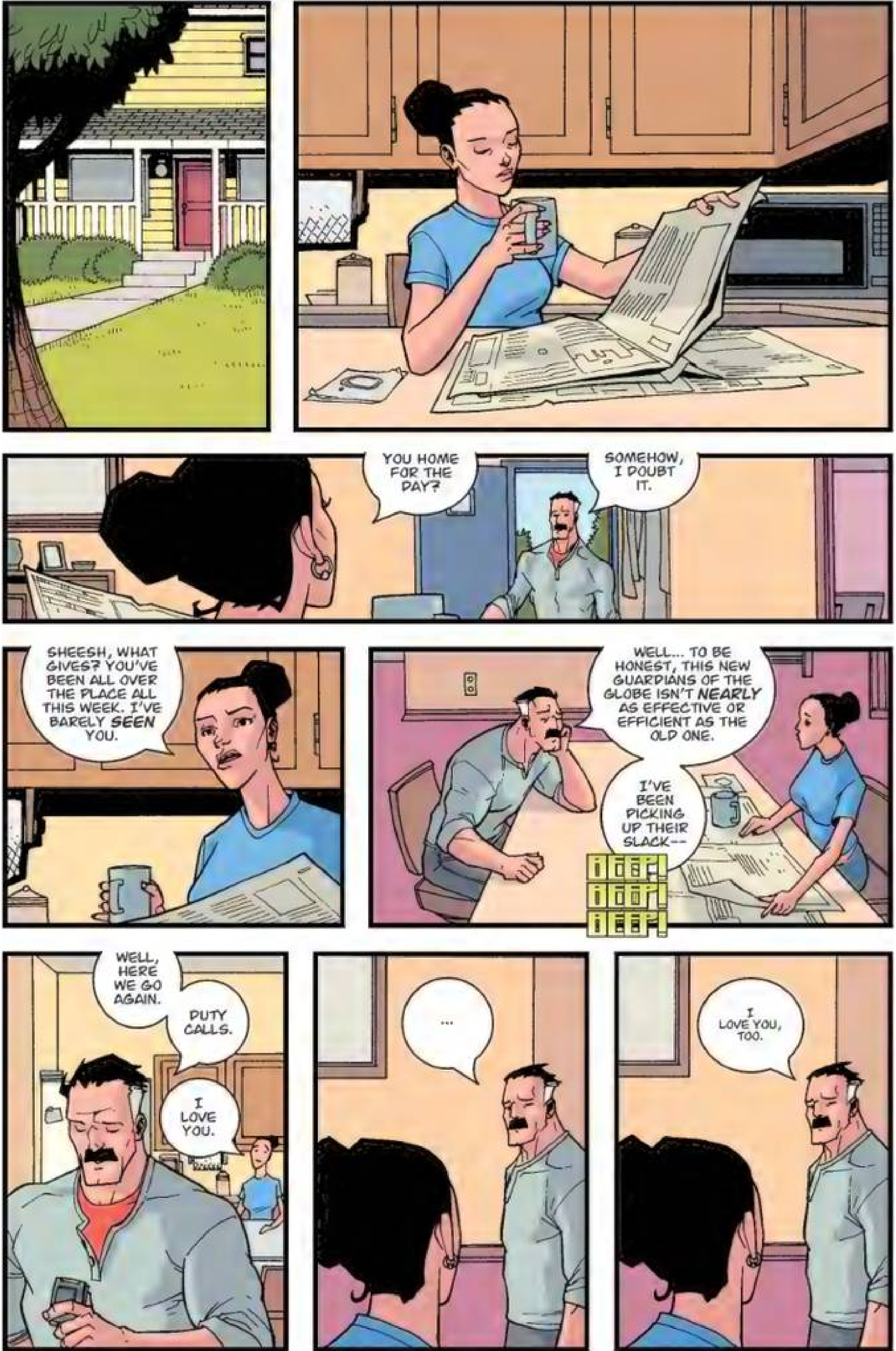

YOUNG FOOL. THAT WILL BE A LESSON HE WON'T SOON FORGET.
=SIGH=
I SHOULD HAVE INVESTED IN A JET PACK LONG AGO...
DON'T WORRY... I'LL GIVE YOU A LIFT--
STRAIGHT TO JAIL.
I BEG TO DIFFER!
CHOOM!
HOLD TIGHT! I'LL SAVE YOU!
I WILL NOT BE DEFEATED BY THE LIKES OF YOU!

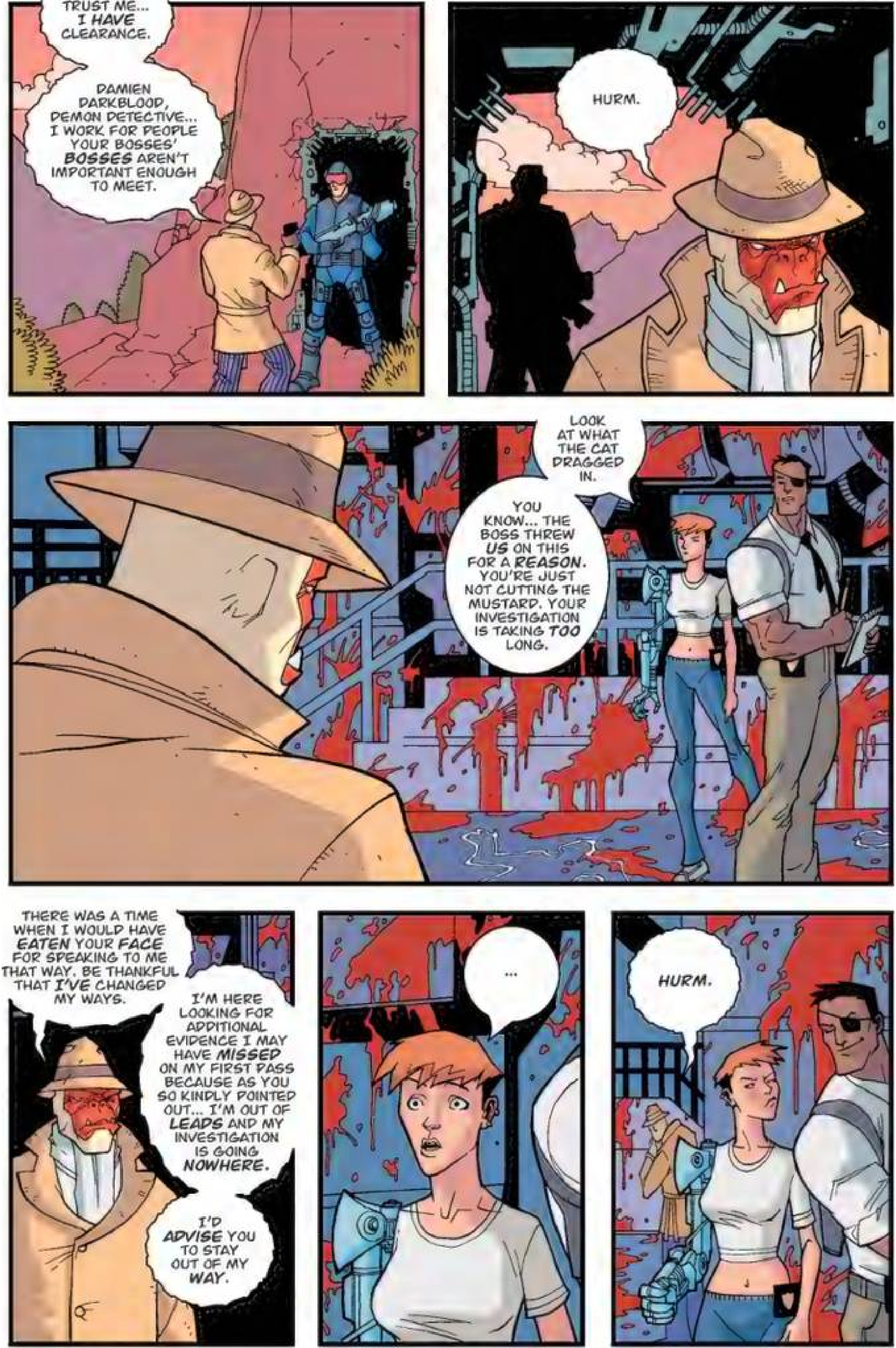

BRAKKA-FOOM!
NO!
THUD!
OOF!
CRAP.
?
CLAP! CLAP! CLAP! CLAP! CLAP! CLAP! CLAP! CLAP! CLAP! CLAP! CLAP! CLAP! CLAP! CLAP! CLAP! CLAP! CLAP!
YOU SAVED OUR LIVES, INVINCIBLE. IF IT WEREN'T FOR YOU, HE'D HAVE DESTROYED MOUNT RUSHMORE AND US ALONG WITH IT.
THANKS.
UM... DON'T MENTION IT.
JUST DOING MY JOB.
I COULD GET USED TO THIS.

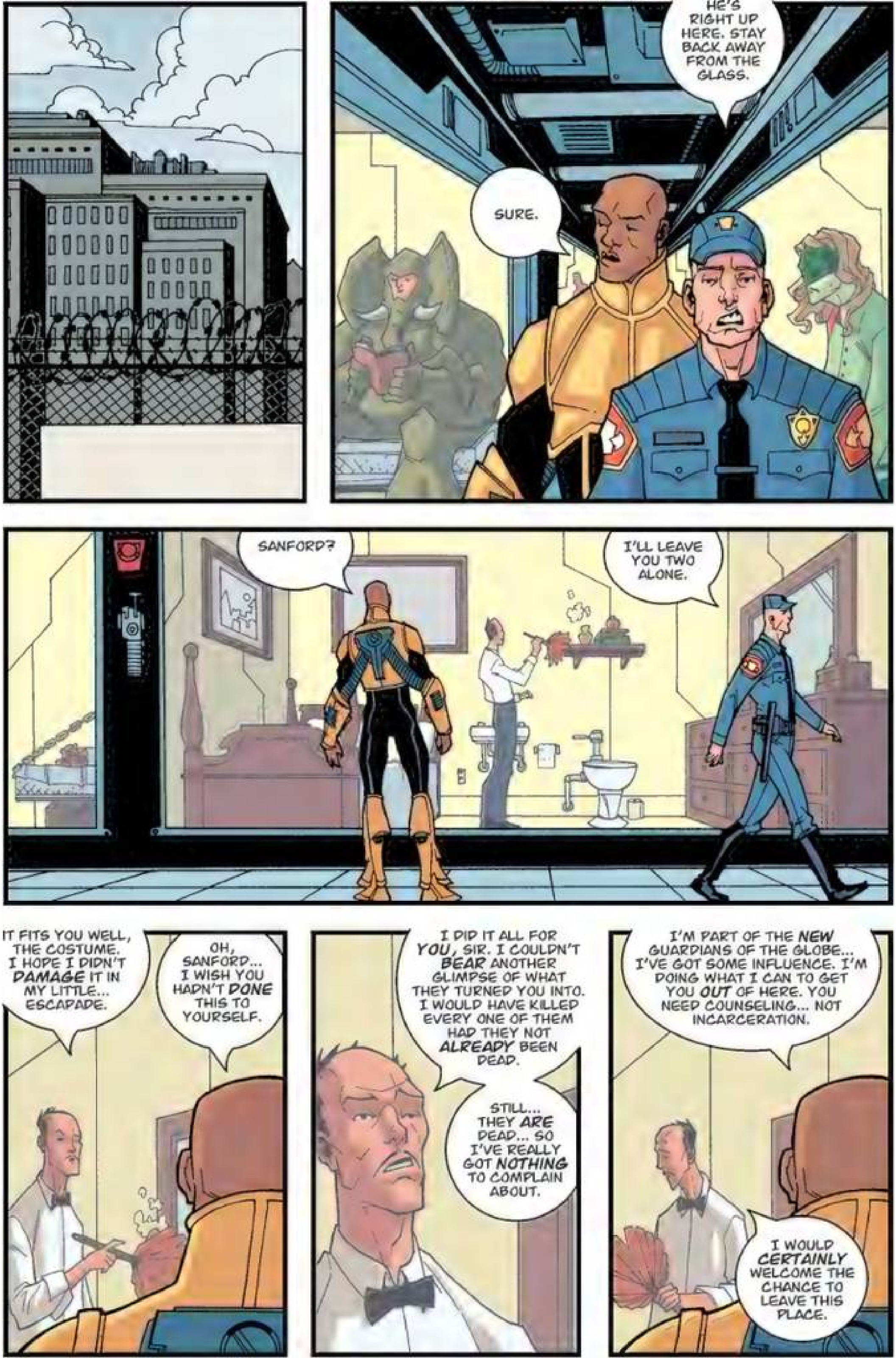

MARK?
OH, HEY DAD... DID I WAKE YOU UP?
NO, SON... WE NEED TO TALK.
=SIGH=
C'MON DAD... I KNOW MOM PUT YOU UP TO THIS. SHE'S BEEN BUGGING ME TO DEATH ABOUT STUFF EVER SINCE AMBER AND I STARTED GOING OUT. I'M JUST NOT IN THE MOOD FOR ANY BIRDS AND BEES TALK RIGHT NOW.
I'VE GOT SCHOOL TOMORROW.
...

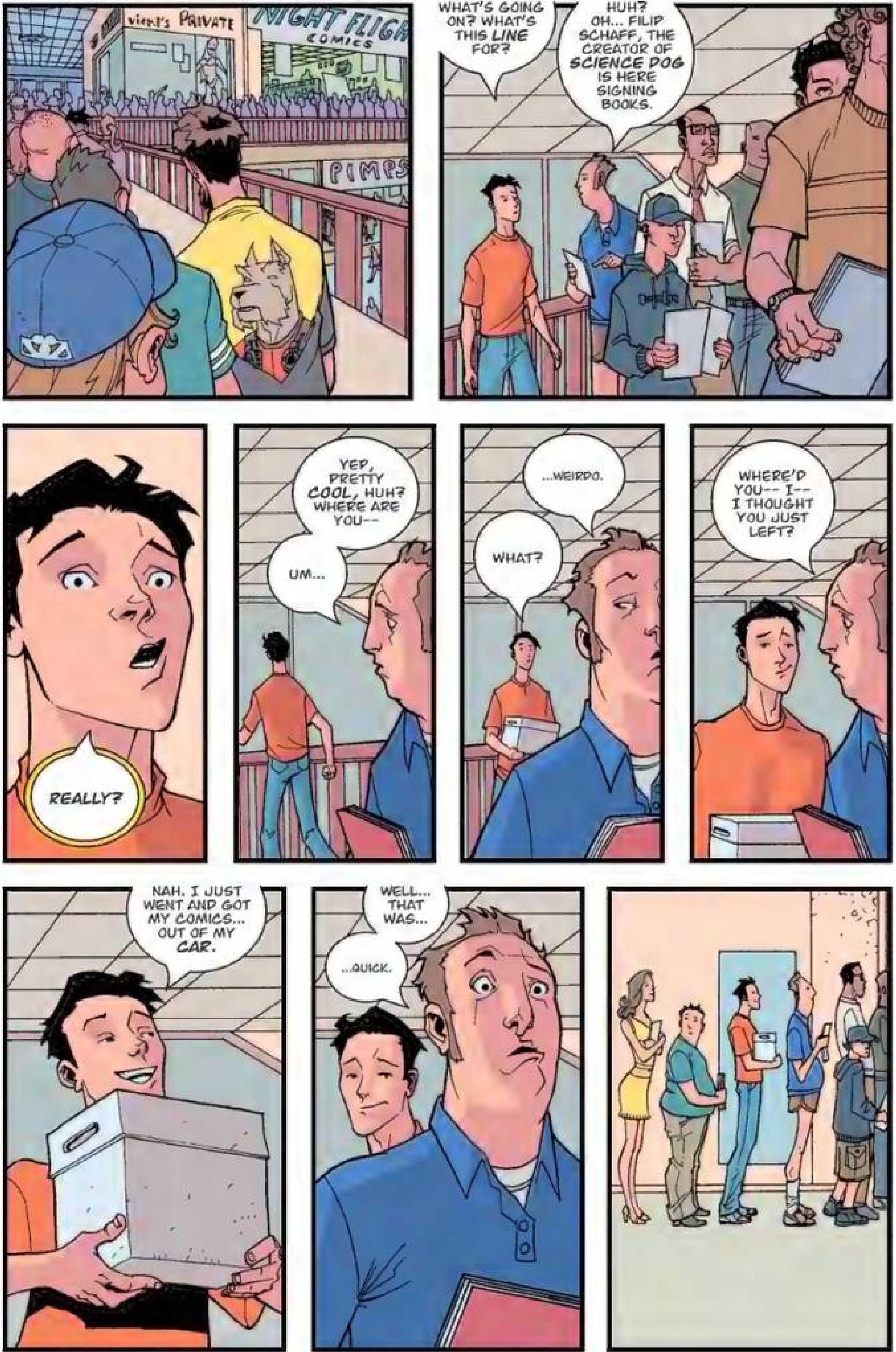

BEEP!
BEEP!
BEEP!
BEEP!
BEEP!
VOOOOSH!!!
DAMN BEEPER.

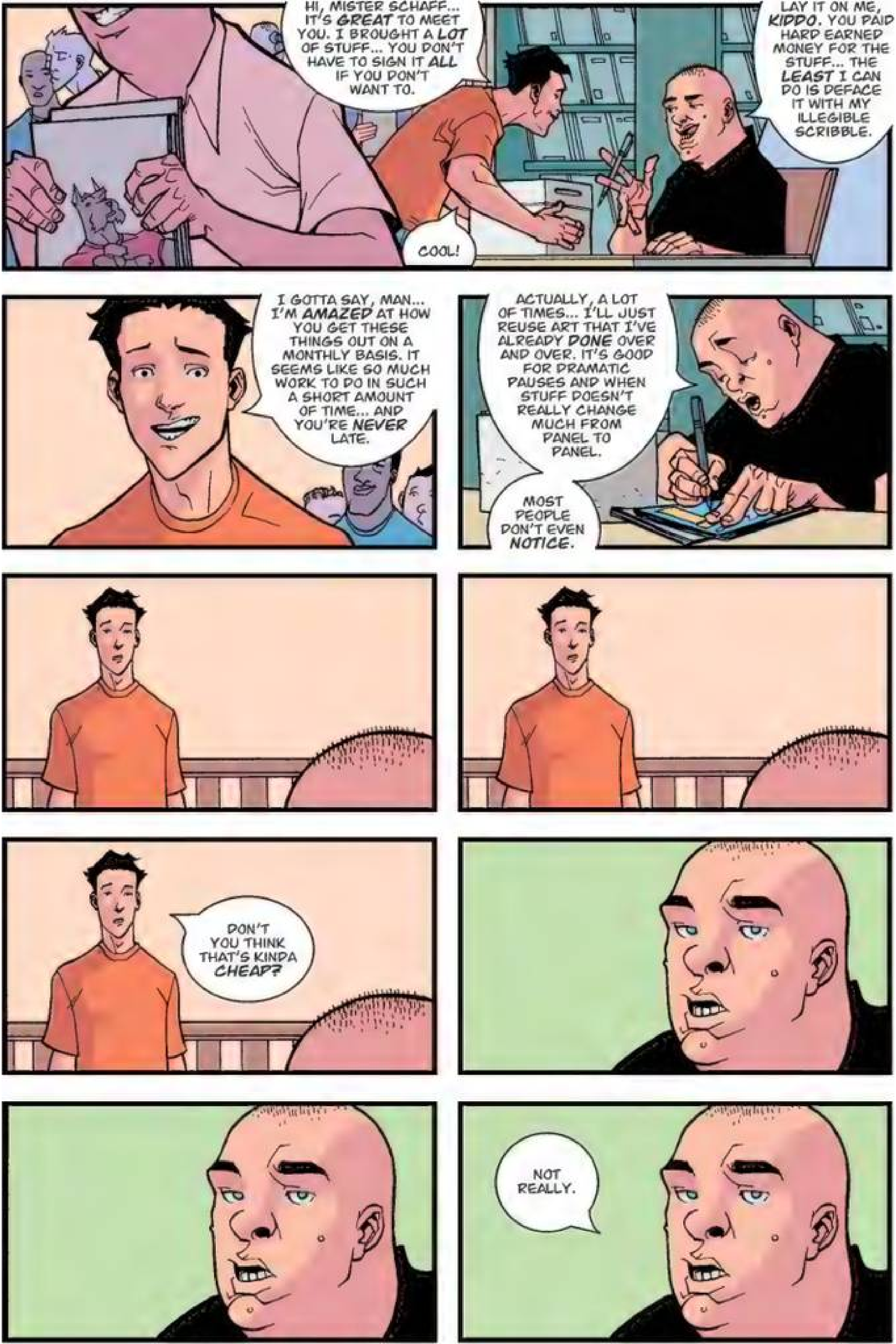

REGINALD VEL JOHNSON HIGH SCHOOL
SO I'LL SEE YOU IN PHYSICS LATER?
WOULDN'T MISS IT FOR THE WORLD.
CHEESE IT BE COO.
LATER.
THERE YOU ARE! I'VE BEEN LOOKING ALL OVER THE CAFETERIA FOR YOU!
HOW IS IT THAT YOU JUST ROAM FREE HERE? DO YOU HAVE ANY CLASSES?
NOT AS FAR AS I'M CONCERNED.
AMBER KNOW ABOUT YOU AND RED OVER THERE?
WHAT? THAT I'M EATING LUNCH WITH A FRIEND? I HAVEN'T RUN IT BY HER.
I KNOW YOU FIND IT HARD TO BELIEVE BUT EVE AND I ARE JUST FRIENDS. SHE'S HAD A BOYFRIEND FOR THE LONGEST TIME... AND NOW THAT HE'S OUT OF THE PICTURE... SHE'S JUST WEIRD.
AND YOU'VE GOT AMBER NOW, SO WHO CARES.
ANYWAY... I WAS WANTING TO KNOW IF YOU WANTED TO HIT THE BURGER MART WITH CHAD AND ME SINCE YOU'VE BAILED THE LAST FEW TIMES.
SURE, BUT I'VE GOT TO RUN BY THE COMIC SHOP AFTER SCHOOL TO GET MY BOOKS. I COULD MEET YOU GUYS THERE AFTER I GO TO THE SHOP.
OR... YOU GUYS COULD COME WITH ME.
ME? GO INTO A COMIC SHOP? NO WAY.
I'M ALREADY ENOUGH OF A GEEK WITHOUT BEING SEEN AT A COMIC SHOP.
AND YET, I'M THE ONE WITH THE GIRLFRIEND.
FUNNY.

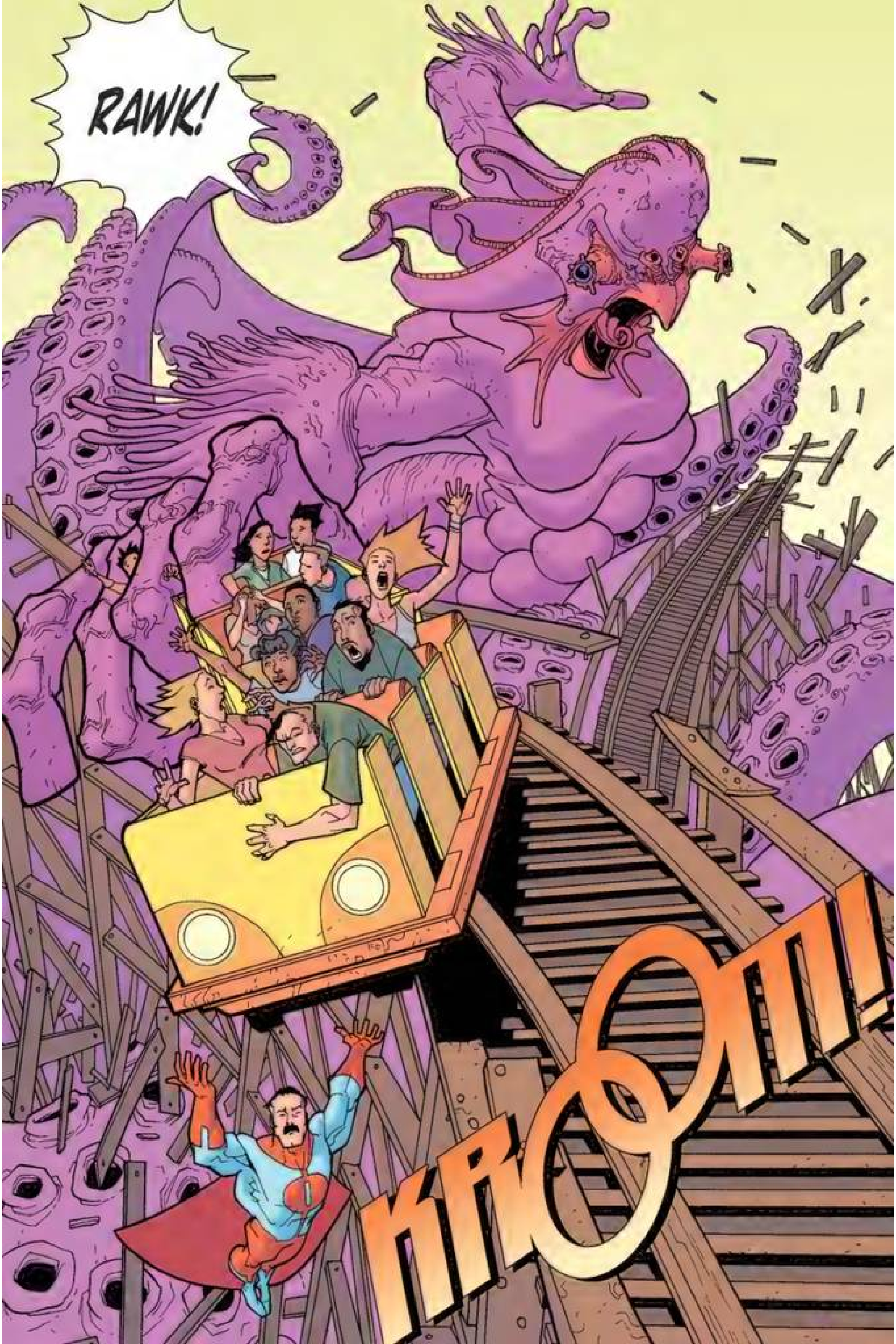

YOU HOME FOR THE DAY?
SOMEHOW, I DOUBT IT.
SHEESH, WHAT GIVES? YOU'VE BEEN ALL OVER THE PLACE ALL THIS WEEK. I'VE BARELY **SEEN** YOU.
WELL... TO BE HONEST, THIS NEW GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE ISN'T **NEARLY** AS EFFECTIVE OR EFFICIENT AS THE OLD ONE.
I'VE BEEN PICKING UP THEIR SLACK--
BEEP!
BEEP!
BEEP!
WELL, HERE WE GO AGAIN.
DUTY CALLS.
I LOVE YOU.
...
I LOVE YOU, TOO.

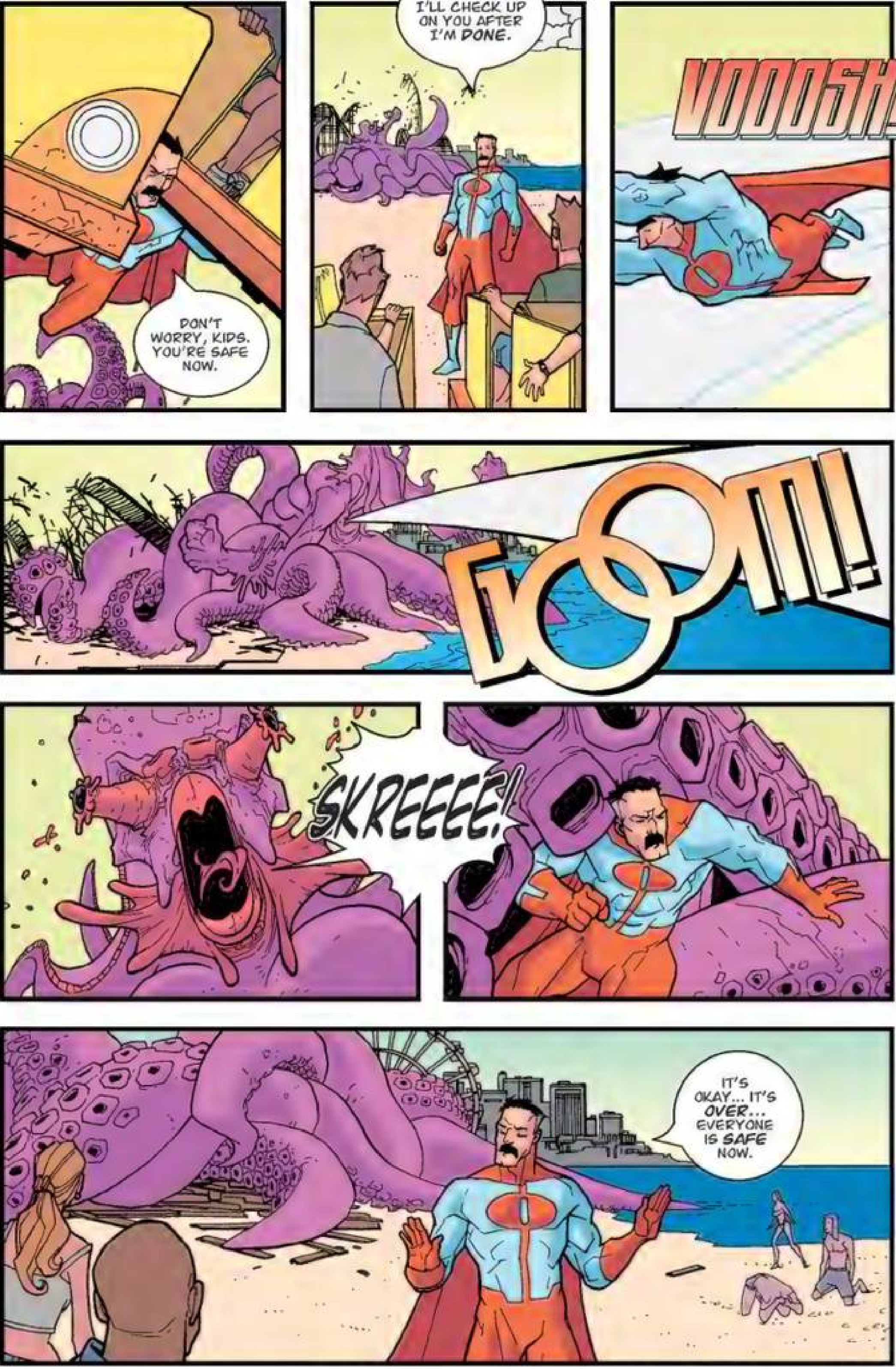

TRUST ME... I HAVE CLEARANCE.
DAMIEN DARKBLOOD, DEMON DETECTIVE... I WORK FOR PEOPLE YOUR BOSSES' BOSSES AREN'T IMPORTANT ENOUGH TO MEET.
HURM.
LOOK AT WHAT THE CAT DRAGGED IN.
YOU KNOW... THE BOSS THREW US ON THIS FOR A REASON. YOU'RE JUST NOT CUTTING THE MUSTARD. YOUR INVESTIGATION IS TAKING TOO LONG.
THERE WAS A TIME WHEN I WOULD HAVE EATEN YOUR FACE FOR SPEAKING TO ME THAT WAY. BE THANKFUL THAT I'VE CHANGED MY WAYS.
I'M HERE LOOKING FOR ADDITIONAL EVIDENCE I MAY HAVE MISSED ON MY FIRST PASS BECAUSE AS YOU SO KINDLY POINTED OUT... I'M OUT OF LEADS AND MY INVESTIGATION IS GOING NOWHERE.
I'D ADVISE YOU TO STAY OUT OF MY WAY.
...
HURM.

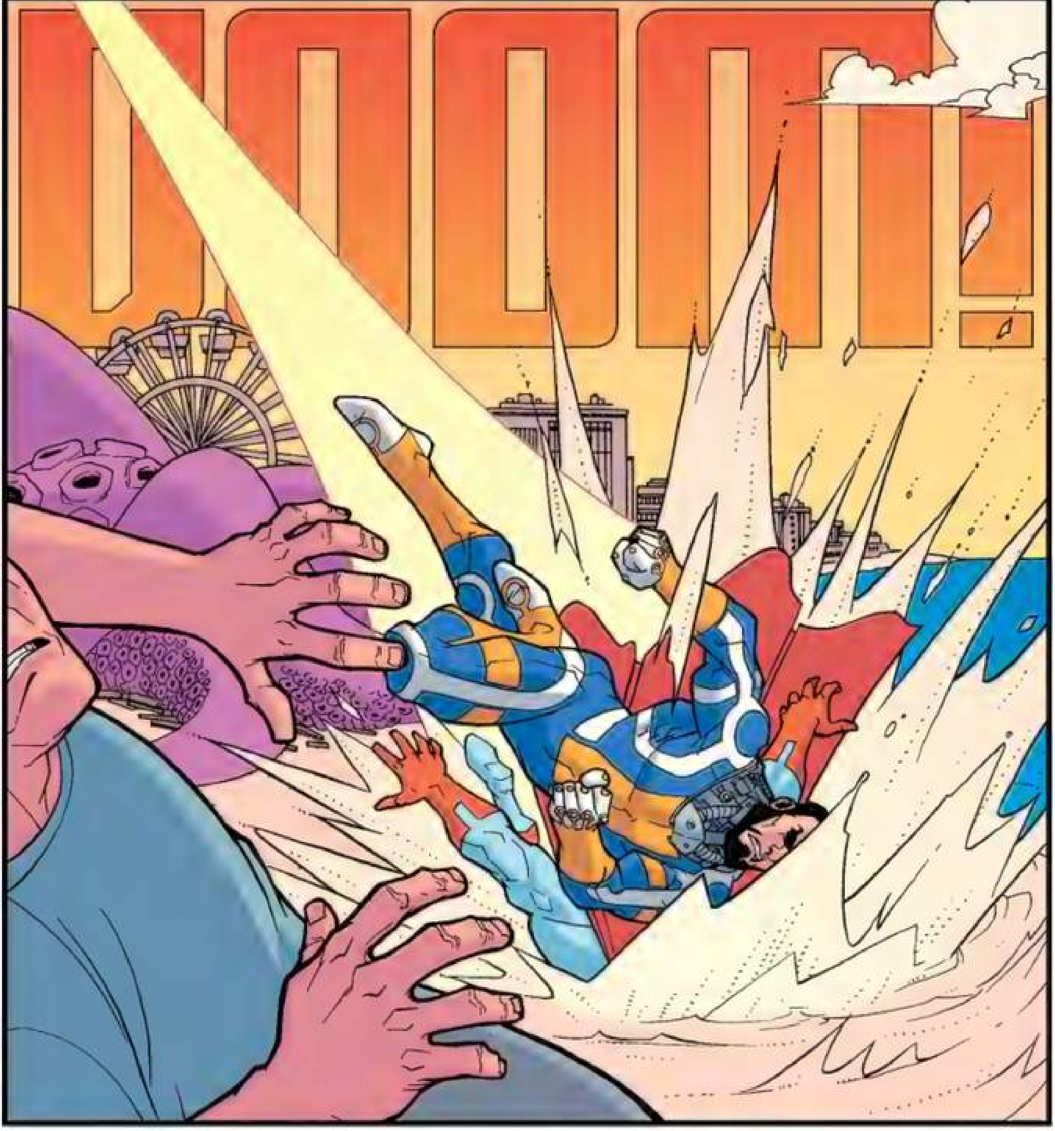

HE'S RIGHT UP HERE. STAY BACK AWAY FROM THE GLASS.
SURE.
SANFORD?
I'LL LEAVE YOU TWO ALONE.
IT FITS YOU WELL, THE COSTUME. I HOPE I DIDN'T DAMAGE IT IN MY LITTLE... ESCAPADE.
OH, SANFORD... I WISH YOU HADN'T DONE THIS TO YOURSELF.
I DID IT ALL FOR YOU, SIR. I COULDN'T BEAR ANOTHER GLIMPSE OF WHAT THEY TURNED YOU INTO. I WOULD HAVE KILLED EVERY ONE OF THEM HAD THEY NOT ALREADY BEEN DEAD.
STILL... THEY ARE DEAD... SO I'VE REALLY GOT NOTHING TO COMPLAIN ABOUT.
I'M PART OF THE NEW GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE... I'VE GOT SOME INFLUENCE. I'M DOING WHAT I CAN TO GET YOU OUT OF HERE. YOU NEED COUNSELING... NOT INCARCERATION.
I WOULD CERTAINLY WELCOME THE CHANCE TO LEAVE THIS PLACE.

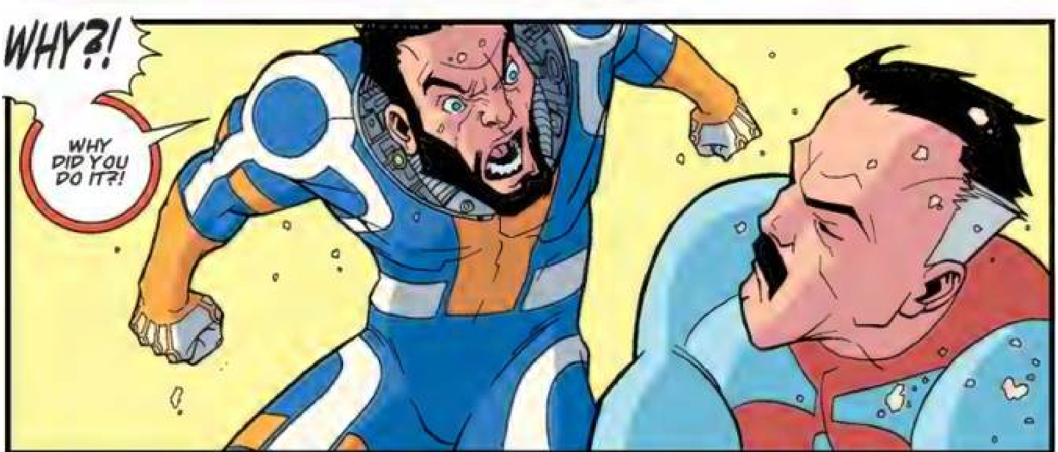

VICKI'S PRIVATE
NIGHT FLIGH
COMICS
PIMPS
WHAT'S GOING ON? WHAT'S THIS LINE FOR?
HUH? OH... FILIP SCHAFF, THE CREATOR OF SCIENCE DOG IS HERE SIGNING BOOKS.
REALLY?
YEP, PRETTY COOL, HUH? WHERE ARE YOU--
UM...
...WEIRDO.
WHAT?
WHERE'D YOU-- I-- I THOUGHT YOU JUST LEFT?
NAH. I JUST WENT AND GOT MY COMICS... OUT OF MY CAR.
WELL... THAT WAS...
...QUICK.

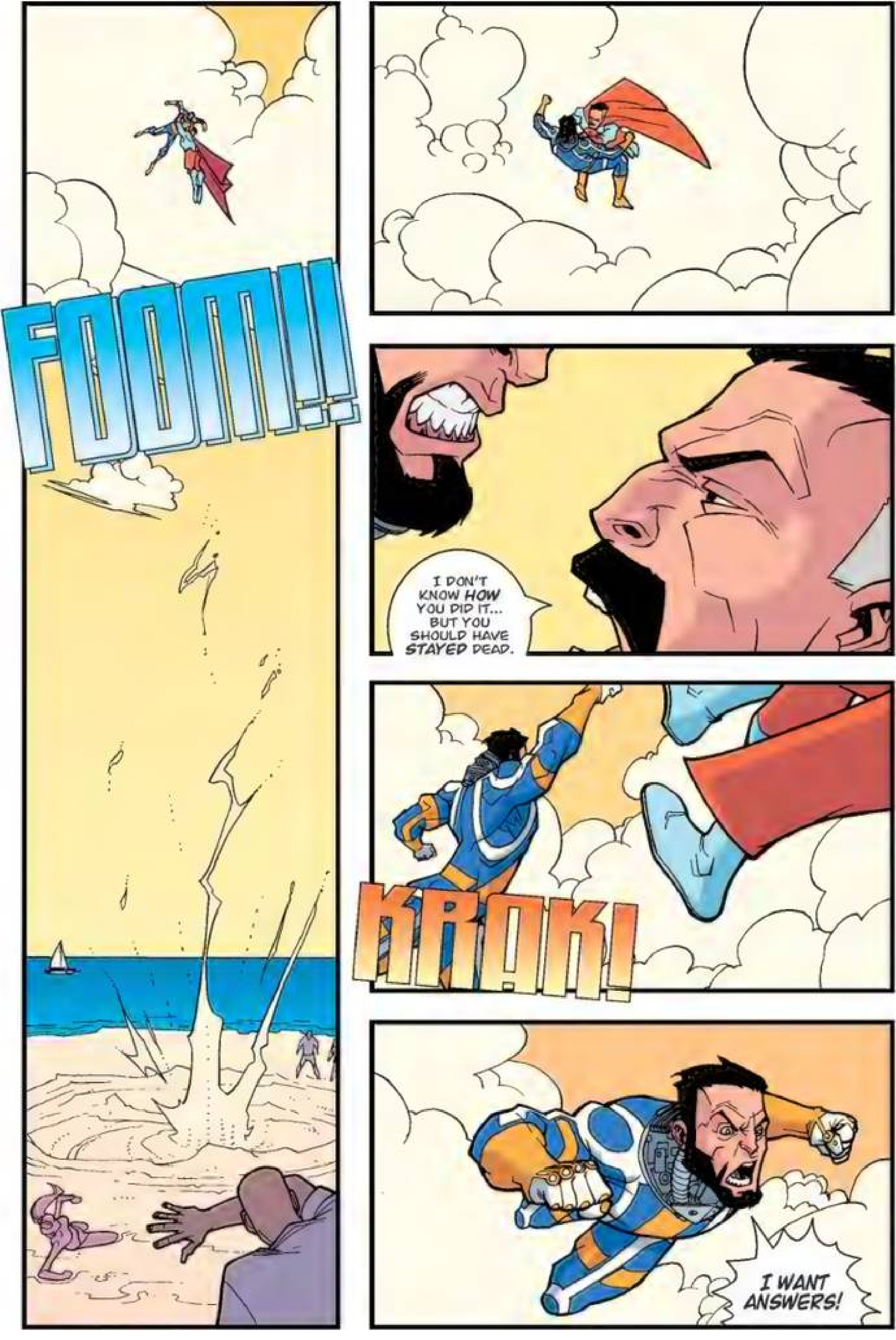

HI, MISTER SCHAFF... IT'S GREAT TO MEET YOU. I BROUGHT A LOT OF STUFF... YOU DON'T HAVE TO SIGN IT ALL IF YOU DON'T WANT TO.
LAY IT ON ME, KIDDO. YOU PAID HARD EARNED MONEY FOR THE STUFF... THE LEAST I CAN DO IS DEFACE IT WITH MY ILLEGIBLE SCRIBBLE.
COOL!
I GOTTA SAY, MAN... I'M AMAZED AT HOW YOU GET THESE THINGS OUT ON A MONTHLY BASIS. IT SEEMS LIKE SO MUCH WORK TO DO IN SUCH A SHORT AMOUNT OF TIME... AND YOU'RE NEVER LATE.
ACTUALLY, A LOT OF TIMES... I'LL JUST REUSE ART THAT I'VE ALREADY DONE OVER AND OVER. IT'S GOOD FOR DRAMATIC PAUSES AND WHEN STUFF DOESN'T REALLY CHANGE MUCH FROM PANEL TO PANEL.
MOST PEOPLE DON'T EVEN NOTICE.
DON'T YOU THINK THAT'S KINDA CHEAP?
NOT REALLY.

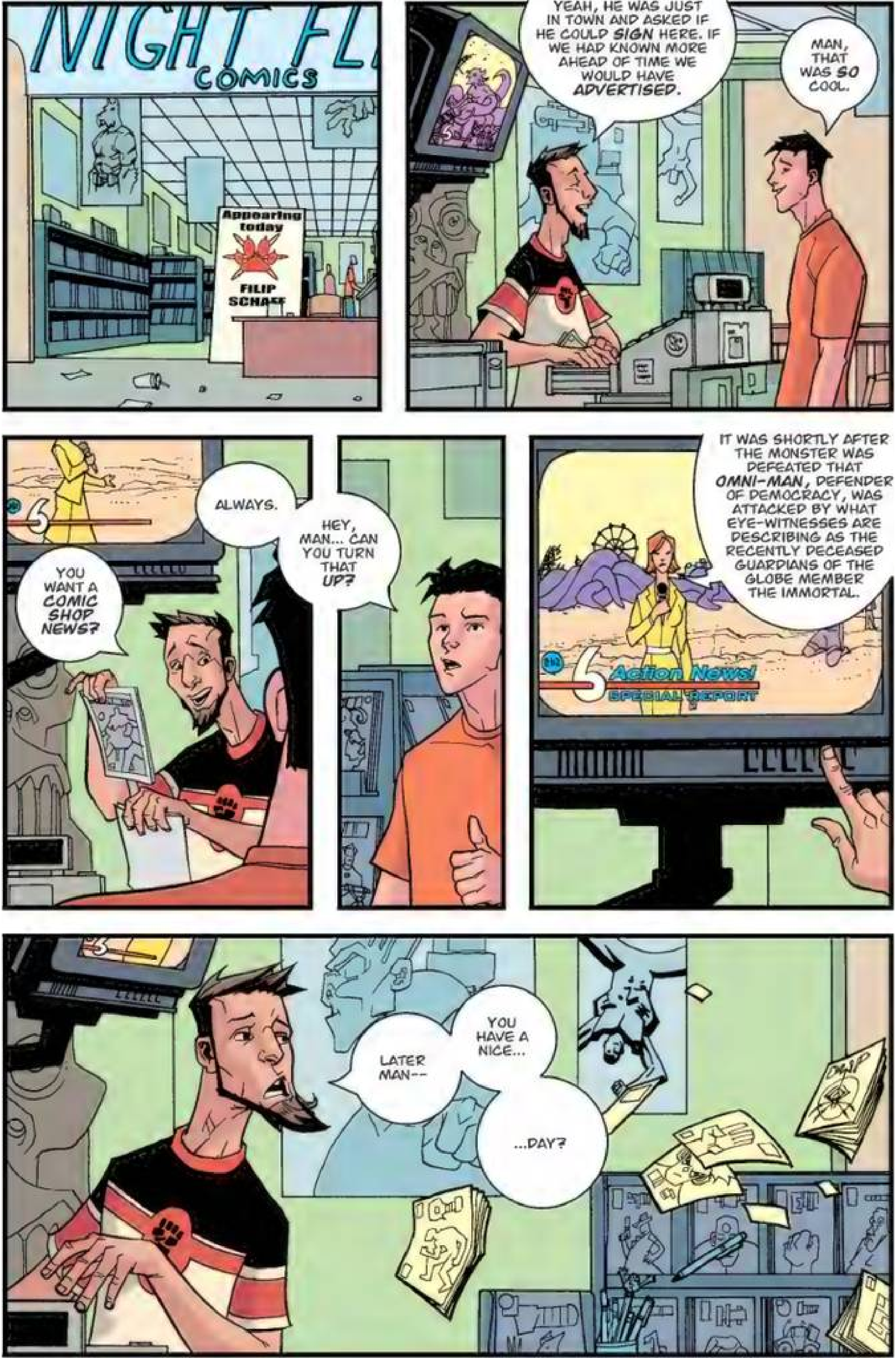

RAWK!
KROOM!

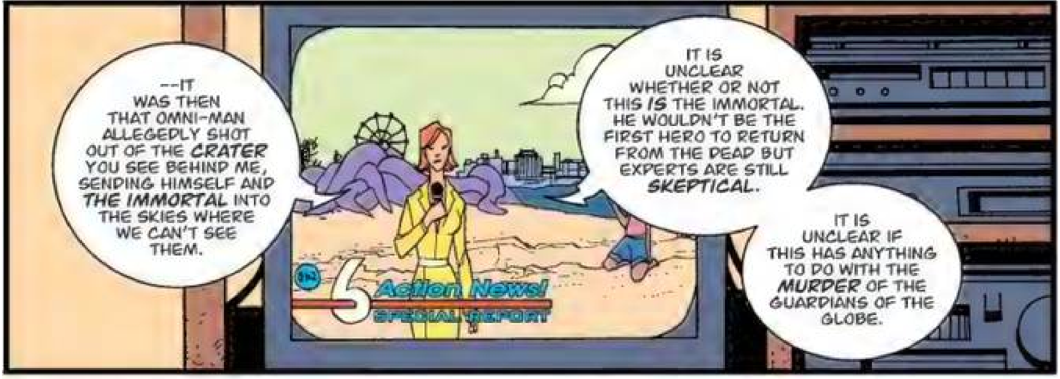

DON'T WORRY, KIDS. YOU'RE SAFE NOW.
I'LL CHECK UP ON YOU AFTER I'M DONE.
VOOOSH!
BOOM!!
SKREEEEE!
IT'S OKAY... IT'S OVER... EVERYONE IS SAFE NOW.

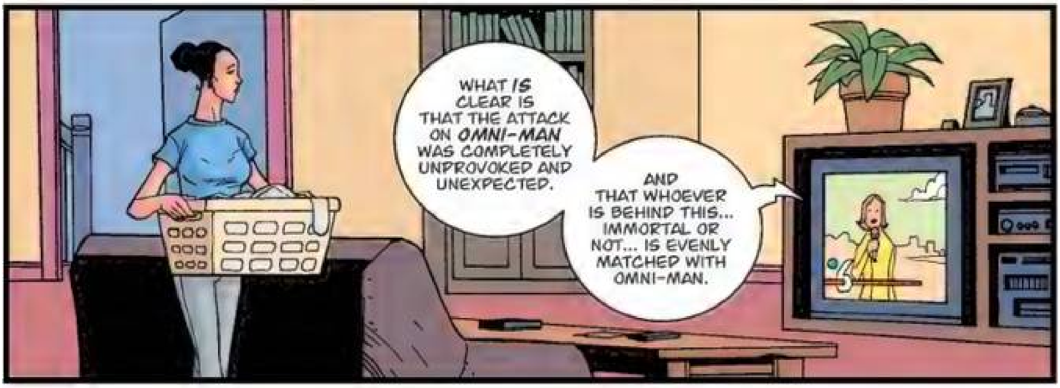

DOOM!

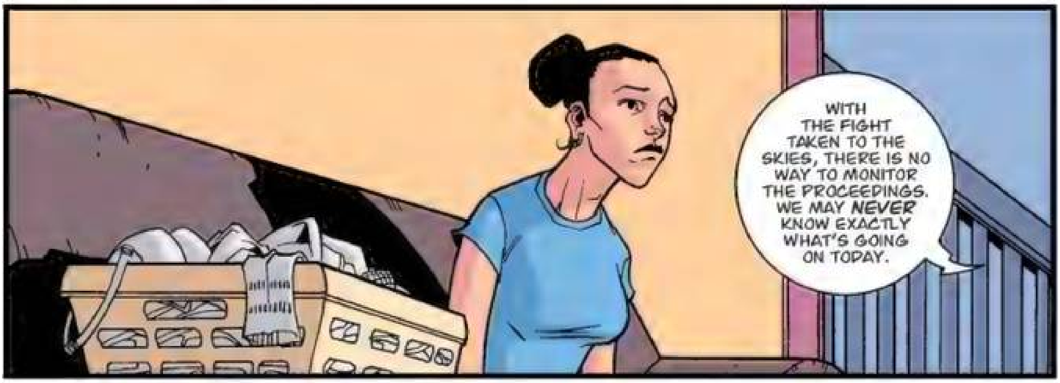

WHY?!
WHY DID YOU DO IT?!

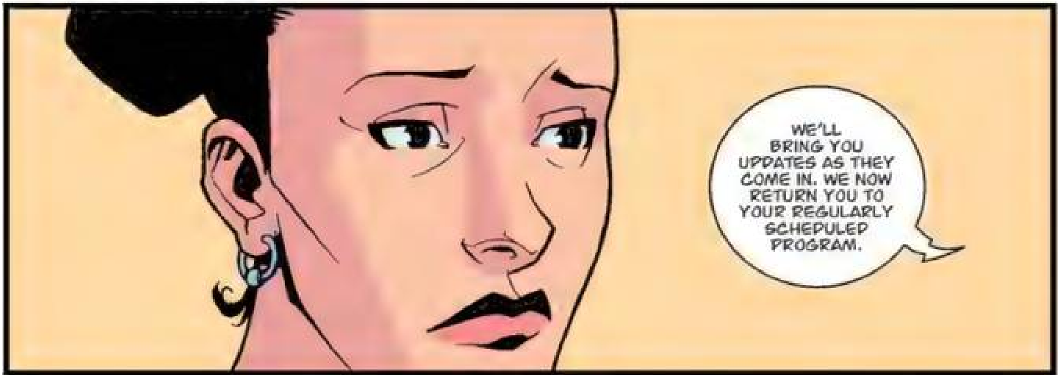

FOOM!!!
I DON'T KNOW HOW YOU DID IT... BUT YOU SHOULD HAVE STAYED DEAD.
KRAK!
I WANT ANSWERS!

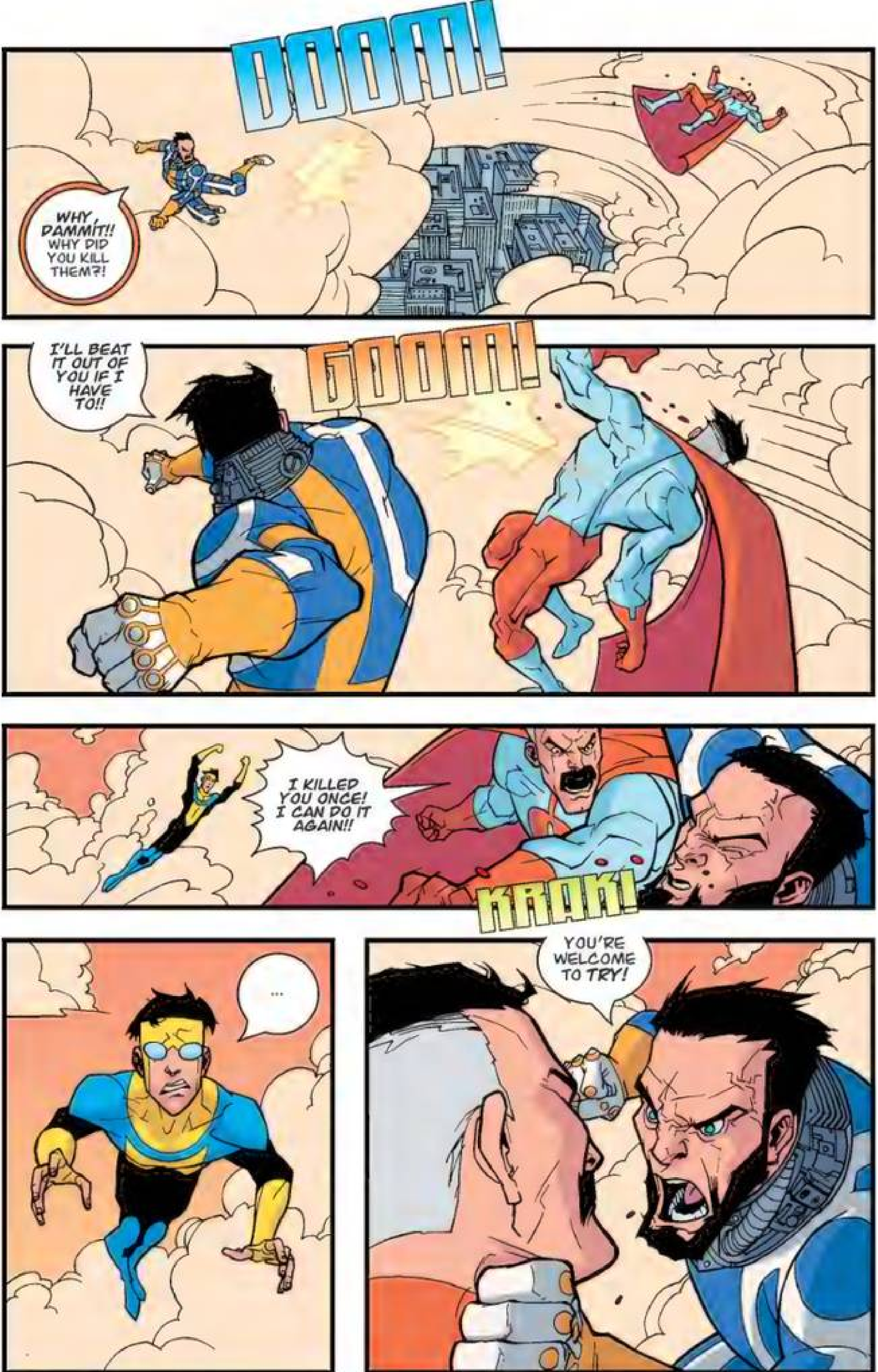

NIGHT FL
COMICS
Appearing today
FILIP SCHAF
YEAH, HE WAS JUST IN TOWN AND ASKED IF HE COULD SIGN HERE. IF WE HAD KNOWN MORE AHEAD OF TIME WE WOULD HAVE ADVERTISED.
MAN, THAT WAS SO COOL.
ALWAYS.
YOU WANT A COMIC SHOP NEWS?
HEY, MAN... CAN YOU TURN THAT UP?
IT WAS SHORTLY AFTER THE MONSTER WAS DEFEATED THAT OMNI-MAN, DEFENDER OF DEMOCRACY, WAS ATTACKED BY WHAT EYE-WITNESSES ARE DESCRIBING AS THE RECENTLY DECEASED GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE MEMBER THE IMMORTAL.
6 Action News!
SPECIAL REPORT
LATER MAN--
YOU HAVE A NICE...
...DAY?

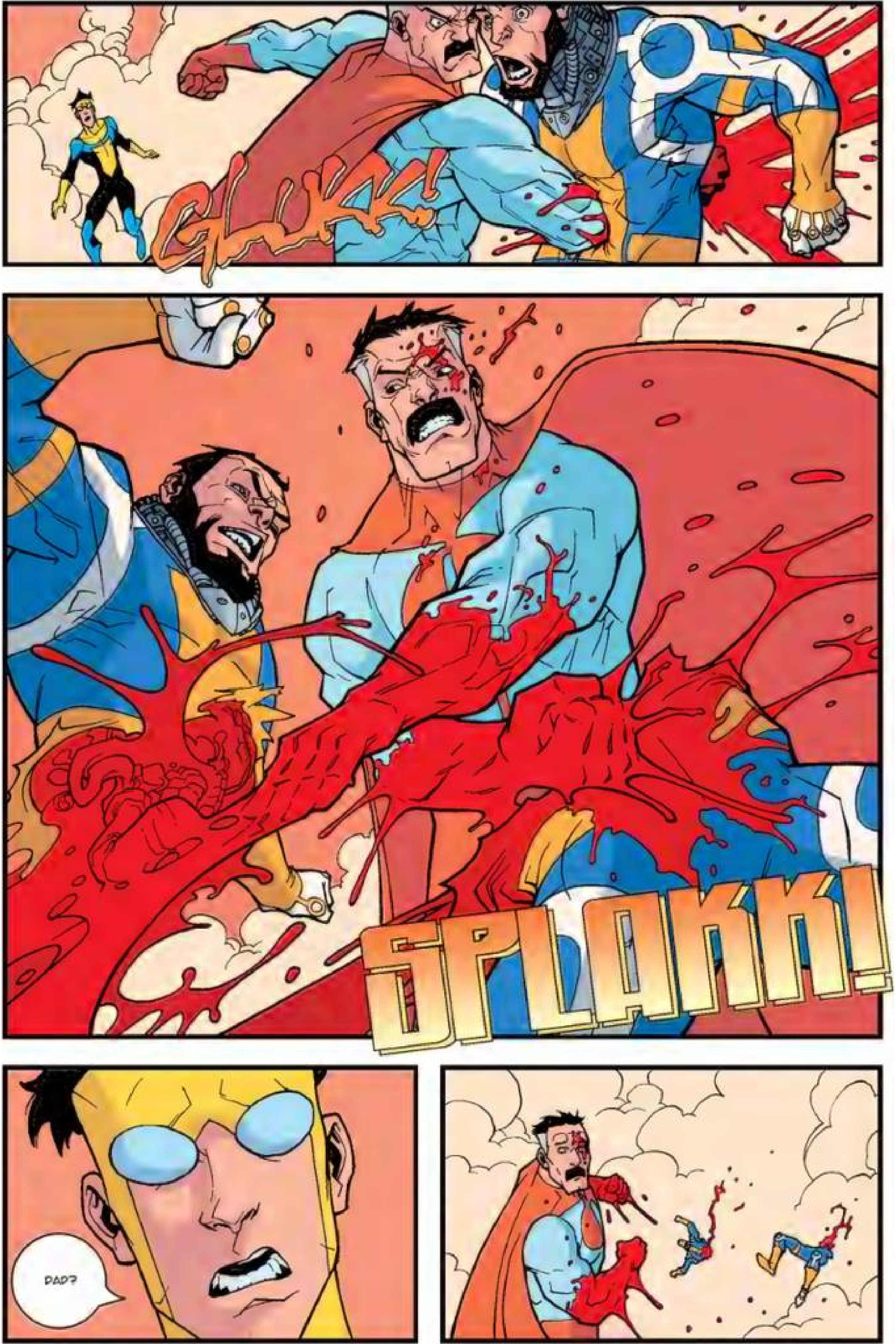

--IT WAS THEN THAT OMNI-MAN ALLEGEDLY SHOT OUT OF THE **CRATER** YOU SEE BEHIND ME, SENDING HIMSELF AND **THE IMMORTAL** INTO THE SKIES WHERE WE CAN'T SEE THEM.
6 Action News!
SPECIAL REPORT
IT IS UNCLEAR WHETHER OR NOT THIS ***IS*** THE IMMORTAL. HE WOULDN'T BE THE FIRST HERO TO RETURN FROM THE DEAD BUT EXPERTS ARE STILL **SKEPTICAL**.
IT IS UNCLEAR IF THIS HAS ANYTHING TO DO WITH THE **MURDER** OF THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE.

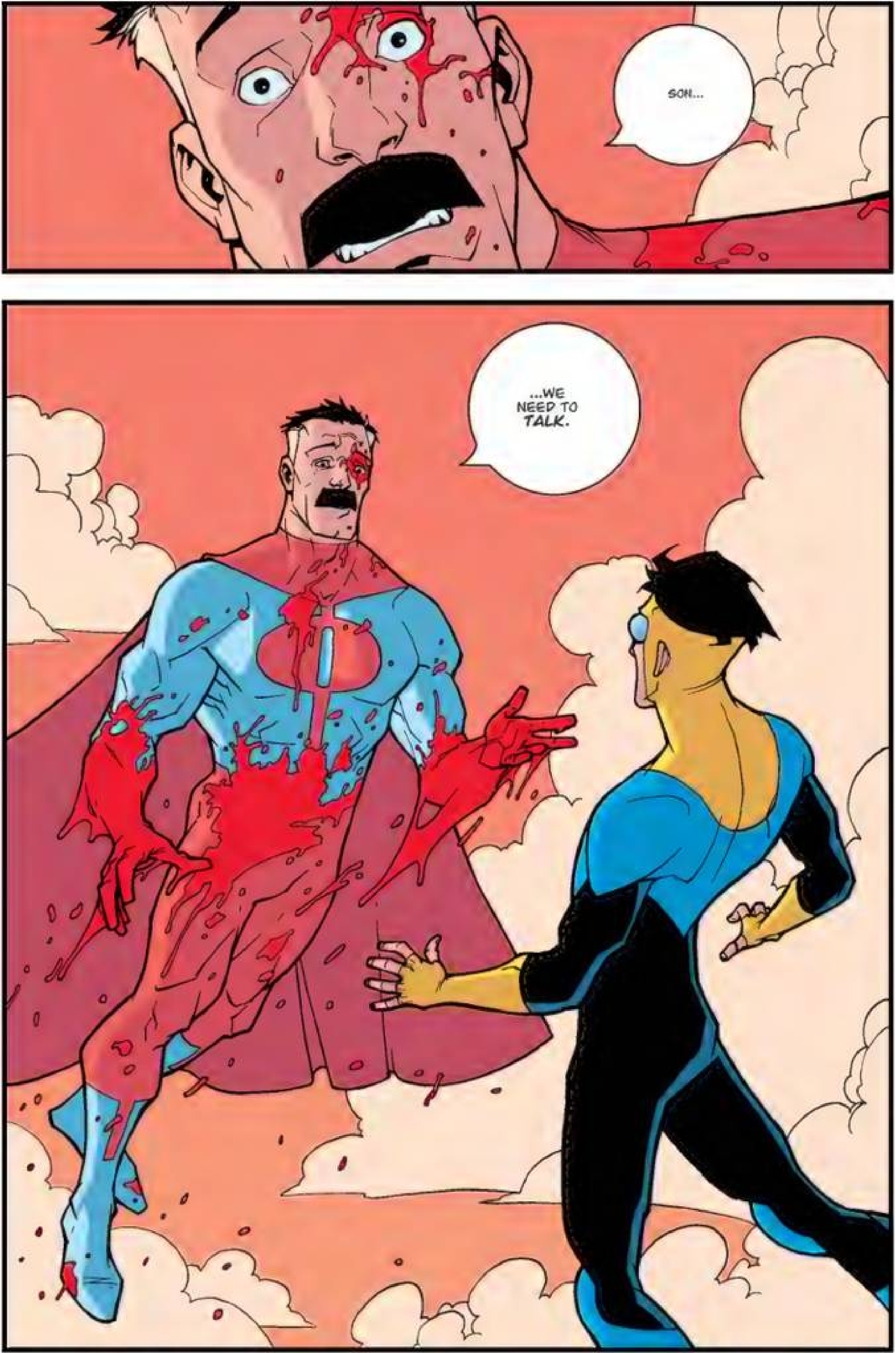

WHAT ***IS*** CLEAR IS THAT THE ATTACK ON **OMNI-MAN** WAS COMPLETELY UNPROVOKED AND UNEXPECTED.
AND THAT WHOEVER IS BEHIND THIS... IMMORTAL OR NOT... IS EVENLY MATCHED WITH OMNI-MAN.


WITH THE FIGHT TAKEN TO THE SKIES, THERE IS NO WAY TO MONITOR THE PROCEEDINGS. WE MAY **NEVER** KNOW EXACTLY WHAT'S GOING ON TODAY.

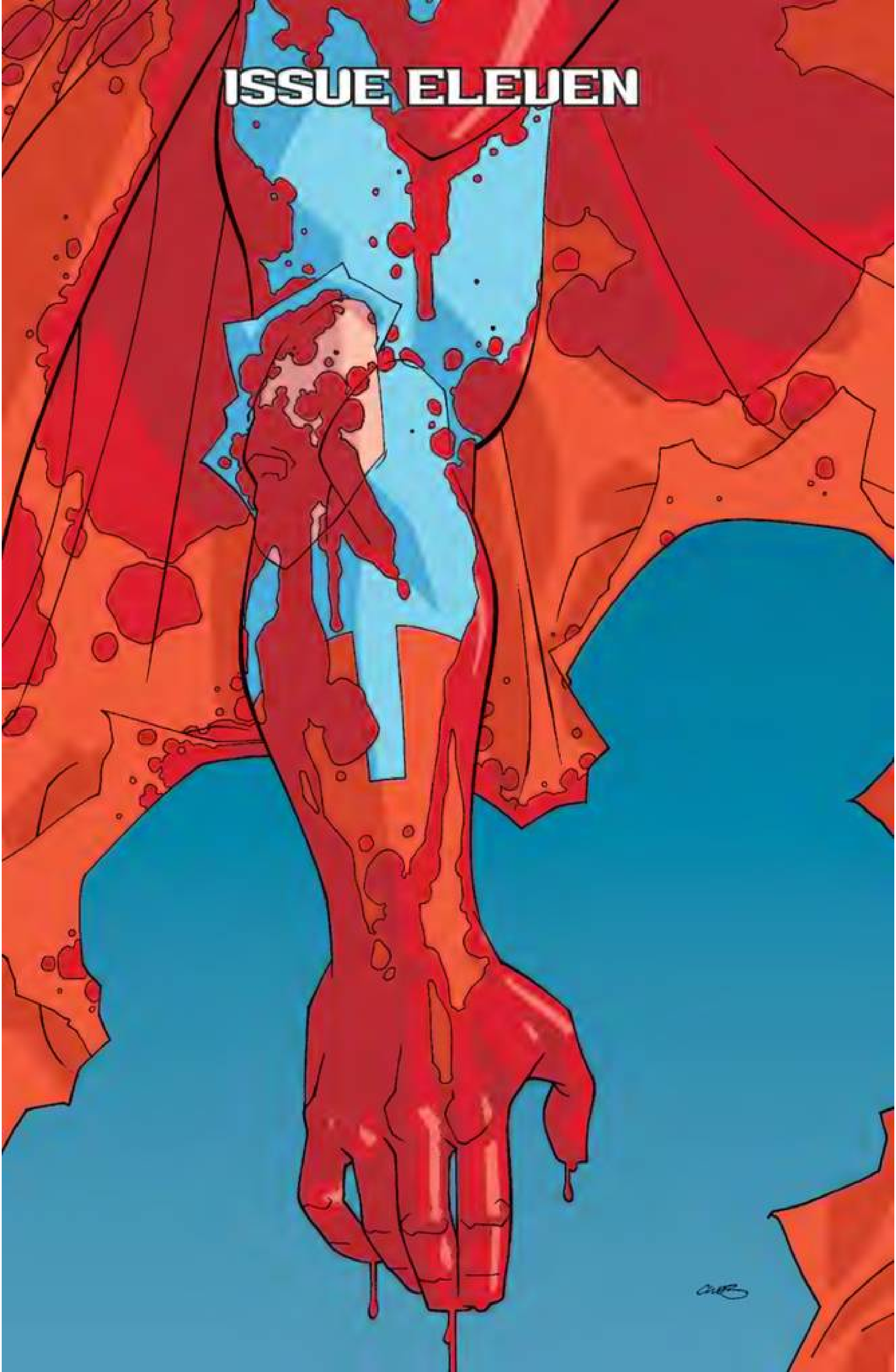

WE'LL BRING YOU UPDATES AS THEY COME IN. WE NOW RETURN YOU TO YOUR REGULARLY SCHEDULED PROGRAM.

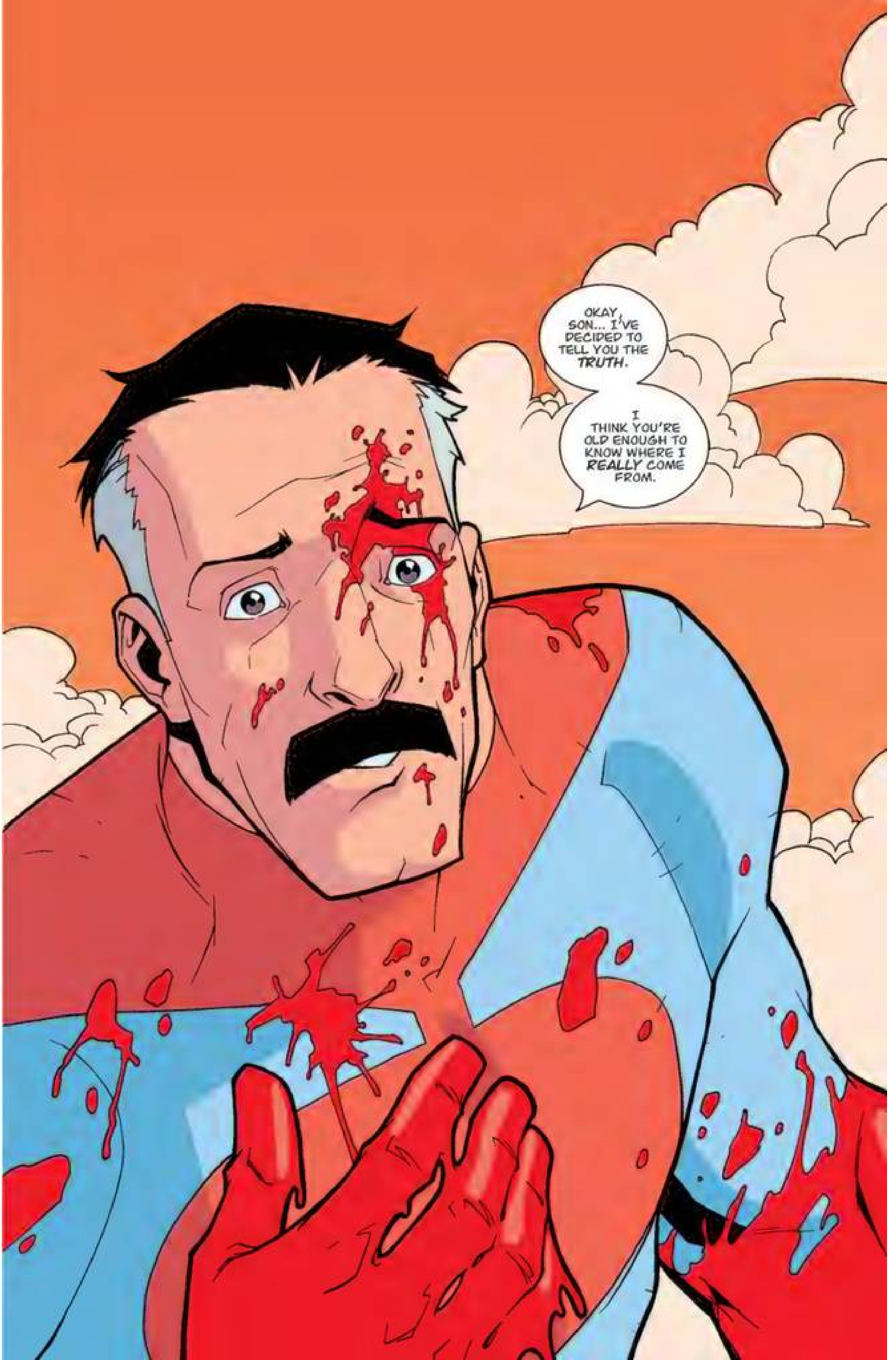

DOOM!
WHY, DAMMIT!! WHY DID YOU KILL THEM?!
I'LL BEAT IT OUT OF YOU IF I HAVE TO!!
GOOM!
I KILLED YOU ONCE! I CAN DO IT AGAIN!!
KRAK!
...
YOU'RE WELCOME TO TRY!

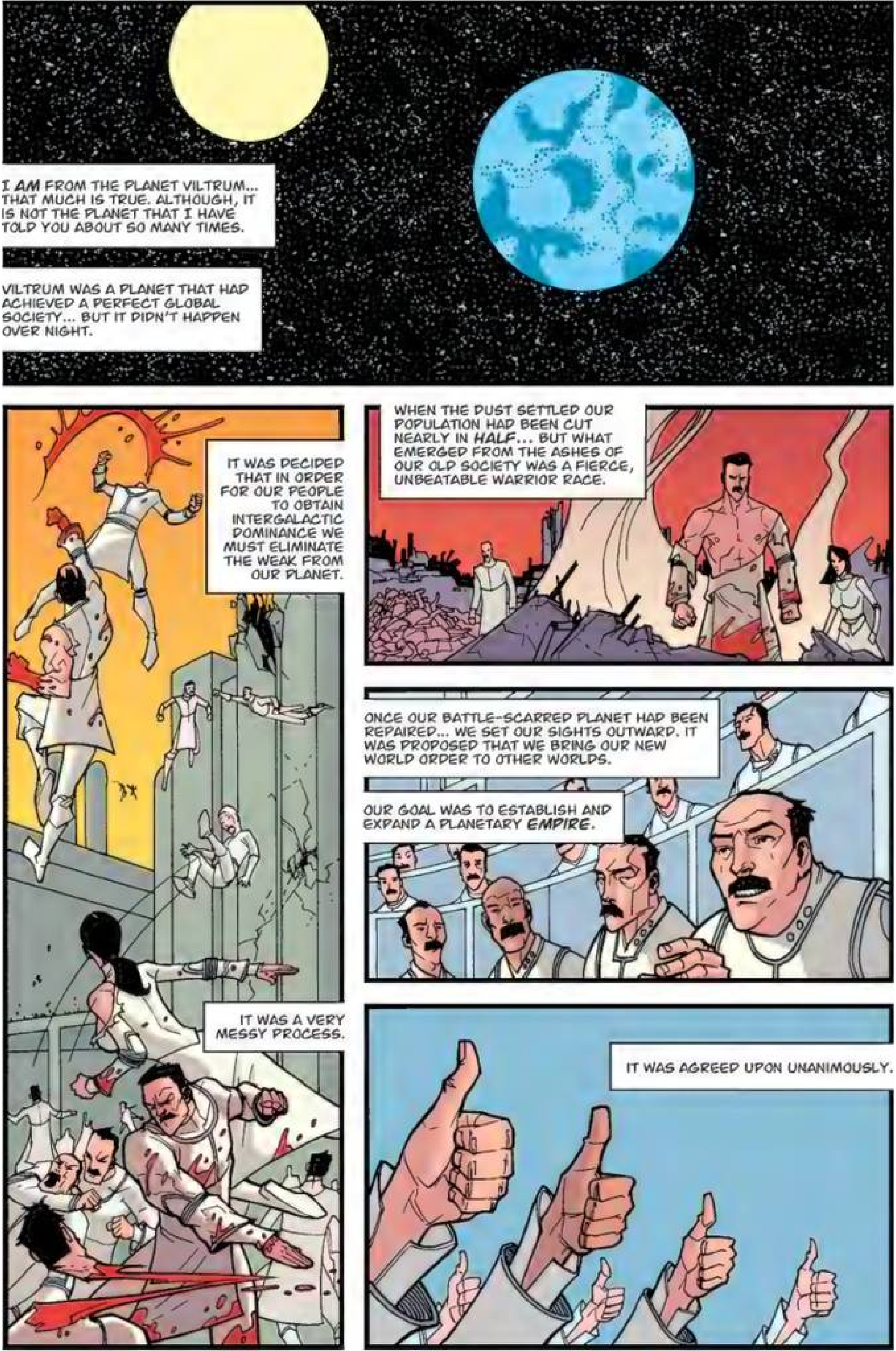

GLUKK!
SPLAKK!
DAD?

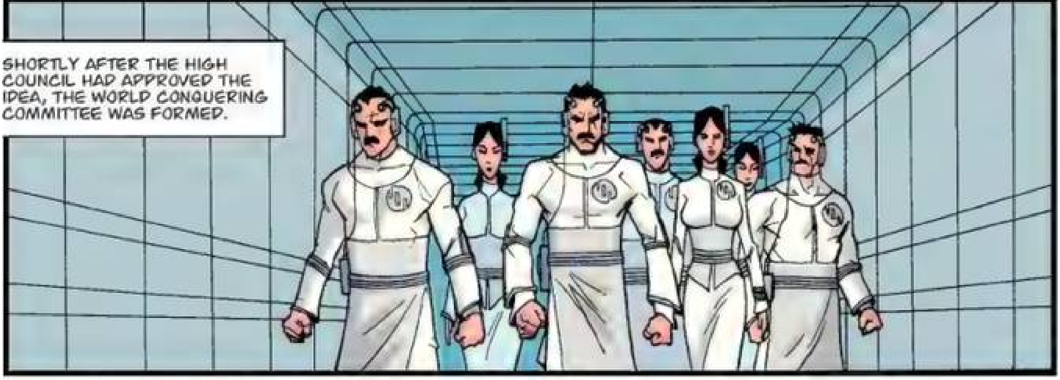

SON...
...WE NEED TO TALK.

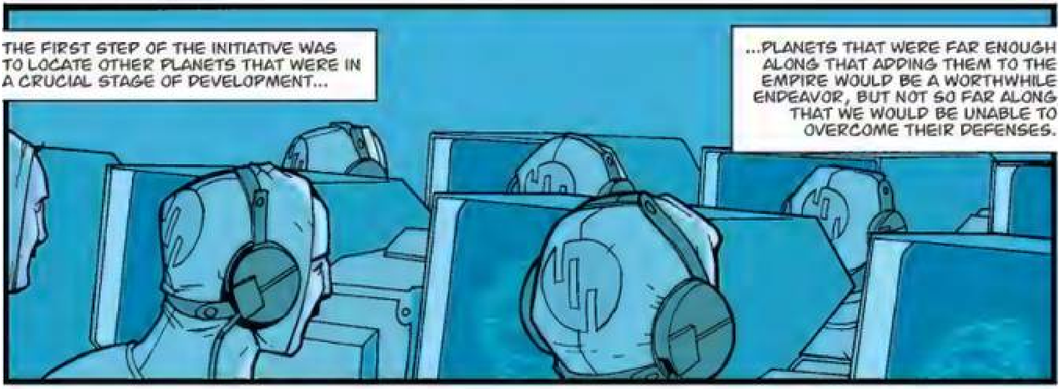
ISSUE ELEVEN

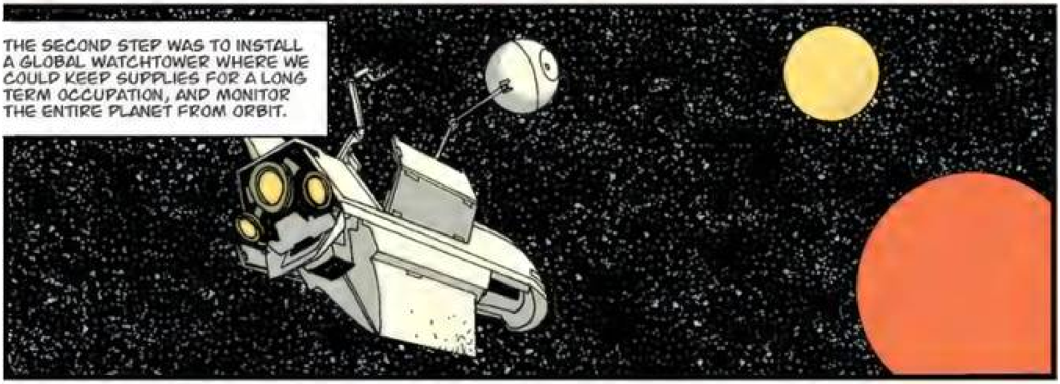


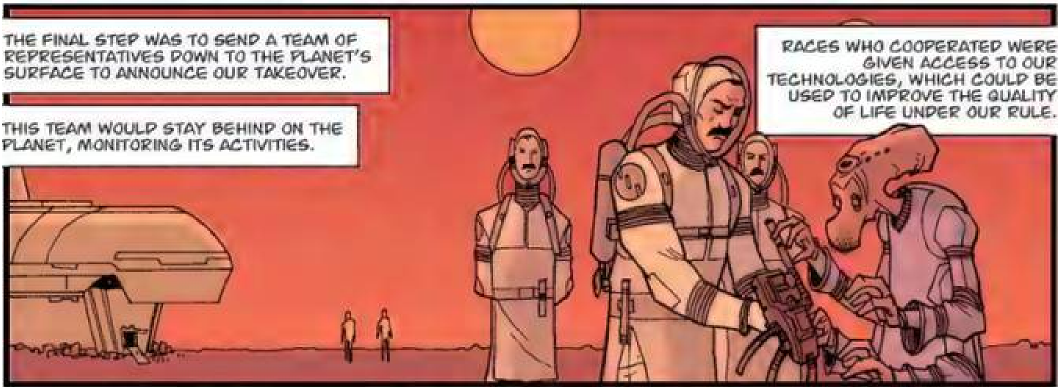

OKAY, SON... I'VE DECIDED TO TELL YOU THE *TRUTH*.
I THINK YOU'RE OLD ENOUGH TO KNOW WHERE I *REALLY* COME FROM.

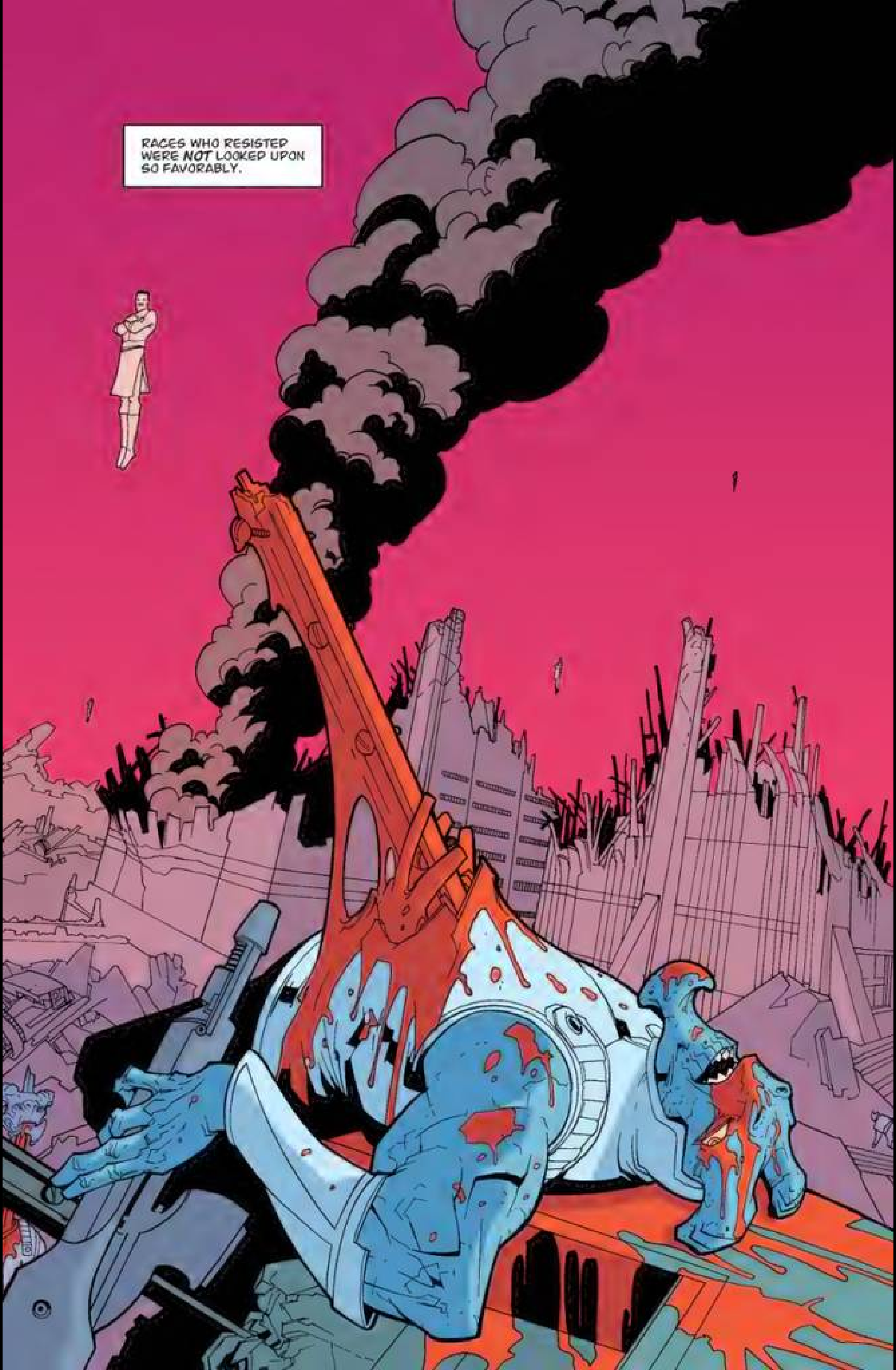

I AM FROM THE PLANET VILTRUM... THAT MUCH IS TRUE. ALTHOUGH, IT IS NOT THE PLANET THAT I HAVE TOLD YOU ABOUT SO MANY TIMES.
VILTRUM WAS A PLANET THAT HAD ACHIEVED A PERFECT GLOBAL SOCIETY... BUT IT DIDN'T HAPPEN OVER NIGHT.
IT WAS DECIDED THAT IN ORDER FOR OUR PEOPLE TO OBTAIN INTERGALACTIC DOMINANCE WE MUST ELIMINATE THE WEAK FROM OUR PLANET.
IT WAS A VERY MESSY PROCESS.
WHEN THE DUST SETTLED OUR POPULATION HAD BEEN CUT NEARLY IN HALF... BUT WHAT EMERGED FROM THE ASHES OF OUR OLD SOCIETY WAS A FIERCE, UNBEATABLE WARRIOR RACE.
ONCE OUR BATTLE-SCARRED PLANET HAD BEEN REPAIRED... WE SET OUR SIGHTS OUTWARD. IT WAS PROPOSED THAT WE BRING OUR NEW WORLD ORDER TO OTHER WORLDS.
OUR GOAL WAS TO ESTABLISH AND EXPAND A PLANETARY EMPIRE.
IT WAS AGREED UPON UNANIMOUSLY.

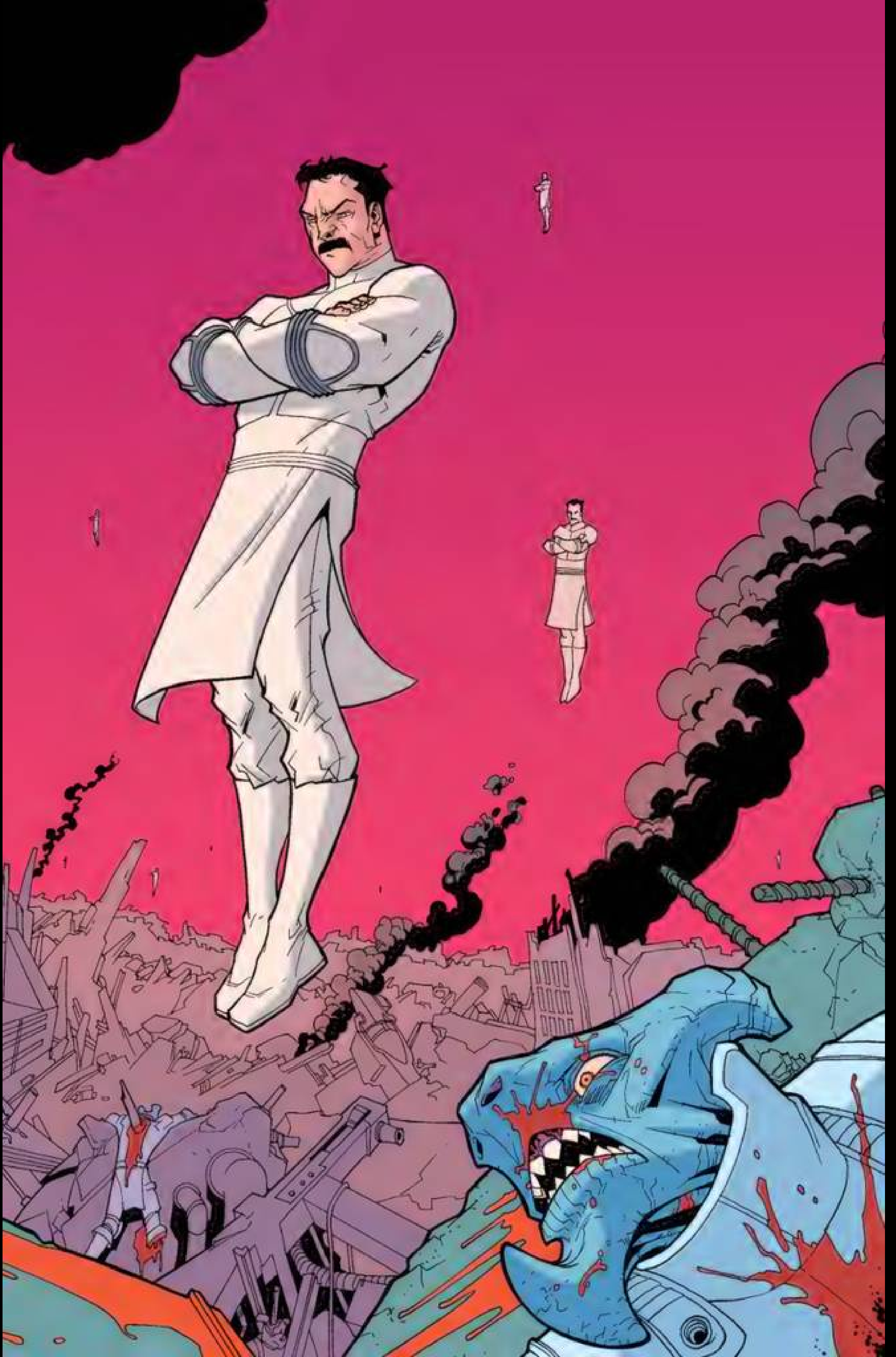

SHORTLY AFTER THE HIGH COUNCIL HAD APPROVED THE IDEA, THE WORLD CONQUERING COMMITTEE WAS FORMED.

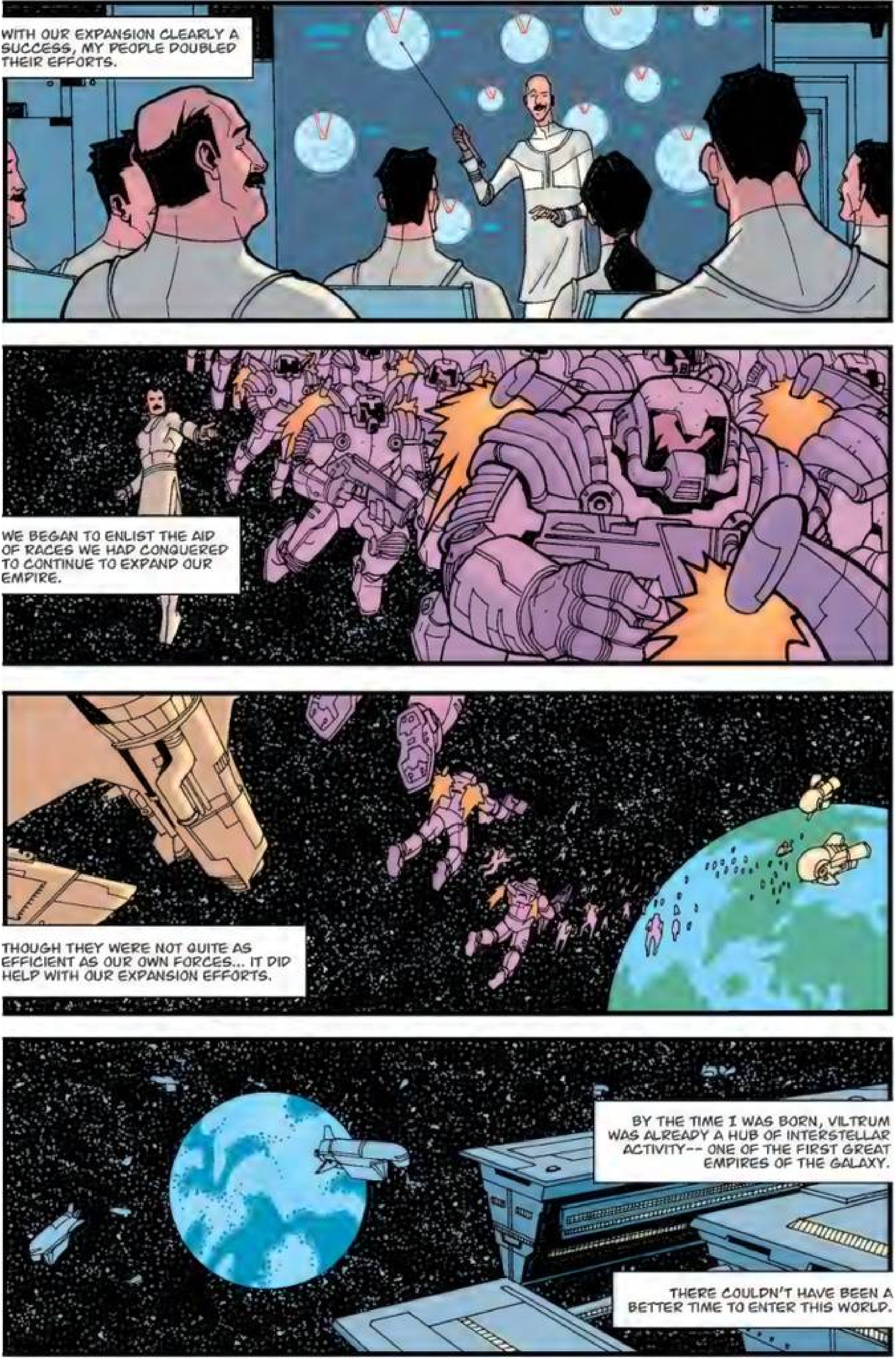

THE FIRST STEP OF THE INITIATIVE WAS TO LOCATE OTHER PLANETS THAT WERE IN A CRUCIAL STAGE OF DEVELOPMENT...
...PLANETS THAT WERE FAR ENOUGH ALONG THAT ADDING THEM TO THE EMPIRE WOULD BE A WORTHWHILE ENDEAVOR, BUT NOT SO FAR ALONG THAT WE WOULD BE UNABLE TO OVERCOME THEIR DEFENSES.

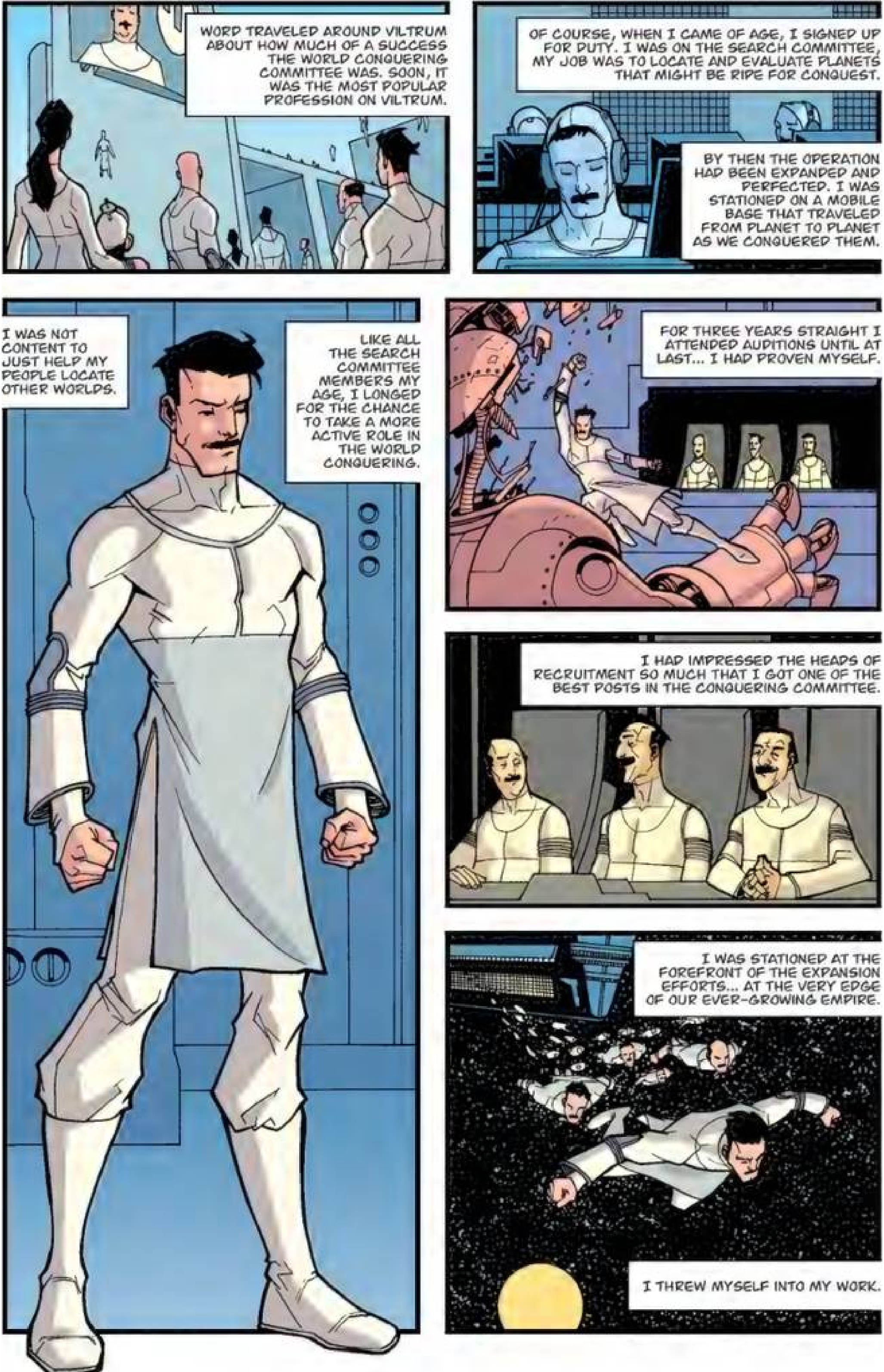

THE SECOND STEP WAS TO INSTALL A GLOBAL WATCHTOWER WHERE WE COULD KEEP SUPPLIES FOR A LONG TERM OCCUPATION, AND MONITOR THE ENTIRE PLANET FROM ORBIT.

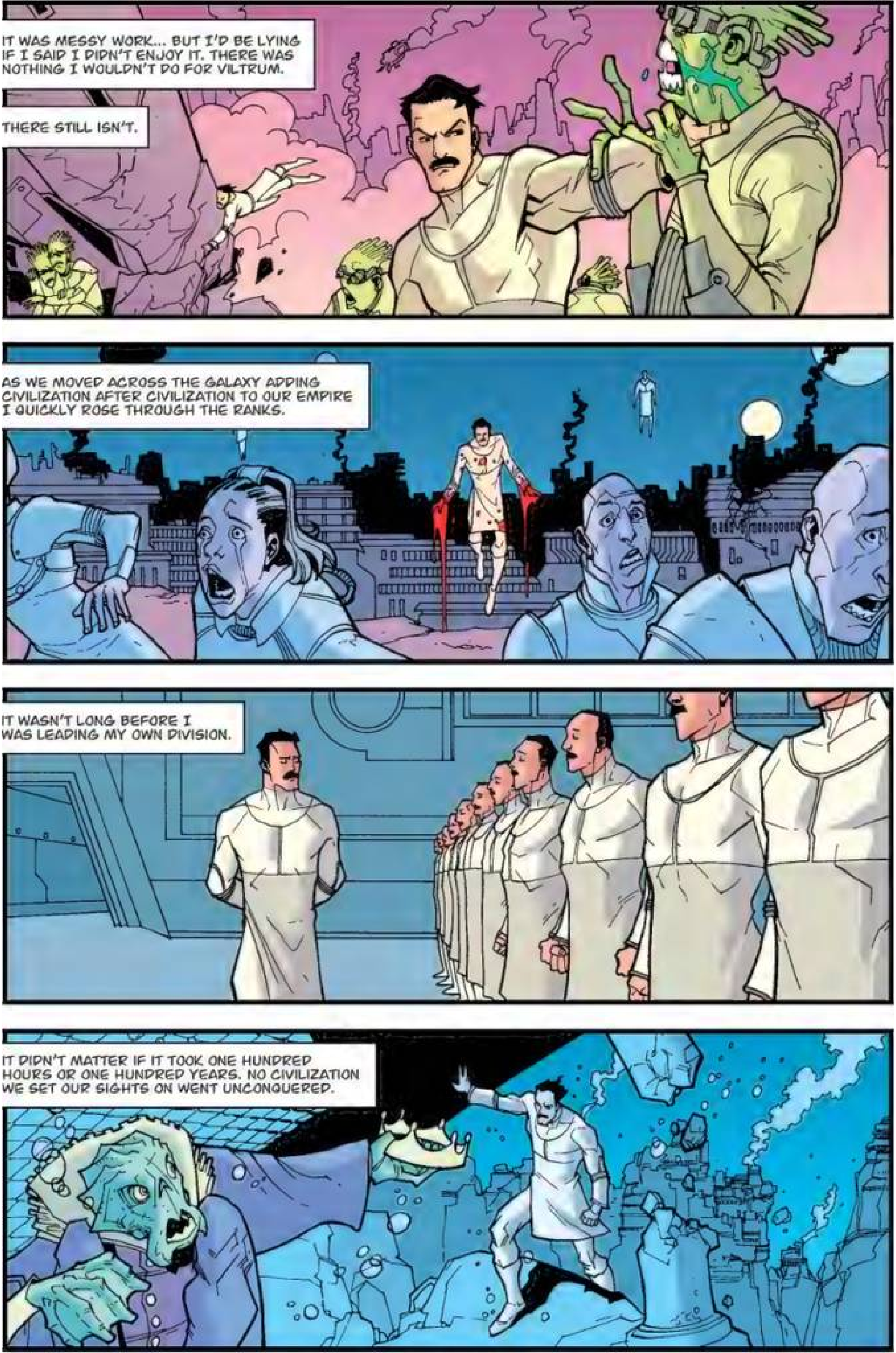

THE FINAL STEP WAS TO SEND A TEAM OF REPRESENTATIVES DOWN TO THE PLANET'S SURFACE TO ANNOUNCE OUR TAKEOVER.
THIS TEAM WOULD STAY BEHIND ON THE PLANET, MONITORING ITS ACTIVITIES.
RACES WHO COOPERATED WERE GIVEN ACCESS TO OUR TECHNOLOGIES, WHICH COULD BE USED TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF LIFE UNDER OUR RULE.

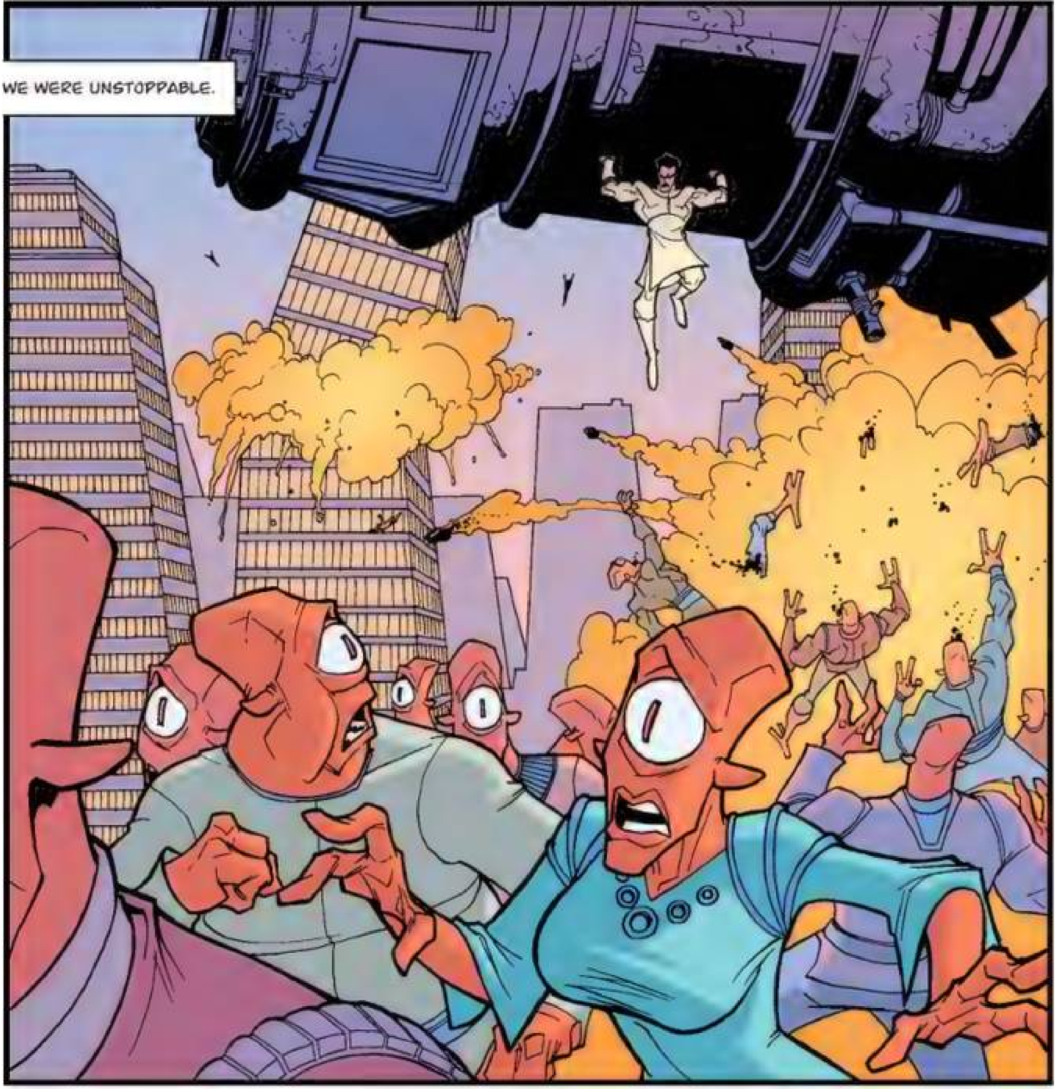

RACES WHO RESISTED WERE *NOT* LOOKED UPON SO FAVORABLY.

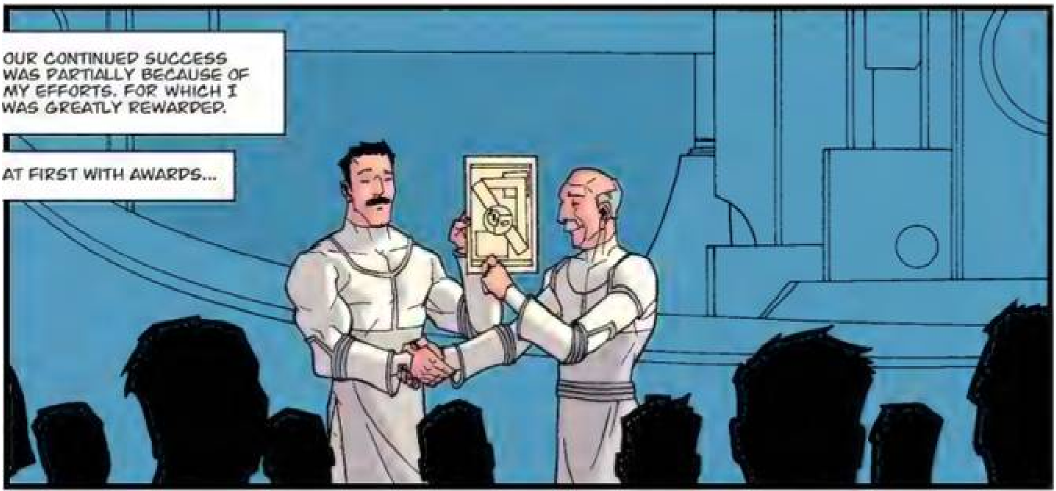


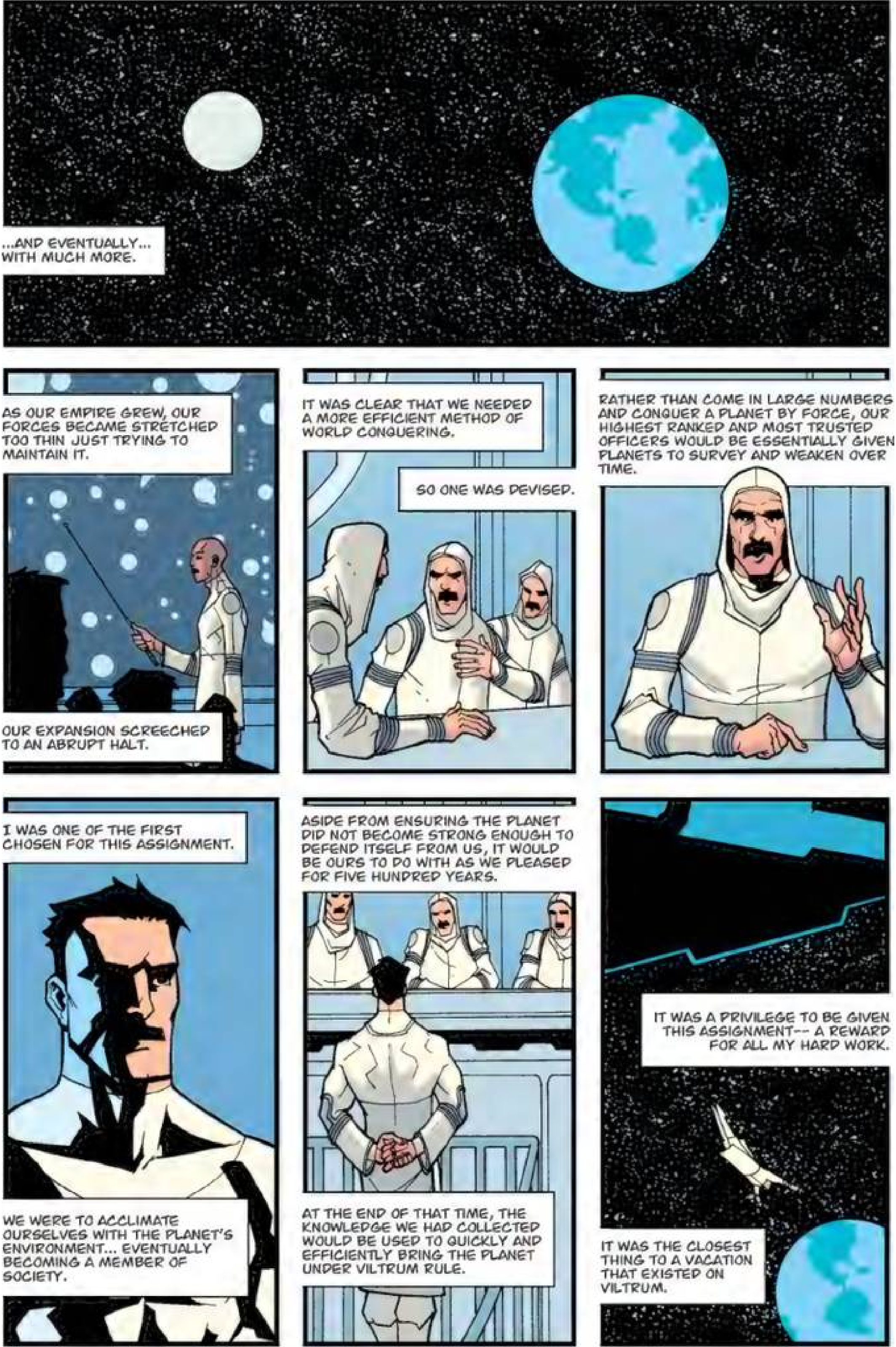

WITH OUR EXPANSION CLEARLY A SUCCESS, MY PEOPLE DOUBLED THEIR EFFORTS.
WE BEGAN TO ENLIST THE AID OF RACES WE HAD CONQUERED TO CONTINUE TO EXPAND OUR EMPIRE.
THOUGH THEY WERE NOT QUITE AS EFFICIENT AS OUR OWN FORCES... IT DID HELP WITH OUR EXPANSION EFFORTS.
BY THE TIME I WAS BORN, VILTRUM WAS ALREADY A HUB OF INTERSTELLAR ACTIVITY-- ONE OF THE FIRST GREAT EMPIRES OF THE GALAXY.
THERE COULDN'T HAVE BEEN A BETTER TIME TO ENTER THIS WORLD.

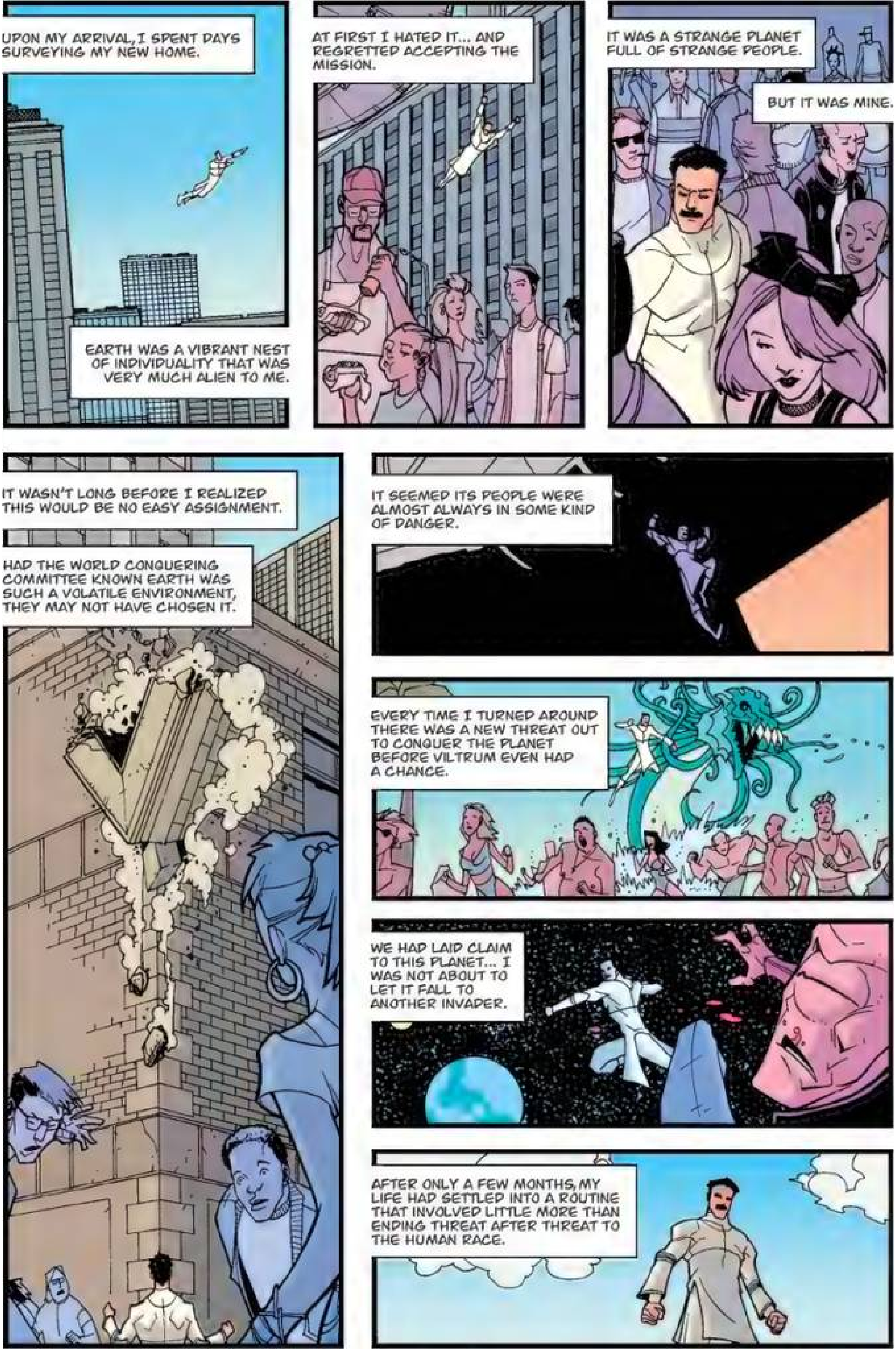

WORD TRAVELED AROUND VILTRUM ABOUT HOW MUCH OF A SUCCESS THE WORLD CONQUERING COMMITTEE WAS. SOON, IT WAS THE MOST POPULAR PROFESSION ON VILTRUM.
OF COURSE, WHEN I CAME OF AGE, I SIGNED UP FOR DUTY. I WAS ON THE SEARCH COMMITTEE, MY JOB WAS TO LOCATE AND EVALUATE PLANETS THAT MIGHT BE RIPE FOR CONQUEST.
BY THEN THE OPERATION HAD BEEN EXPANDED AND PERFECTED. I WAS STATIONED ON A MOBILE BASE THAT TRAVELED FROM PLANET TO PLANET AS WE CONQUERED THEM.
I WAS NOT CONTENT TO JUST HELP MY PEOPLE LOCATE OTHER WORLDS.
LIKE ALL THE SEARCH COMMITTEE MEMBERS MY AGE, I LONGED FOR THE CHANCE TO TAKE A MORE ACTIVE ROLE IN THE WORLD CONQUERING.
FOR THREE YEARS STRAIGHT I ATTENDED AUDITIONS UNTIL AT LAST... I HAD PROVEN MYSELF.
I HAD IMPRESSED THE HEADS OF RECRUITMENT SO MUCH THAT I GOT ONE OF THE BEST POSTS IN THE CONQUERING COMMITTEE.
I WAS STATIONED AT THE FOREFRONT OF THE EXPANSION EFFORTS... AT THE VERY EDGE OF OUR EVER-GROWING EMPIRE.
I THREW MYSELF INTO MY WORK.

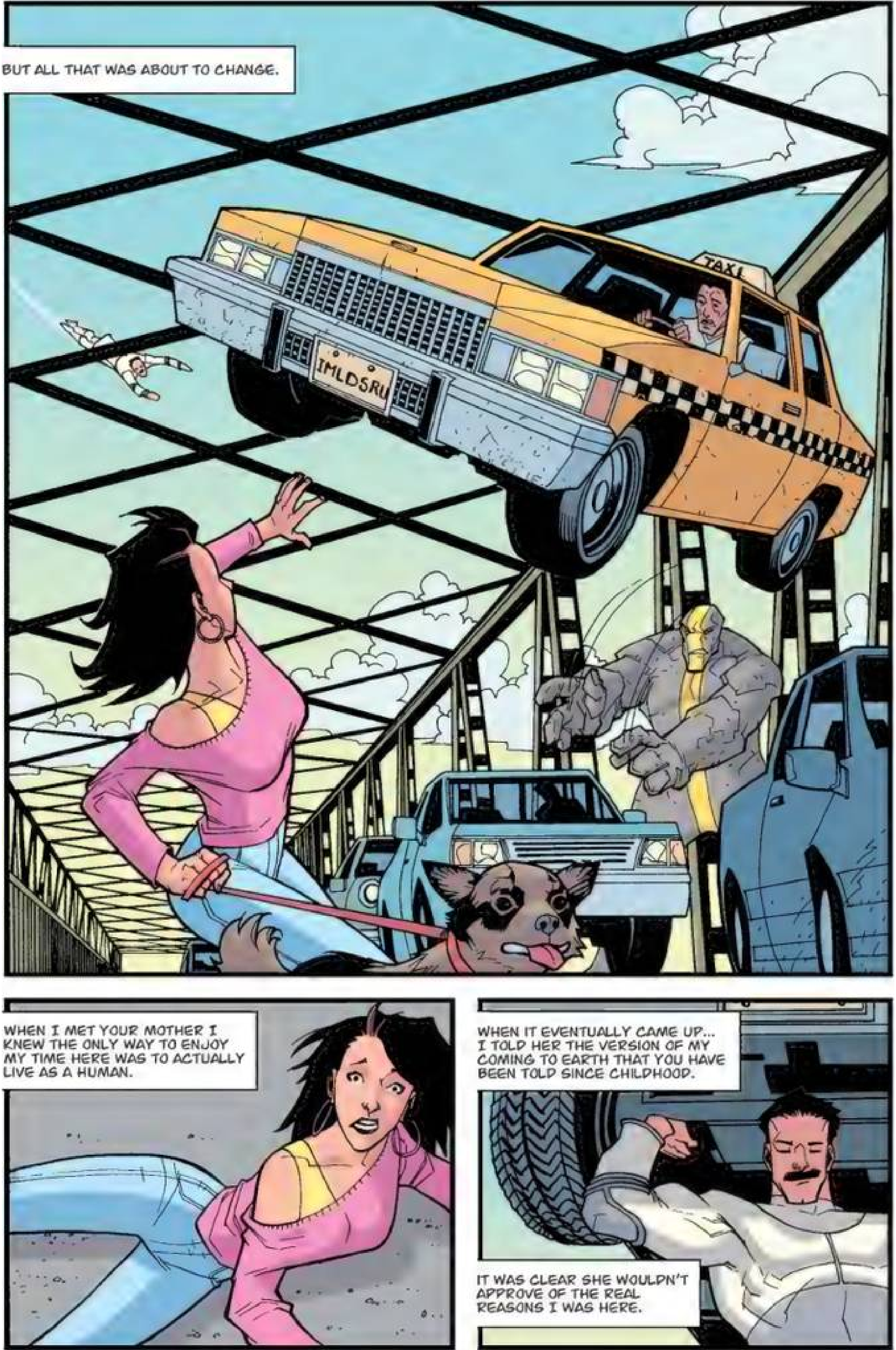

IT WAS MESSY WORK... BUT I'D BE LYING IF I SAID I DIDN'T ENJOY IT. THERE WAS NOTHING I WOULDN'T DO FOR VILTRUM.
THERE STILL ISN'T.
AS WE MOVED ACROSS THE GALAXY ADDING CIVILIZATION AFTER CIVILIZATION TO OUR EMPIRE I QUICKLY ROSE THROUGH THE RANKS.
IT WASN'T LONG BEFORE I WAS LEADING MY OWN DIVISION.
IT DIDN'T MATTER IF IT TOOK ONE HUNDRED HOURS OR ONE HUNDRED YEARS. NO CIVILIZATION WE SET OUR SIGHTS ON WENT UNCONQUERED.

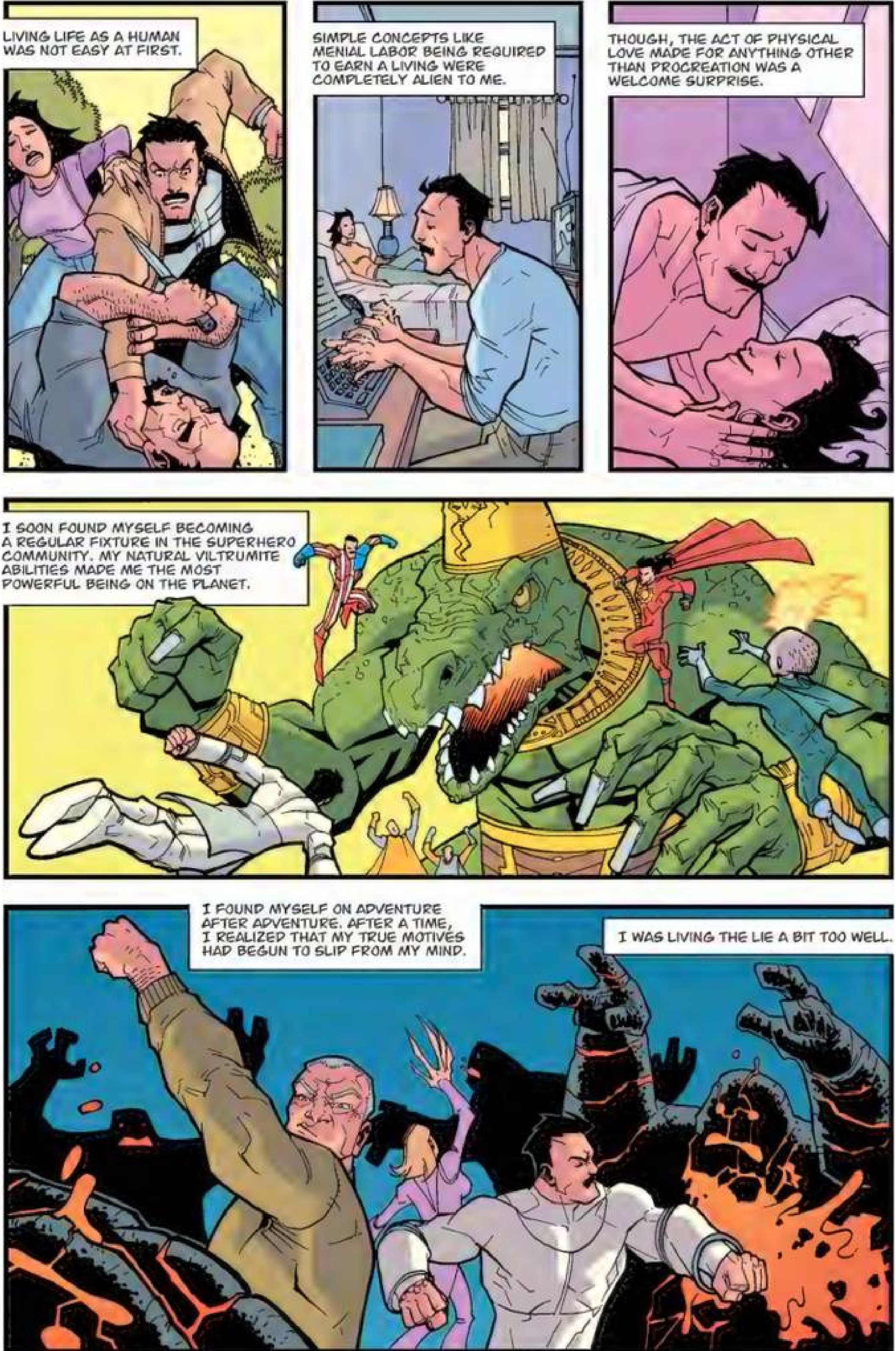

WE WERE UNSTOPPABLE.

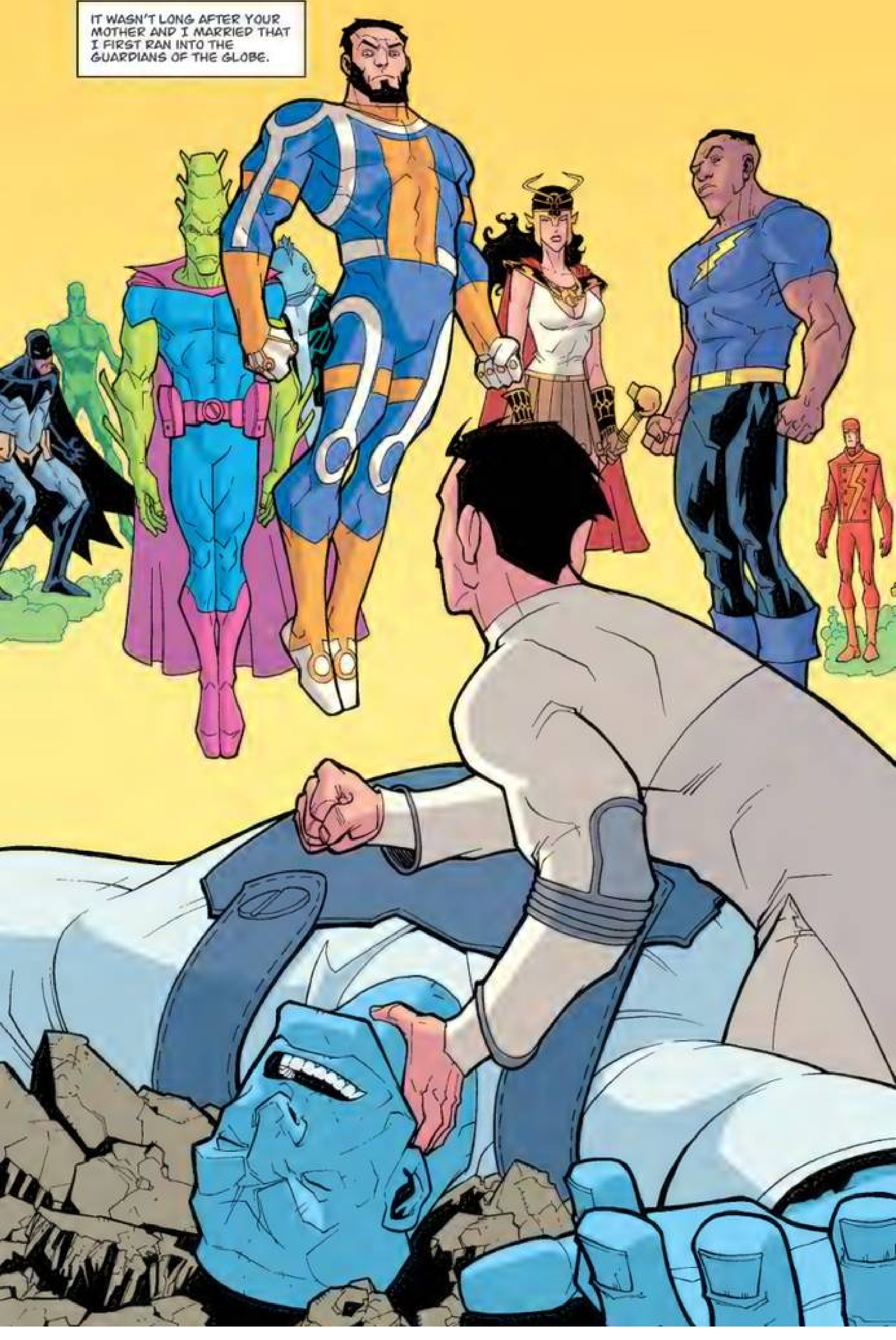

OUR CONTINUED SUCCESS WAS PARTIALLY BECAUSE OF MY EFFORTS. FOR WHICH I WAS GREATLY REWARDED.
AT FIRST WITH AWARDS...

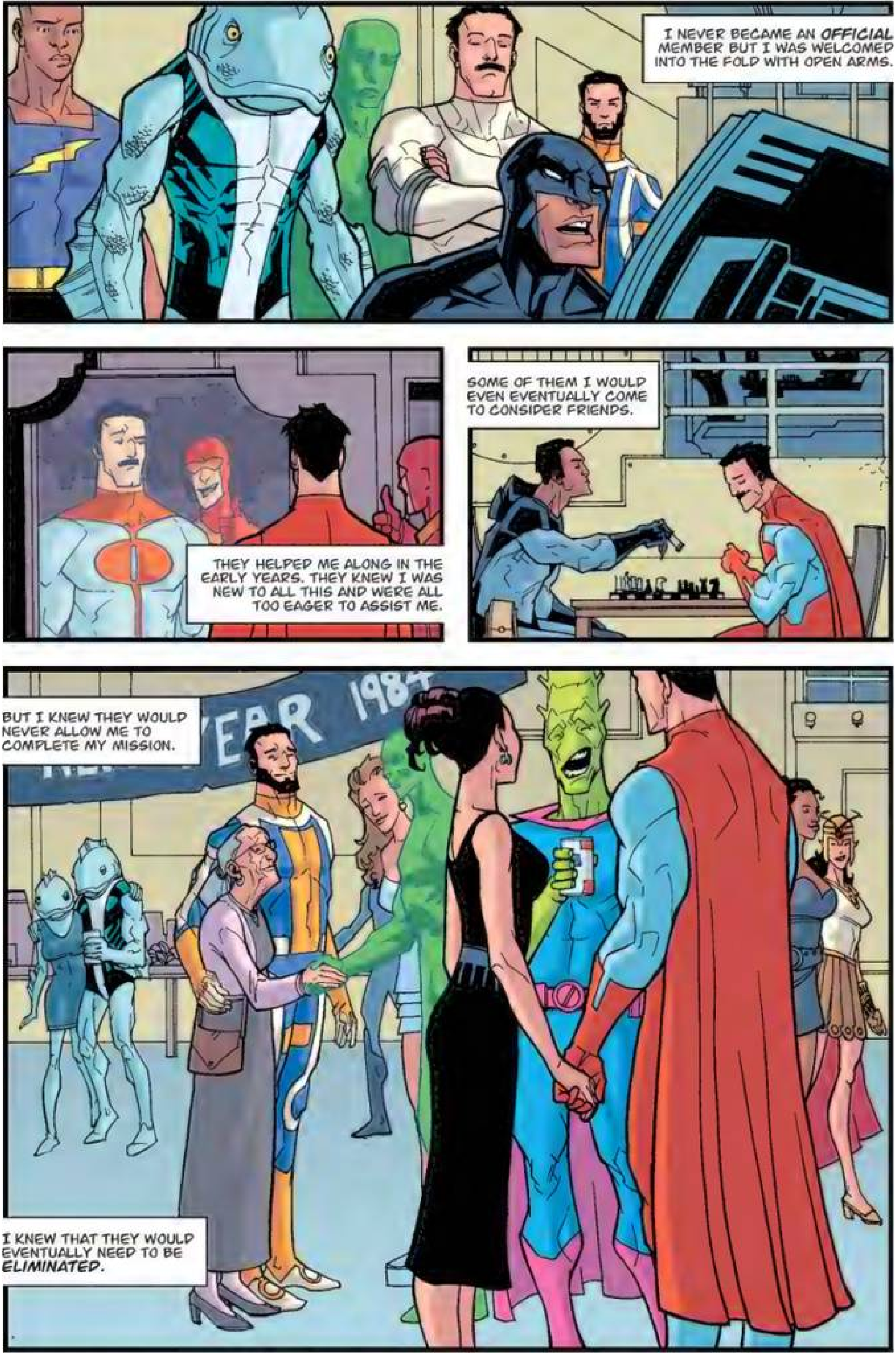

...AND EVENTUALLY... WITH MUCH MORE.
AS OUR EMPIRE GREW, OUR FORCES BECAME STRETCHED TOO THIN JUST TRYING TO MAINTAIN IT.
OUR EXPANSION SCREECHED TO AN ABRUPT HALT.
IT WAS CLEAR THAT WE NEEDED A MORE EFFICIENT METHOD OF WORLD CONQUERING.
SO ONE WAS DEVISED.
RATHER THAN COME IN LARGE NUMBERS AND CONQUER A PLANET BY FORCE, OUR HIGHEST RANKED AND MOST TRUSTED OFFICERS WOULD BE ESSENTIALLY GIVEN PLANETS TO SURVEY AND WEAKEN OVER TIME.
I WAS ONE OF THE FIRST CHOSEN FOR THIS ASSIGNMENT.
WE WERE TO ACCLIMATE OURSELVES WITH THE PLANET'S ENVIRONMENT... EVENTUALLY BECOMING A MEMBER OF SOCIETY.
ASIDE FROM ENSURING THE PLANET DID NOT BECOME STRONG ENOUGH TO DEFEND ITSELF FROM US, IT WOULD BE OURS TO DO WITH AS WE PLEASED FOR FIVE HUNDRED YEARS.
AT THE END OF THAT TIME, THE KNOWLEDGE WE HAD COLLECTED WOULD BE USED TO QUICKLY AND EFFICIENTLY BRING THE PLANET UNDER VILTRUM RULE.
IT WAS A PRIVILEGE TO BE GIVEN THIS ASSIGNMENT-- A REWARD FOR ALL MY HARD WORK.
IT WAS THE CLOSEST THING TO A VACATION THAT EXISTED ON VILTRUM.

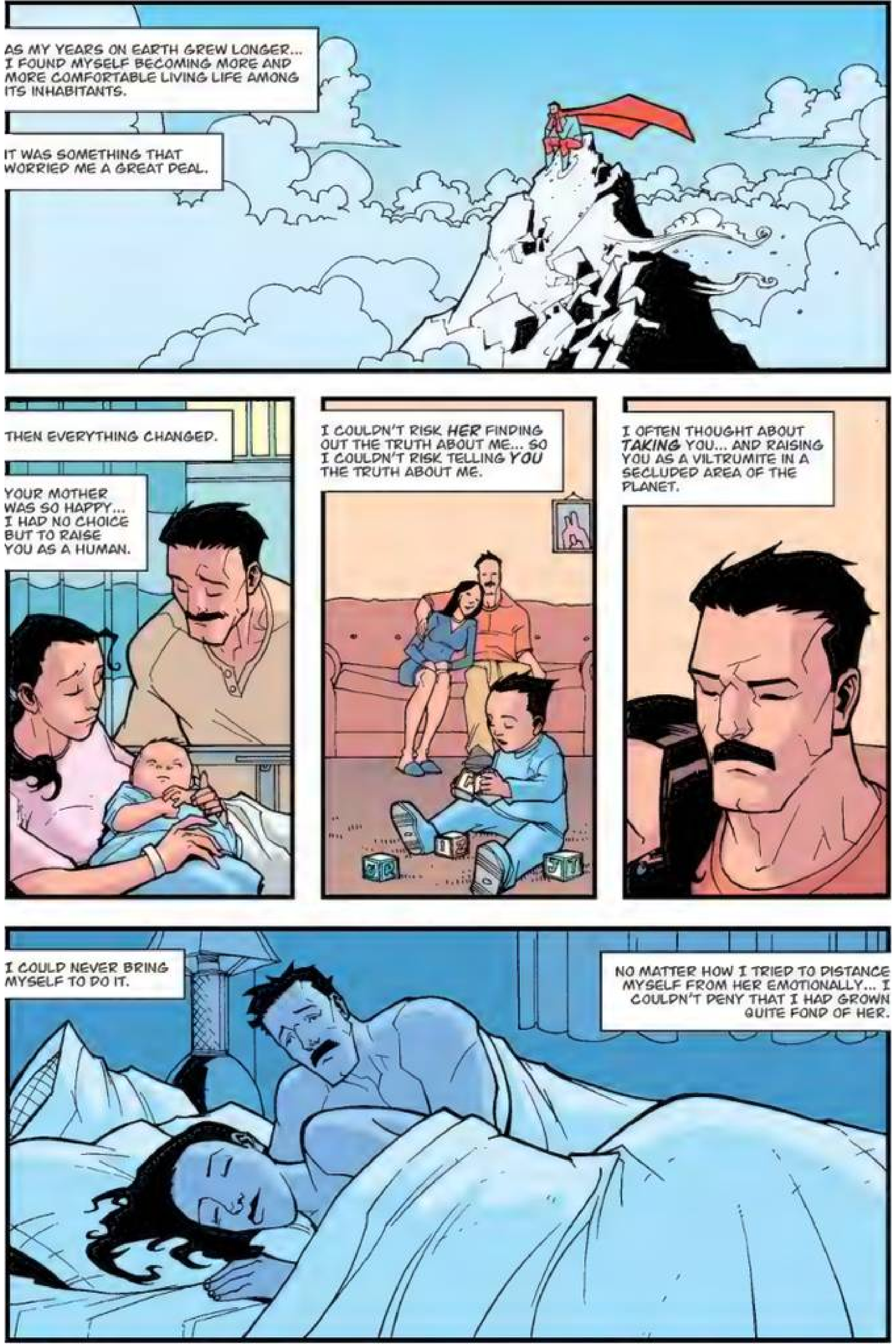

UPON MY ARRIVAL, I SPENT DAYS SURVEYING MY NEW HOME.
EARTH WAS A VIBRANT NEST OF INDIVIDUALITY THAT WAS VERY MUCH ALIEN TO ME.
AT FIRST I HATED IT... AND REGRETTED ACCEPTING THE MISSION.
IT WAS A STRANGE PLANET FULL OF STRANGE PEOPLE.
BUT IT WAS MINE.
IT WASN'T LONG BEFORE I REALIZED THIS WOULD BE NO EASY ASSIGNMENT.
HAD THE WORLD CONQUERING COMMITTEE KNOWN EARTH WAS SUCH A VOLATILE ENVIRONMENT, THEY MAY NOT HAVE CHOSEN IT.
IT SEEMED ITS PEOPLE WERE ALMOST ALWAYS IN SOME KIND OF DANGER.
EVERY TIME I TURNED AROUND THERE WAS A NEW THREAT OUT TO CONQUER THE PLANET BEFORE VILTRUM EVEN HAD A CHANCE.
WE HAD LAID CLAIM TO THIS PLANET... I WAS NOT ABOUT TO LET IT FALL TO ANOTHER INVADER.
AFTER ONLY A FEW MONTHS, MY LIFE HAD SETTLED INTO A ROUTINE THAT INVOLVED LITTLE MORE THAN ENDING THREAT AFTER THREAT TO THE HUMAN RACE.

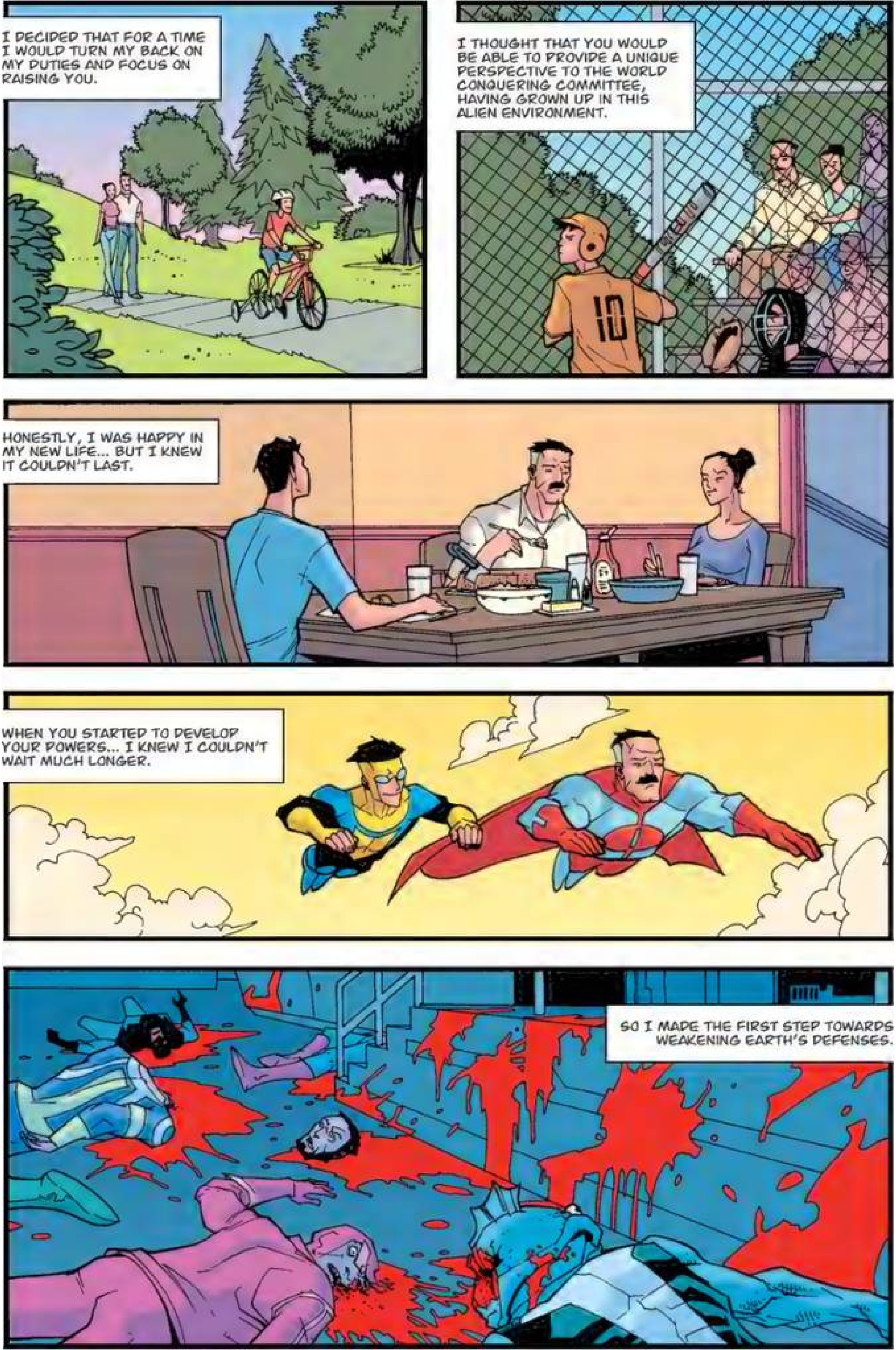

BUT ALL THAT WAS ABOUT TO CHANGE.
TAXI
IMLDSRU
WHEN I MET YOUR MOTHER I KNEW THE ONLY WAY TO ENJOY MY TIME HERE WAS TO ACTUALLY LIVE AS A HUMAN.
WHEN IT EVENTUALLY CAME UP... I TOLD HER THE VERSION OF MY COMING TO EARTH THAT YOU HAVE BEEN TOLD SINCE CHILDHOOD.
IT WAS CLEAR SHE WOULDN'T APPROVE OF THE REAL REASONS I WAS HERE.

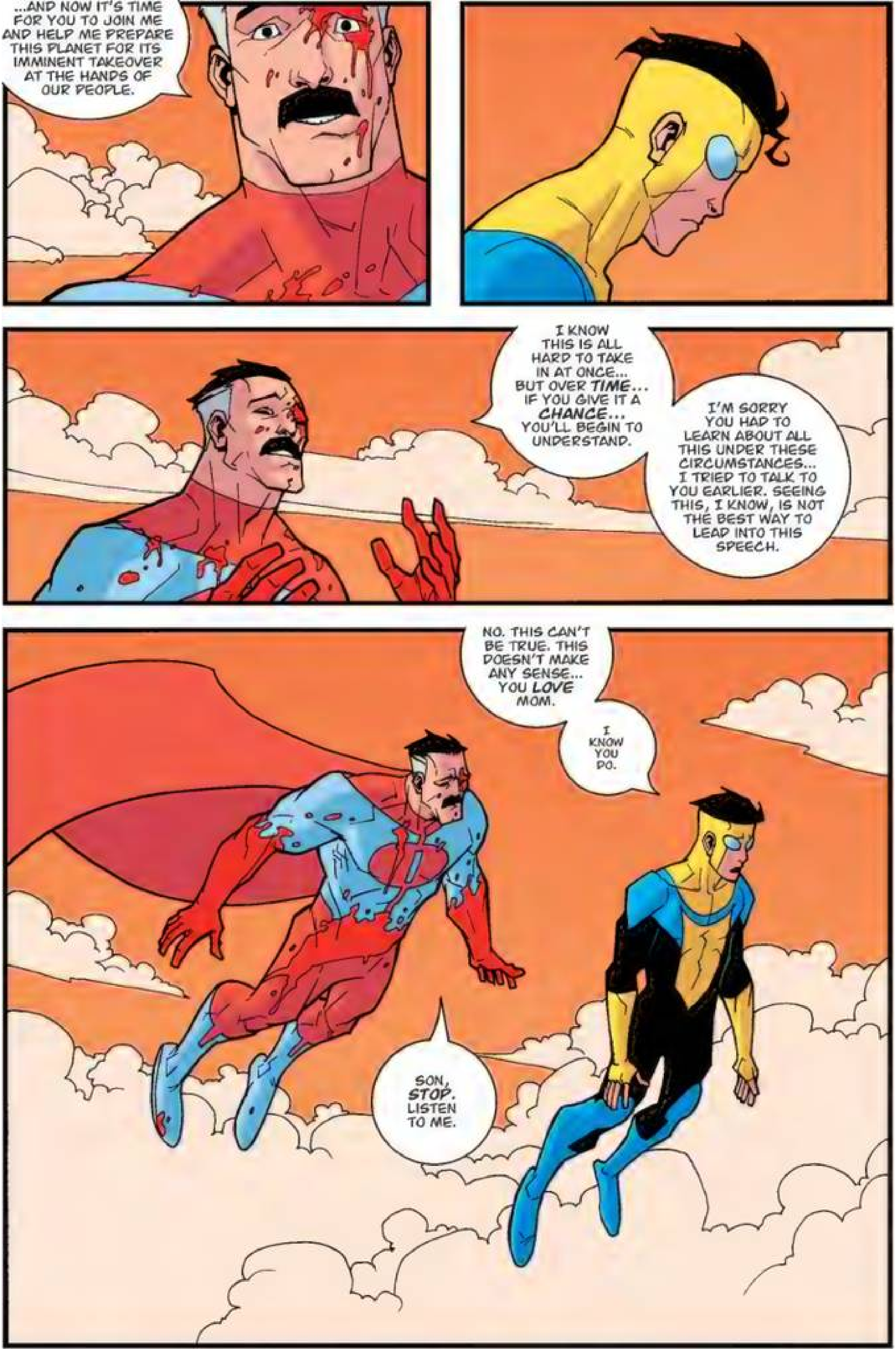

LIVING LIFE AS A HUMAN WAS NOT EASY AT FIRST.
SIMPLE CONCEPTS LIKE MENIAL LABOR BEING REQUIRED TO EARN A LIVING WERE COMPLETELY ALIEN TO ME.
THOUGH, THE ACT OF PHYSICAL LOVE MADE FOR ANYTHING OTHER THAN PROCREATION WAS A WELCOME SURPRISE.
I SOON FOUND MYSELF BECOMING A REGULAR FIXTURE IN THE SUPERHERO COMMUNITY. MY NATURAL VILTRUMITE ABILITIES MADE ME THE MOST POWERFUL BEING ON THE PLANET.
I FOUND MYSELF ON ADVENTURE AFTER ADVENTURE. AFTER A TIME, I REALIZED THAT MY TRUE MOTIVES HAD BEGUN TO SLIP FROM MY MIND.
I WAS LIVING THE LIE A BIT TOO WELL.

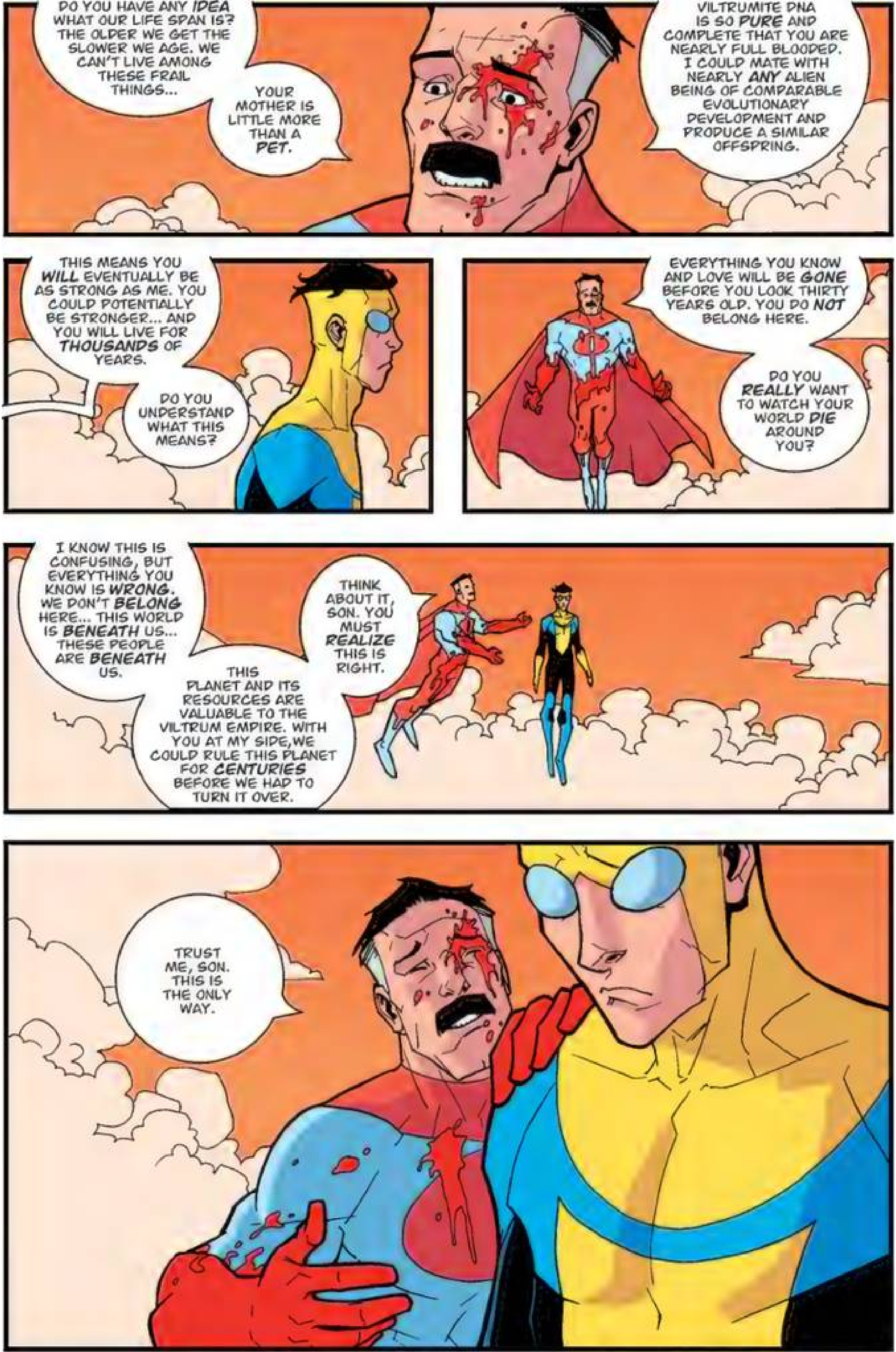

IT WASN'T LONG AFTER YOUR MOTHER AND I MARRIED THAT I FIRST RAN INTO THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE.

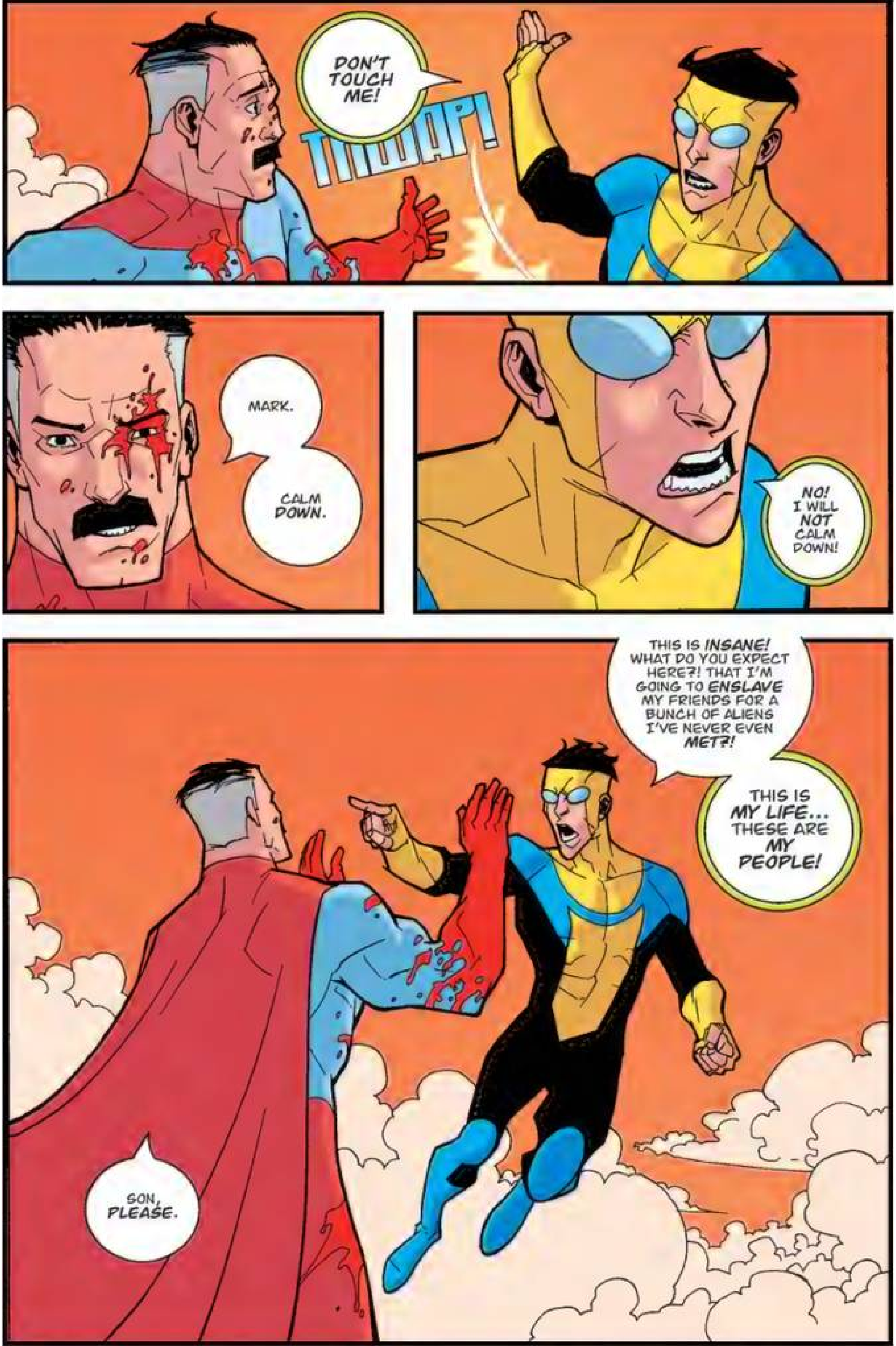

I NEVER BECAME AN *OFFICIAL* MEMBER BUT I WAS WELCOMED INTO THE FOLD WITH OPEN ARMS.
THEY HELPED ME ALONG IN THE EARLY YEARS. THEY KNEW I WAS NEW TO ALL THIS AND WERE ALL TOO EAGER TO ASSIST ME.
SOME OF THEM I WOULD EVEN EVENTUALLY COME TO CONSIDER FRIENDS.
YEAR 1984
BUT I KNEW THEY WOULD NEVER ALLOW ME TO COMPLETE MY MISSION.
I KNEW THAT THEY WOULD EVENTUALLY NEED TO BE **ELIMINATED**.

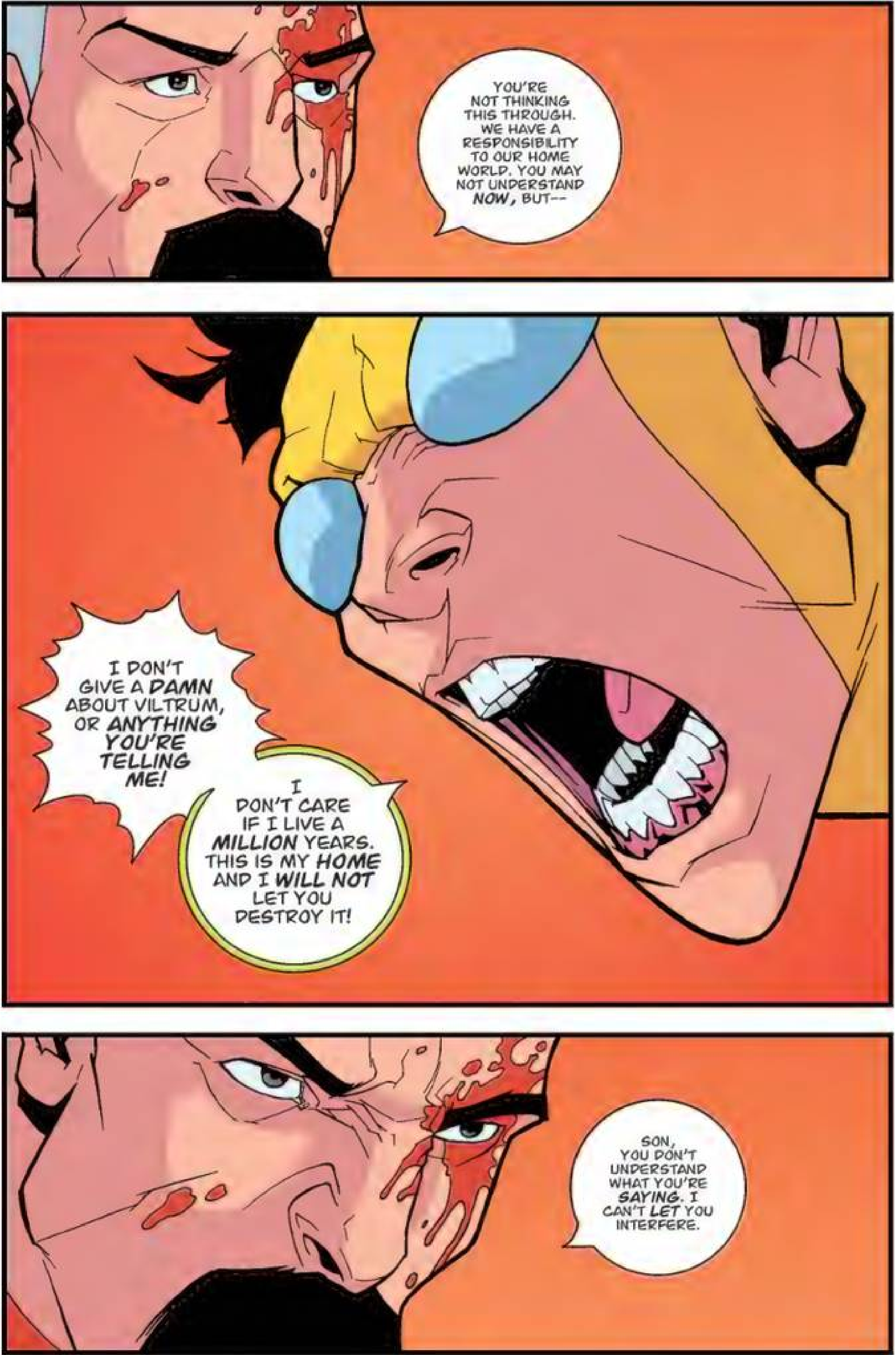

AS MY YEARS ON EARTH GREW LONGER... I FOUND MYSELF BECOMING MORE AND MORE COMFORTABLE LIVING LIFE AMONG ITS INHABITANTS.
IT WAS SOMETHING THAT WORRIED ME A GREAT DEAL.
THEN EVERYTHING CHANGED.
YOUR MOTHER WAS SO HAPPY... I HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO RAISE YOU AS A HUMAN.
I COULDN'T RISK *HER* FINDING OUT THE TRUTH ABOUT ME... SO I COULDN'T RISK TELLING *YOU* THE TRUTH ABOUT ME.
I OFTEN THOUGHT ABOUT *TAKING* YOU... AND RAISING YOU AS A VILTRUMITE IN A SECLUDED AREA OF THE PLANET.
I COULD NEVER BRING MYSELF TO DO IT.
NO MATTER HOW I TRIED TO DISTANCE MYSELF FROM HER EMOTIONALLY... I COULDN'T DENY THAT I HAD GROWN QUITE FOND OF HER.

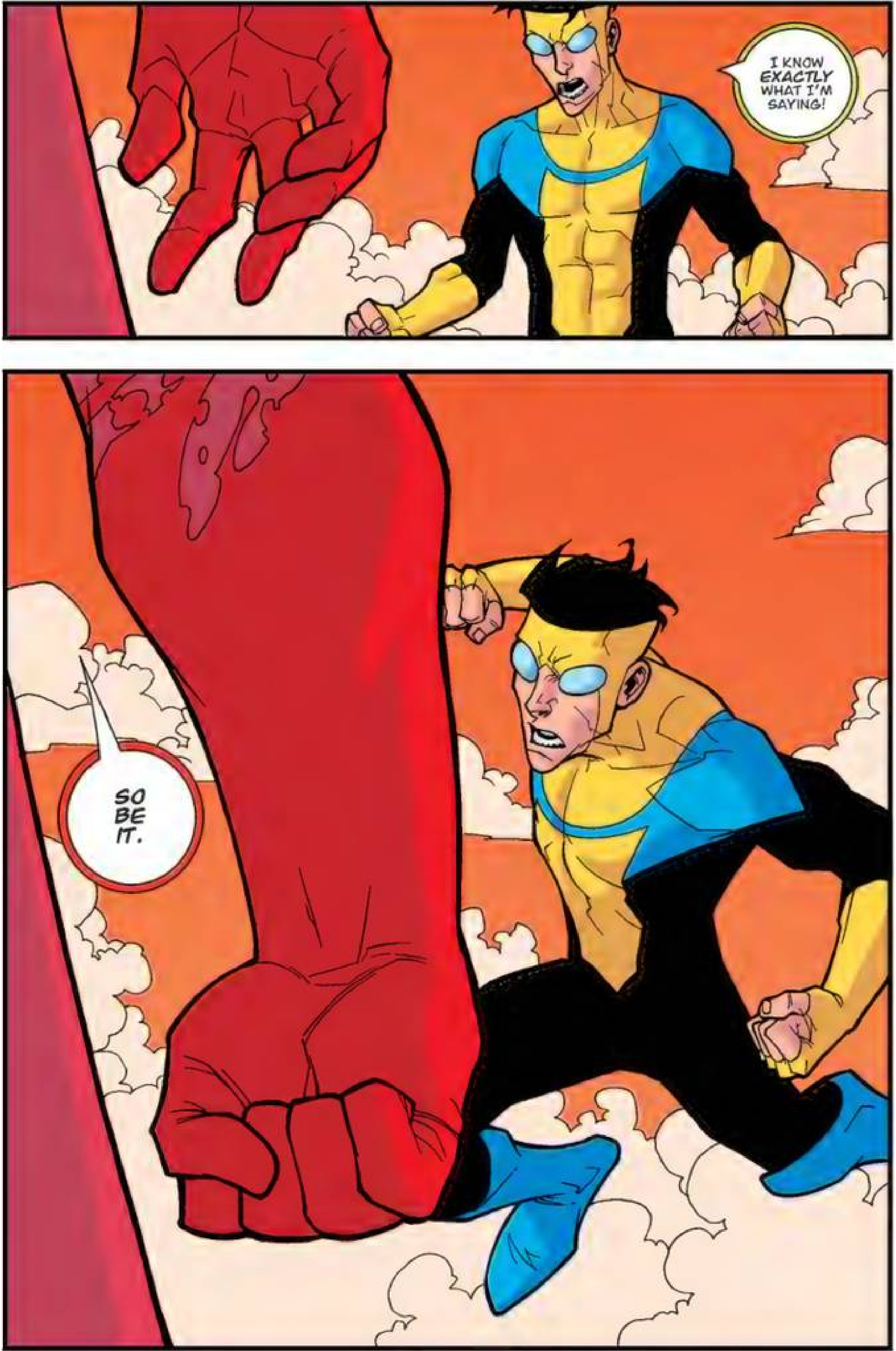

I DECIDED THAT FOR A TIME I WOULD TURN MY BACK ON MY DUTIES AND FOCUS ON RAISING YOU.
I THOUGHT THAT YOU WOULD BE ABLE TO PROVIDE A UNIQUE PERSPECTIVE TO THE WORLD CONQUERING COMMITTEE, HAVING GROWN UP IN THIS ALIEN ENVIRONMENT.
10
HONESTLY, I WAS HAPPY IN MY NEW LIFE... BUT I KNEW IT COULDN'T LAST.
WHEN YOU STARTED TO DEVELOP YOUR POWERS... I KNEW I COULDN'T WAIT MUCH LONGER.
SO I MADE THE FIRST STEP TOWARDS WEAKENING EARTH'S DEFENSES.

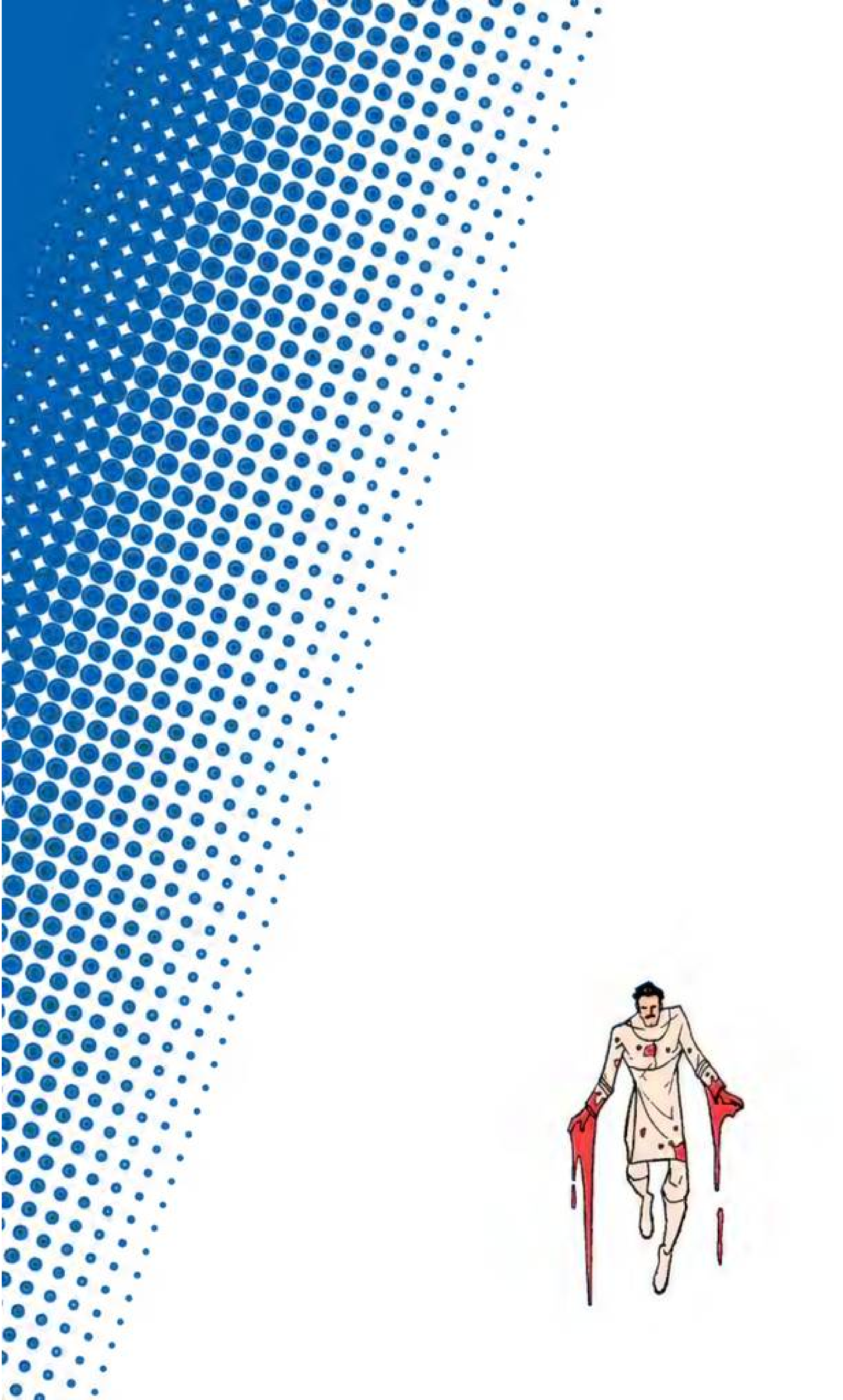

...AND NOW IT'S TIME FOR YOU TO JOIN ME AND HELP ME PREPARE THIS PLANET FOR ITS IMMINENT TAKEOVER AT THE HANDS OF OUR PEOPLE.
I KNOW THIS IS ALL HARD TO TAKE IN AT ONCE... BUT OVER *TIME*... IF YOU GIVE IT A *CHANCE*... YOU'LL BEGIN TO UNDERSTAND.
I'M SORRY YOU HAD TO LEARN ABOUT ALL THIS UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES... I TRIED TO TALK TO YOU EARLIER. SEEING THIS, I KNOW, IS NOT THE BEST WAY TO LEAD INTO THIS SPEECH.
NO. THIS CAN'T BE TRUE. THIS DOESN'T MAKE ANY SENSE... YOU *LOVE* MOM.
I KNOW YOU DO.
SON, *STOP*. LISTEN TO ME.


DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA WHAT OUR LIFE SPAN IS? THE OLDER WE GET THE SLOWER WE AGE. WE CAN'T LIVE AMONG THESE FRAIL THINGS...
YOUR MOTHER IS LITTLE MORE THAN A PET.
VILTRUMITE DNA IS SO PURE AND COMPLETE THAT YOU ARE NEARLY FULL BLOODED. I COULD MATE WITH NEARLY ANY ALIEN BEING OF COMPARABLE EVOLUTIONARY DEVELOPMENT AND PRODUCE A SIMILAR OFFSPRING.
THIS MEANS YOU WILL EVENTUALLY BE AS STRONG AS ME. YOU COULD POTENTIALLY BE STRONGER... AND YOU WILL LIVE FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS.
DO YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT THIS MEANS?
EVERYTHING YOU KNOW AND LOVE WILL BE GONE BEFORE YOU LOOK THIRTY YEARS OLD. YOU DO NOT BELONG HERE.
DO YOU REALLY WANT TO WATCH YOUR WORLD DIE AROUND YOU?
I KNOW THIS IS CONFUSING, BUT EVERYTHING YOU KNOW IS WRONG. WE DON'T BELONG HERE... THIS WORLD IS BENEATH US... THESE PEOPLE ARE BENEATH US.
THIS PLANET AND ITS RESOURCES ARE VALUABLE TO THE VILTRUM EMPIRE. WITH YOU AT MY SIDE,WE COULD RULE THIS PLANET FOR CENTURIES BEFORE WE HAD TO TURN IT OVER.
THINK ABOUT IT, SON. YOU MUST REALIZE THIS IS RIGHT.
TRUST ME, SON. THIS IS THE ONLY WAY.

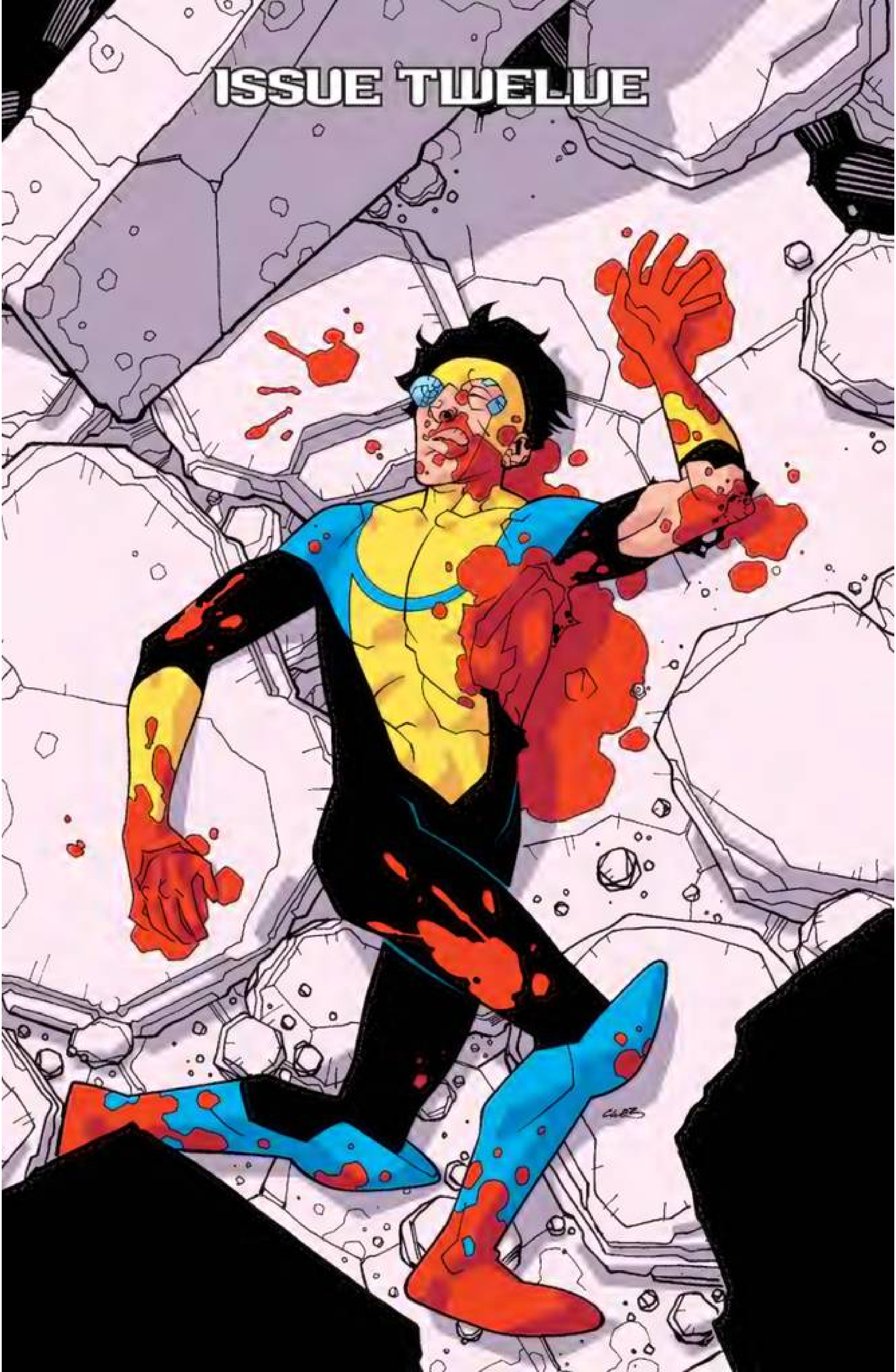

DON'T TOUCH ME!
THWAP!
MARK.
CALM DOWN.
NO! I WILL NOT CALM DOWN!
THIS IS INSANE! WHAT DO YOU EXPECT HERE?! THAT I'M GOING TO ENSLAVE MY FRIENDS FOR A BUNCH OF ALIENS I'VE NEVER EVEN MET?!
THIS IS MY LIFE... THESE ARE MY PEOPLE!
SON, PLEASE.


YOU'RE NOT THINKING THIS THROUGH. WE HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO OUR HOME WORLD. YOU MAY NOT UNDERSTAND *NOW*, BUT--
I DON'T GIVE A *DAMN* ABOUT VILTRUM, OR *ANYTHING YOU'RE TELLING ME!*
I DON'T CARE IF I LIVE A *MILLION* YEARS. THIS IS MY *HOME* AND I *WILL NOT* LET YOU DESTROY IT!
SON, YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU'RE *SAYING*. I CAN'T *LET* YOU INTERFERE.

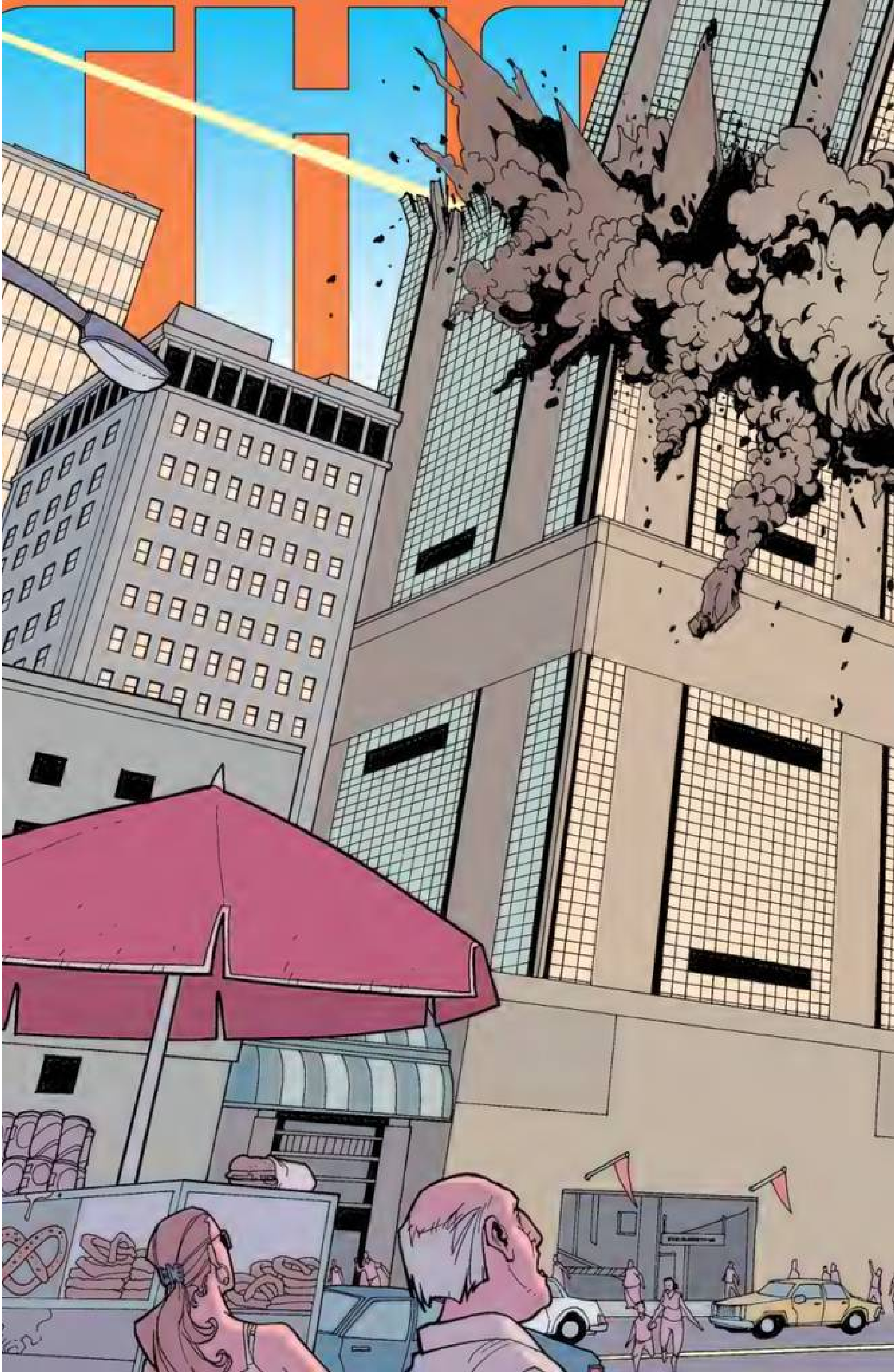

I KNOW EXACTLY WHAT I'M SAYING!
SO BE IT.

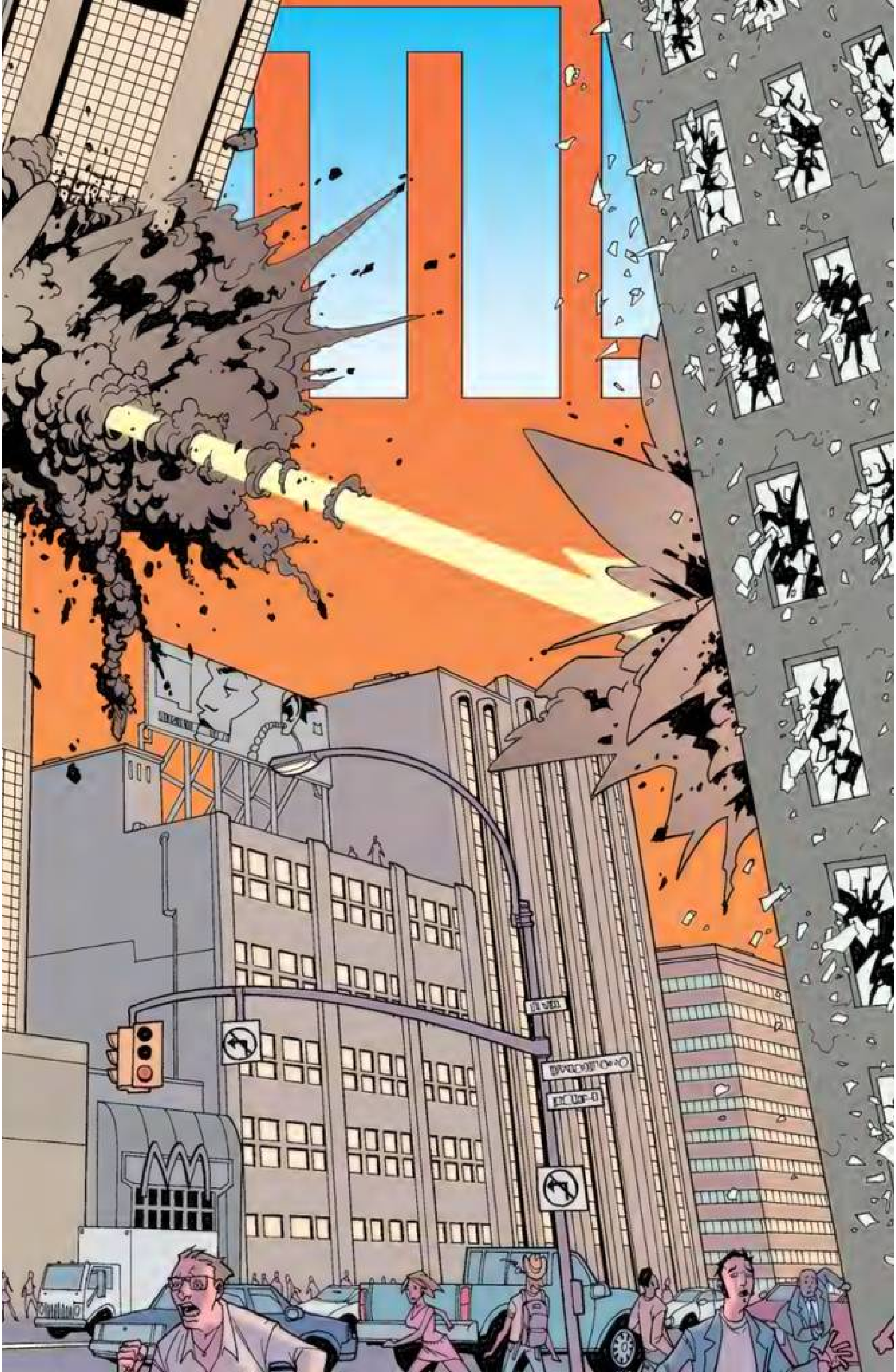


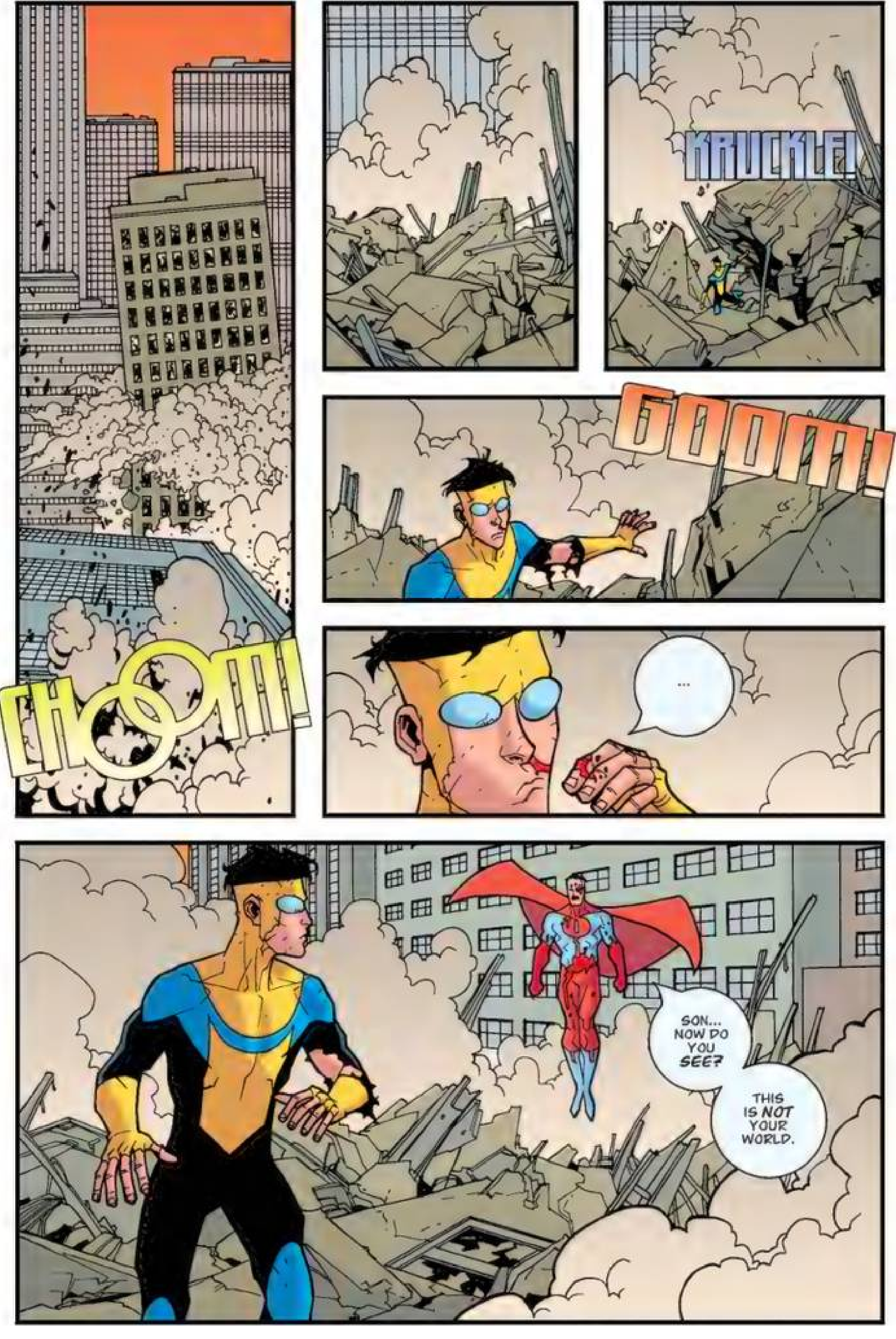
ISSUE TWELVE

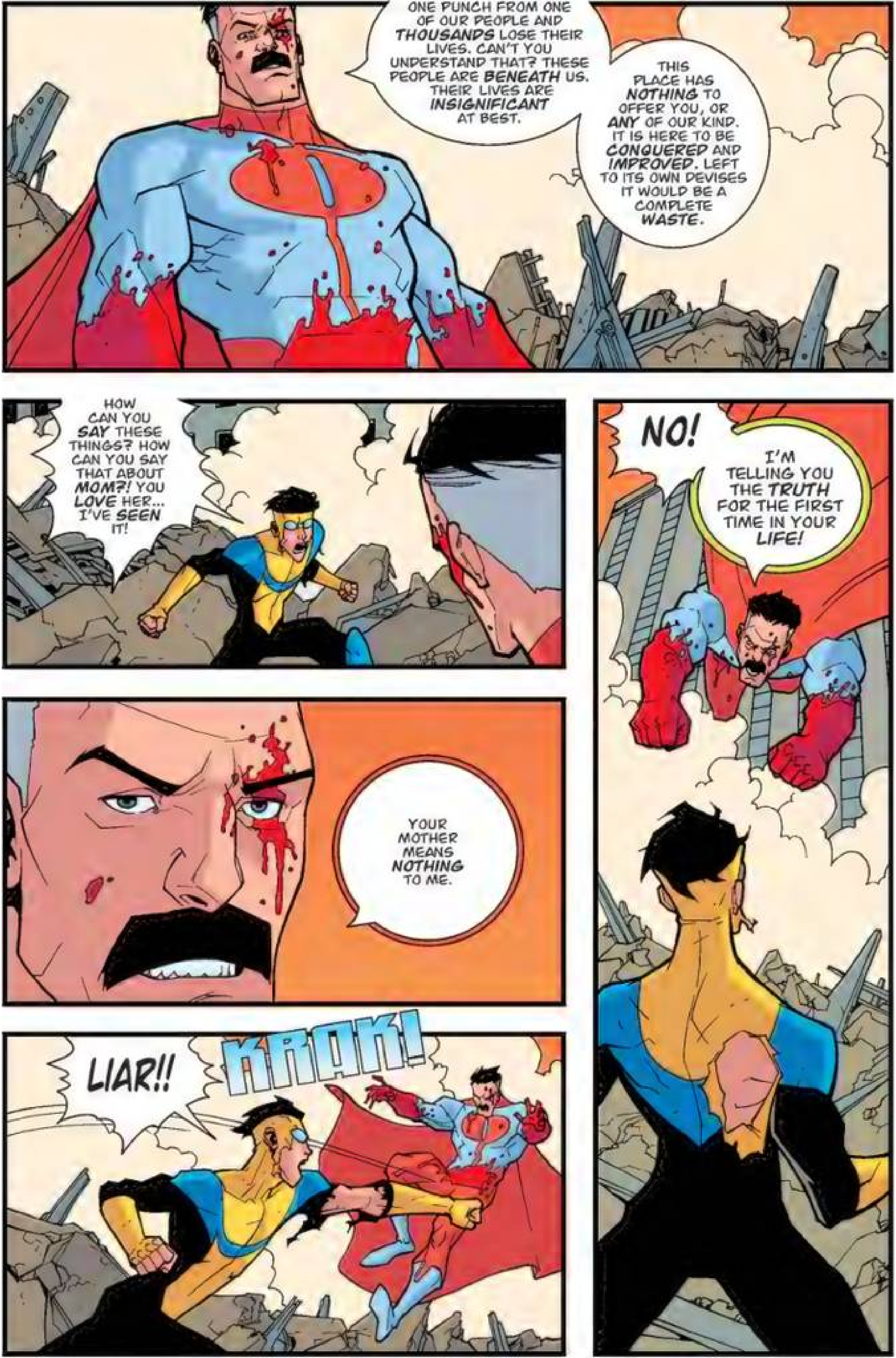


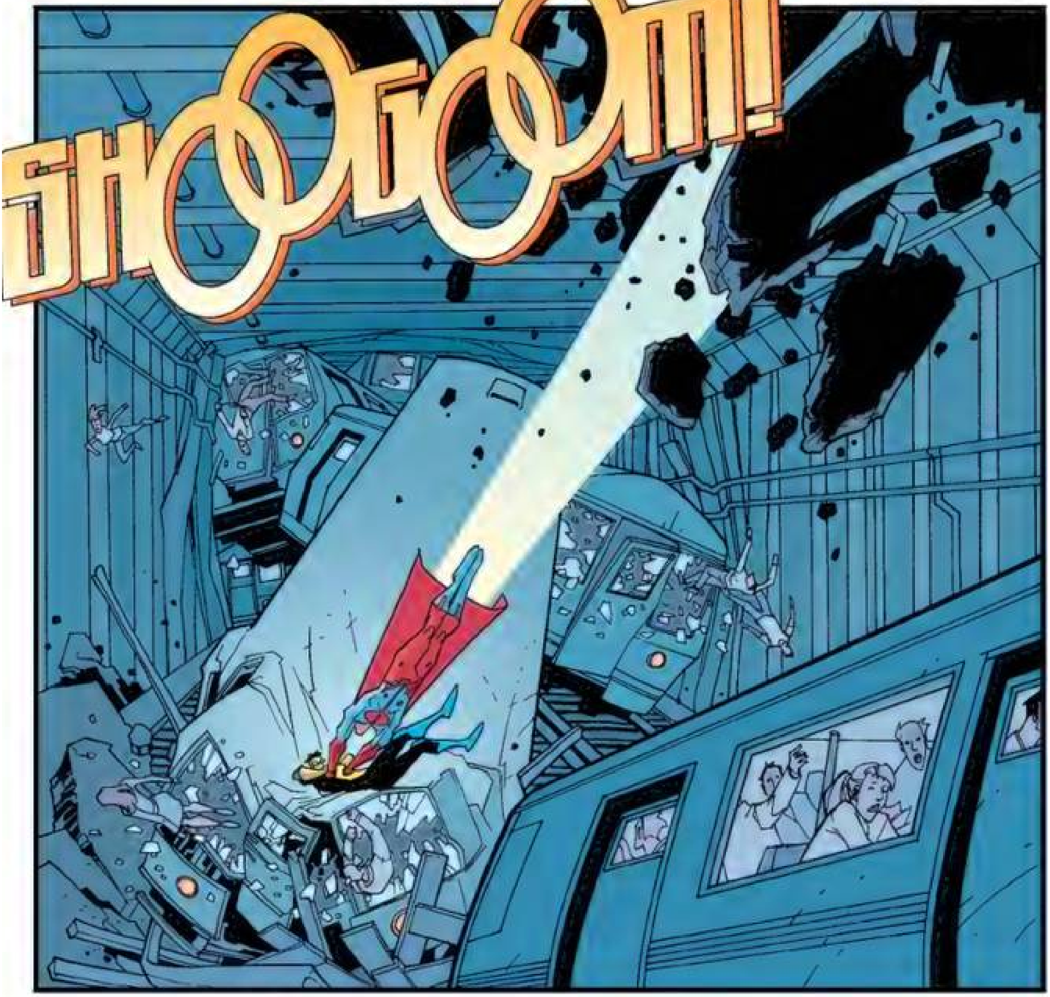
BRAKKOW!

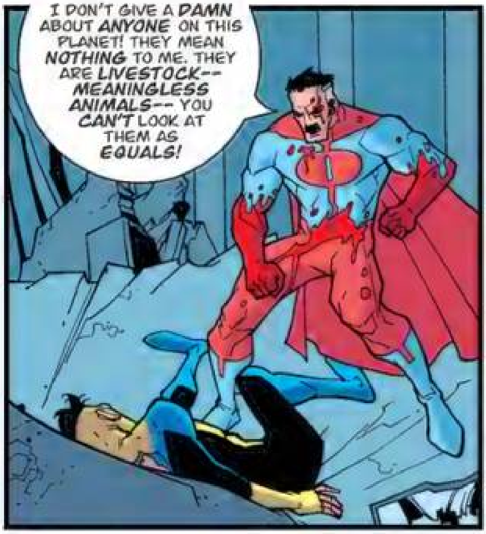


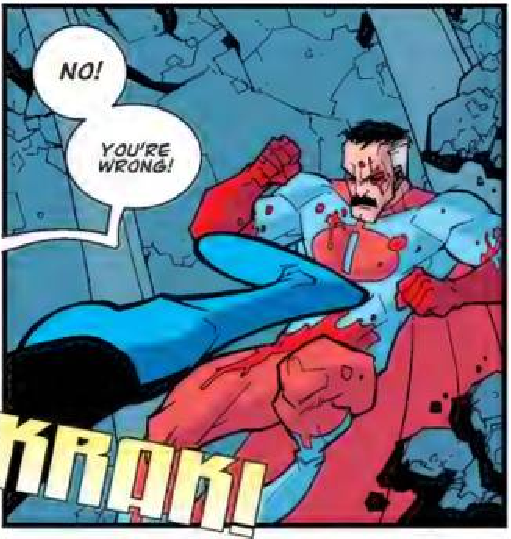


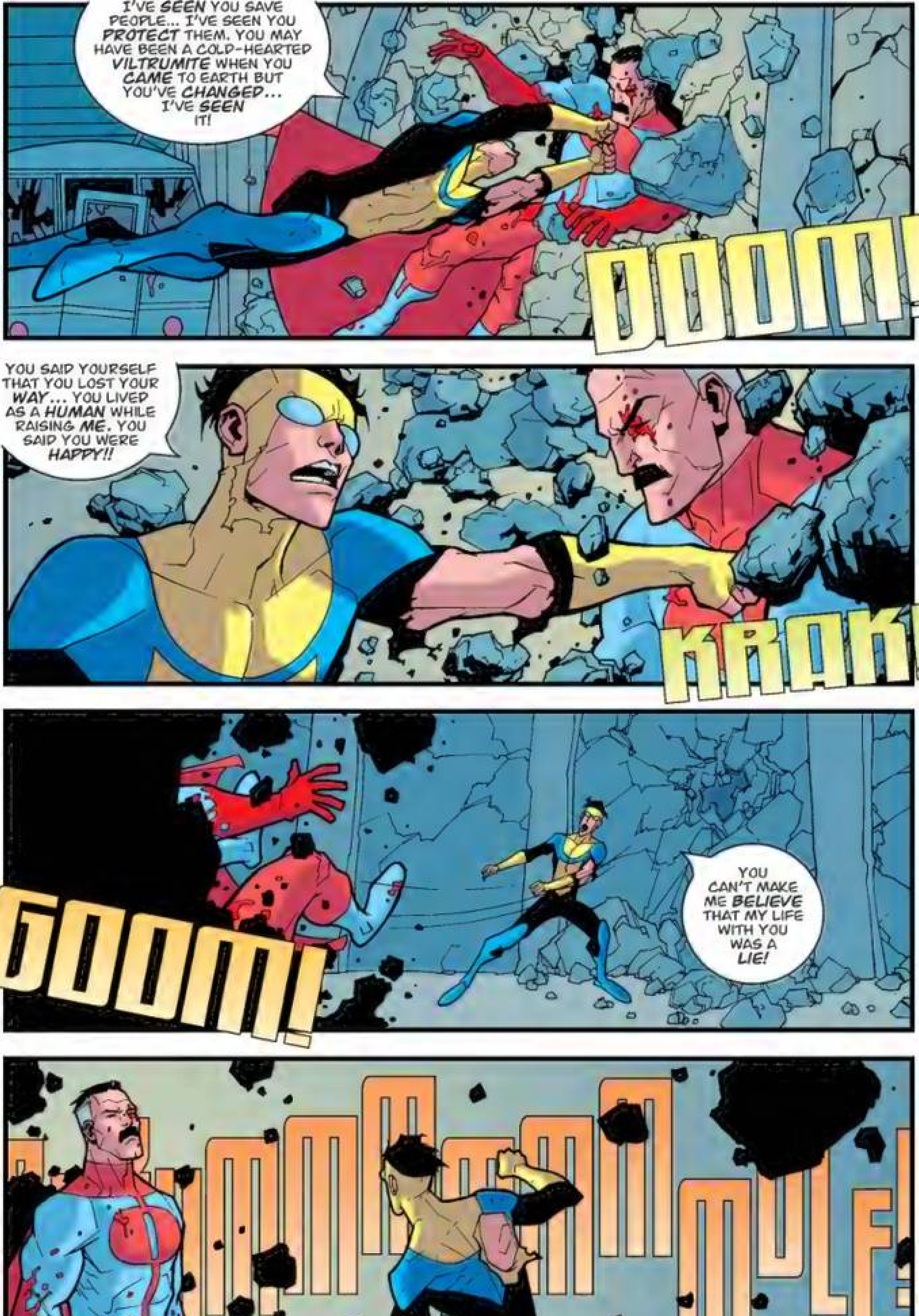

CHOOM!
KRUCKLE!
GOOM!
...
SON... NOW DO YOU *SEE?*
THIS IS *NOT* YOUR WORLD.

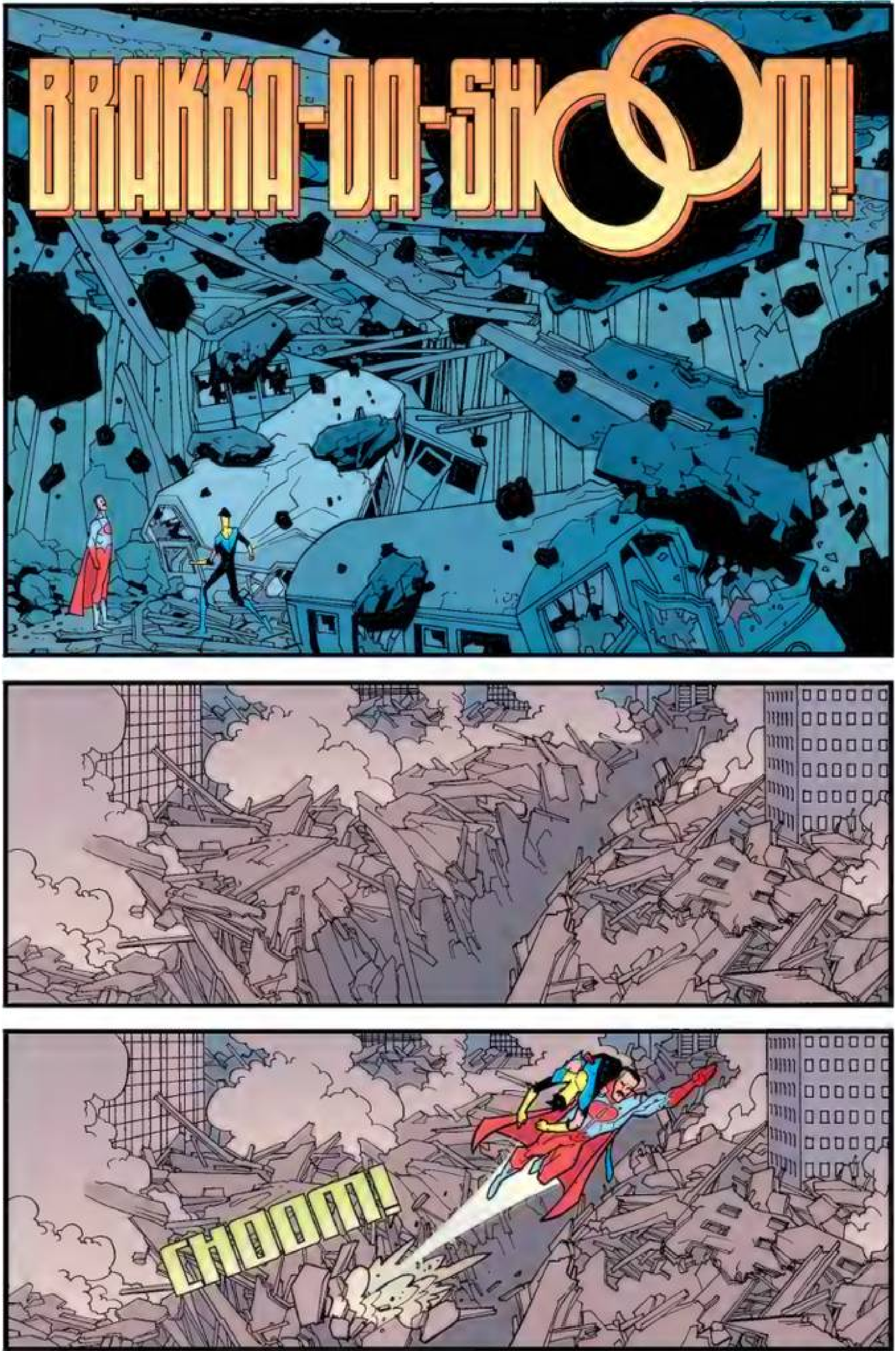

ONE PUNCH FROM ONE OF OUR PEOPLE AND THOUSANDS LOSE THEIR LIVES. CAN'T YOU UNDERSTAND THAT? THESE PEOPLE ARE BENEATH US. THEIR LIVES ARE INSIGNIFICANT AT BEST.
THIS PLACE HAS NOTHING TO OFFER YOU, OR ANY OF OUR KIND. IT IS HERE TO BE CONQUERED AND IMPROVED. LEFT TO ITS OWN DEVISES IT WOULD BE A COMPLETE WASTE.
HOW CAN YOU SAY THESE THINGS? HOW CAN YOU SAY THAT ABOUT MOM?! YOU LOVE HER... I'VE SEEN IT!
YOUR MOTHER MEANS NOTHING TO ME.
LIAR!!
KRAK!
NO!
I'M TELLING YOU THE TRUTH FOR THE FIRST TIME IN YOUR LIFE!

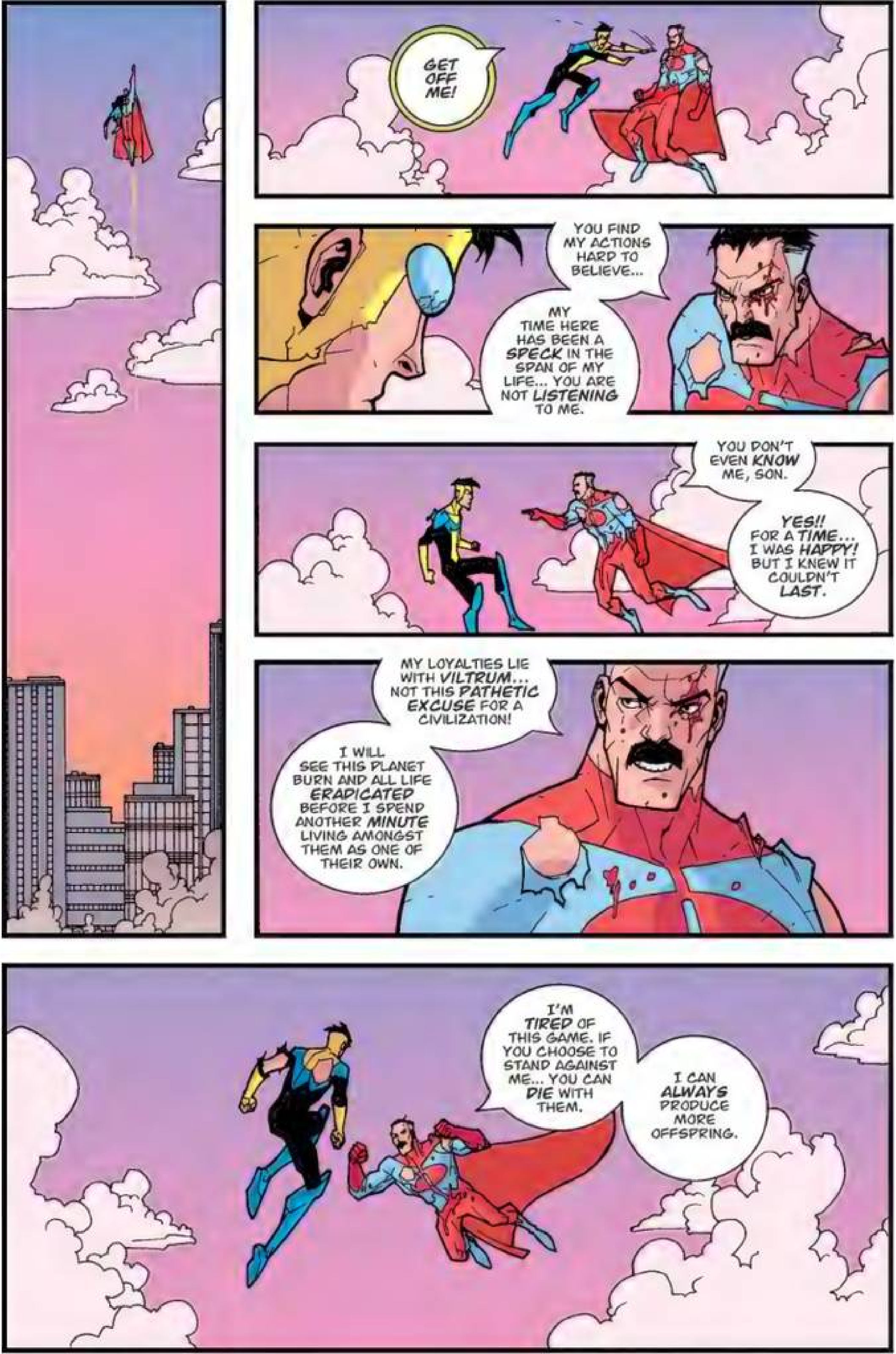

SHOOOOOM!

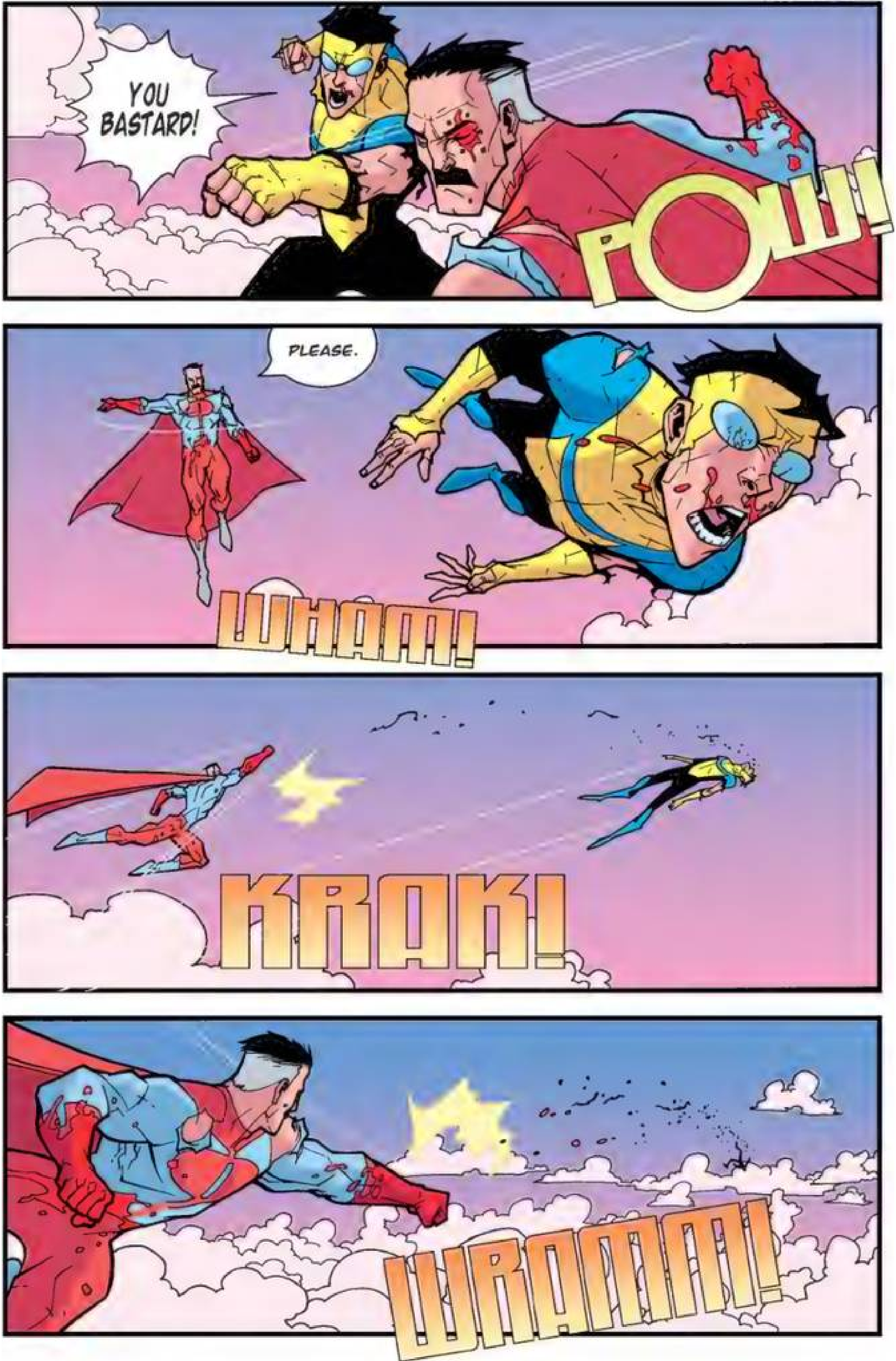

I DON'T GIVE A DAMN ABOUT ANYONE ON THIS PLANET! THEY MEAN NOTHING TO ME. THEY ARE LIVESTOCK-- MEANINGLESS ANIMALS-- YOU CAN'T LOOK AT THEM AS EQUALS!

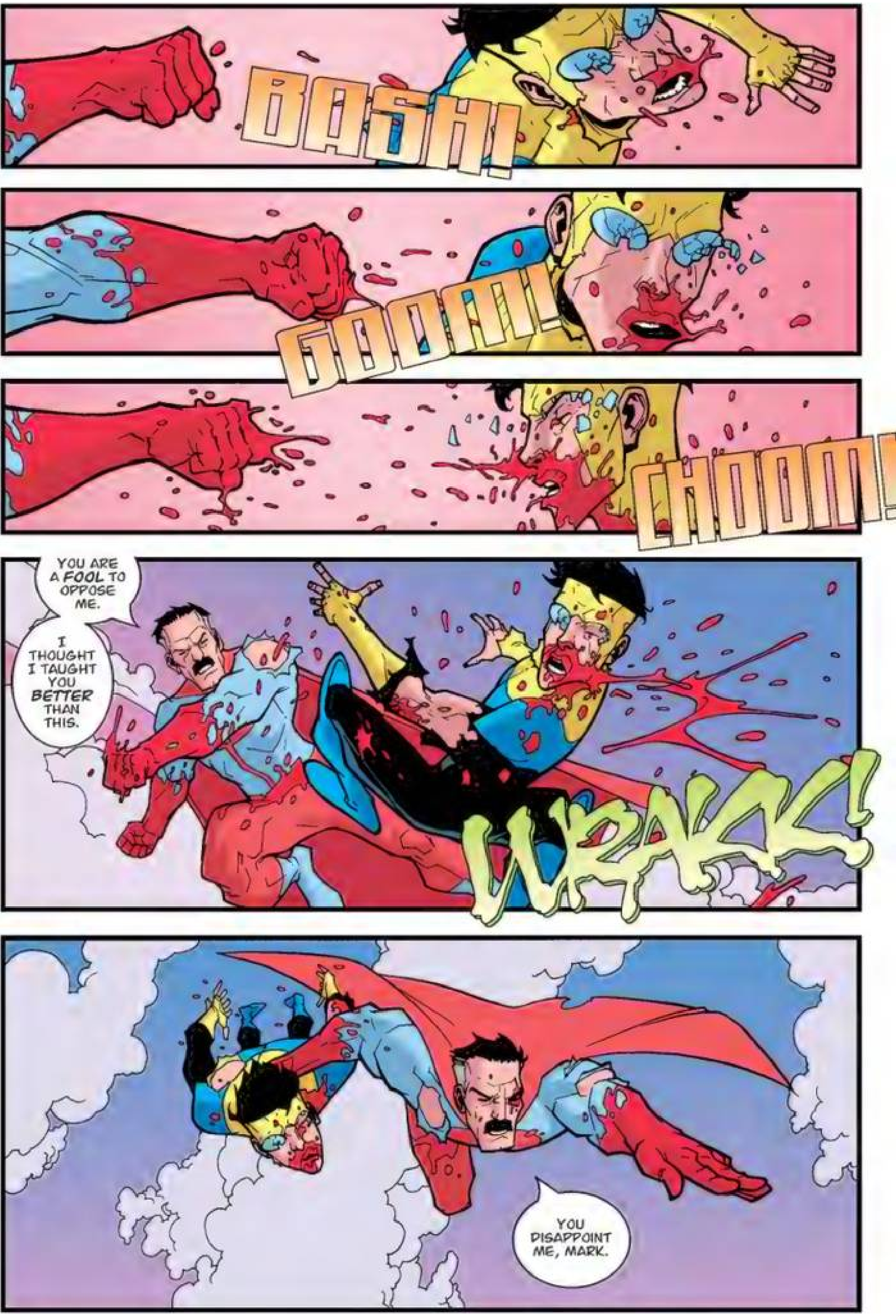

NO!
YOU'RE WRONG!
KRAK!

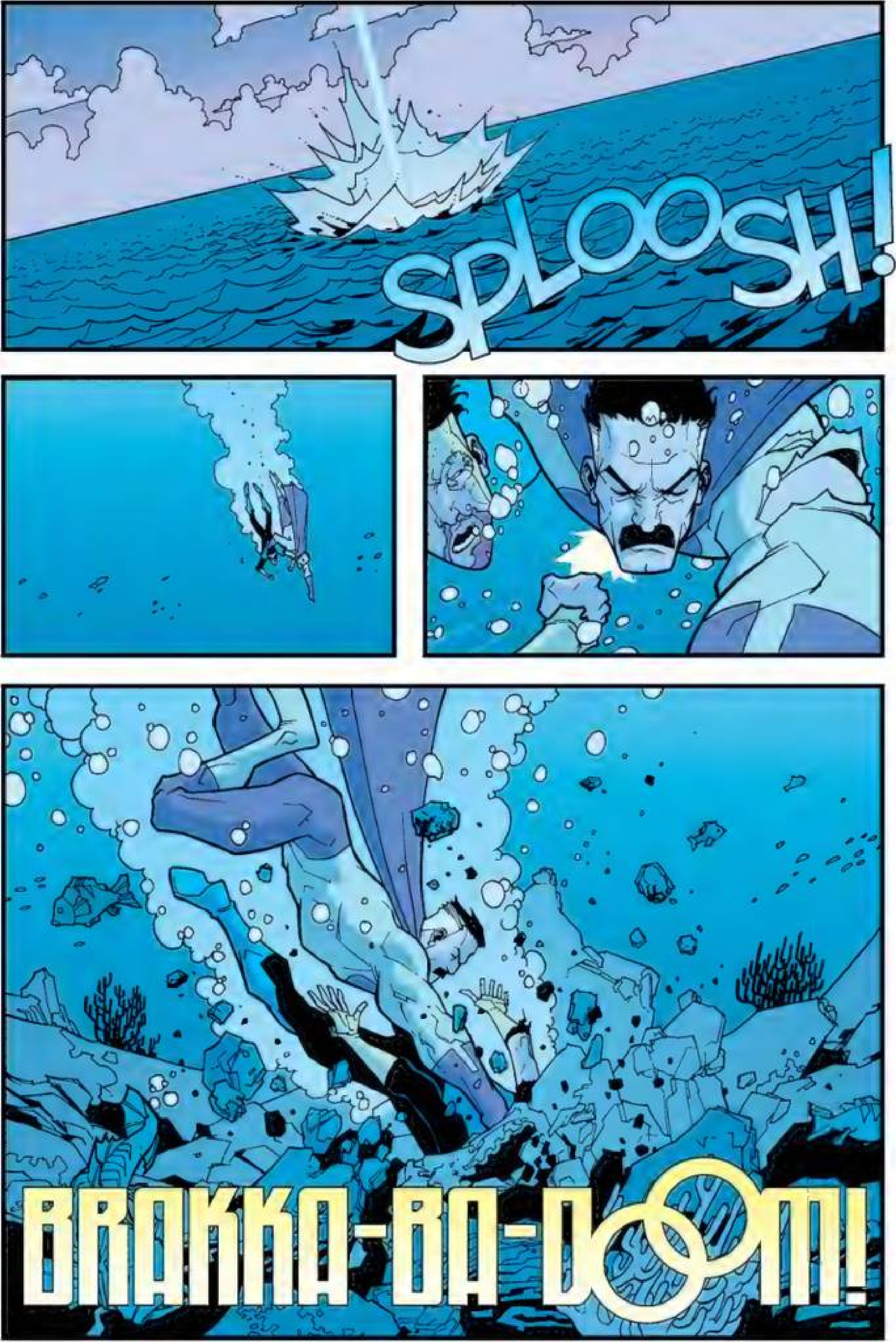

I'VE SEEN YOU SAVE PEOPLE... I'VE SEEN YOU PROTECT THEM. YOU MAY HAVE BEEN A COLD-HEARTED VILTRUMITE WHEN YOU CAME TO EARTH BUT YOU'VE CHANGED... I'VE SEEN IT!
DOOM!
YOU SAID YOURSELF THAT YOU LOST YOUR WAY... YOU LIVED AS A HUMAN WHILE RAISING ME. YOU SAID YOU WERE HAPPY!!
KRAK!
GOOM!
YOU CAN'T MAKE ME BELIEVE THAT MY LIFE WITH YOU WAS A LIE!
RUMMMMMMMMMBLE!


BRAKKA-DA-SHOOM!
CHOOM!

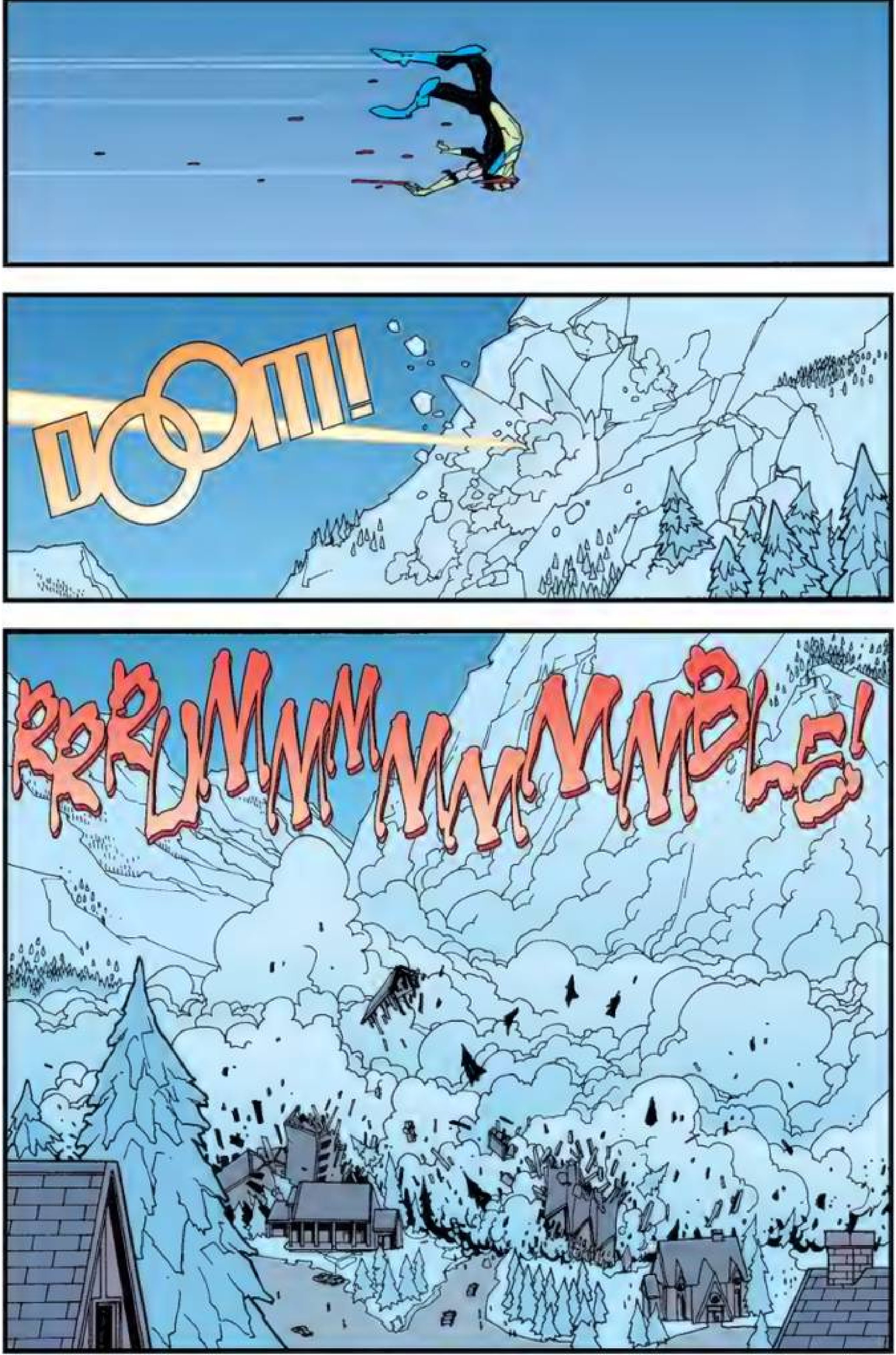

GET OFF ME!
YOU FIND MY ACTIONS HARD TO BELIEVE...
MY TIME HERE HAS BEEN A SPECK IN THE SPAN OF MY LIFE... YOU ARE NOT LISTENING TO ME.
YOU DON'T EVEN KNOW ME, SON.
YES!! FOR A TIME... I WAS HAPPY! BUT I KNEW IT COULDN'T LAST.
MY LOYALTIES LIE WITH VILTRUM... NOT THIS PATHETIC EXCUSE FOR A CIVILIZATION!
I WILL SEE THIS PLANET BURN AND ALL LIFE ERADICATED BEFORE I SPEND ANOTHER MINUTE LIVING AMONGST THEM AS ONE OF THEIR OWN.
I'M TIRED OF THIS GAME. IF YOU CHOOSE TO STAND AGAINST ME... YOU CAN DIE WITH THEM.
I CAN ALWAYS PRODUCE MORE OFFSPRING.

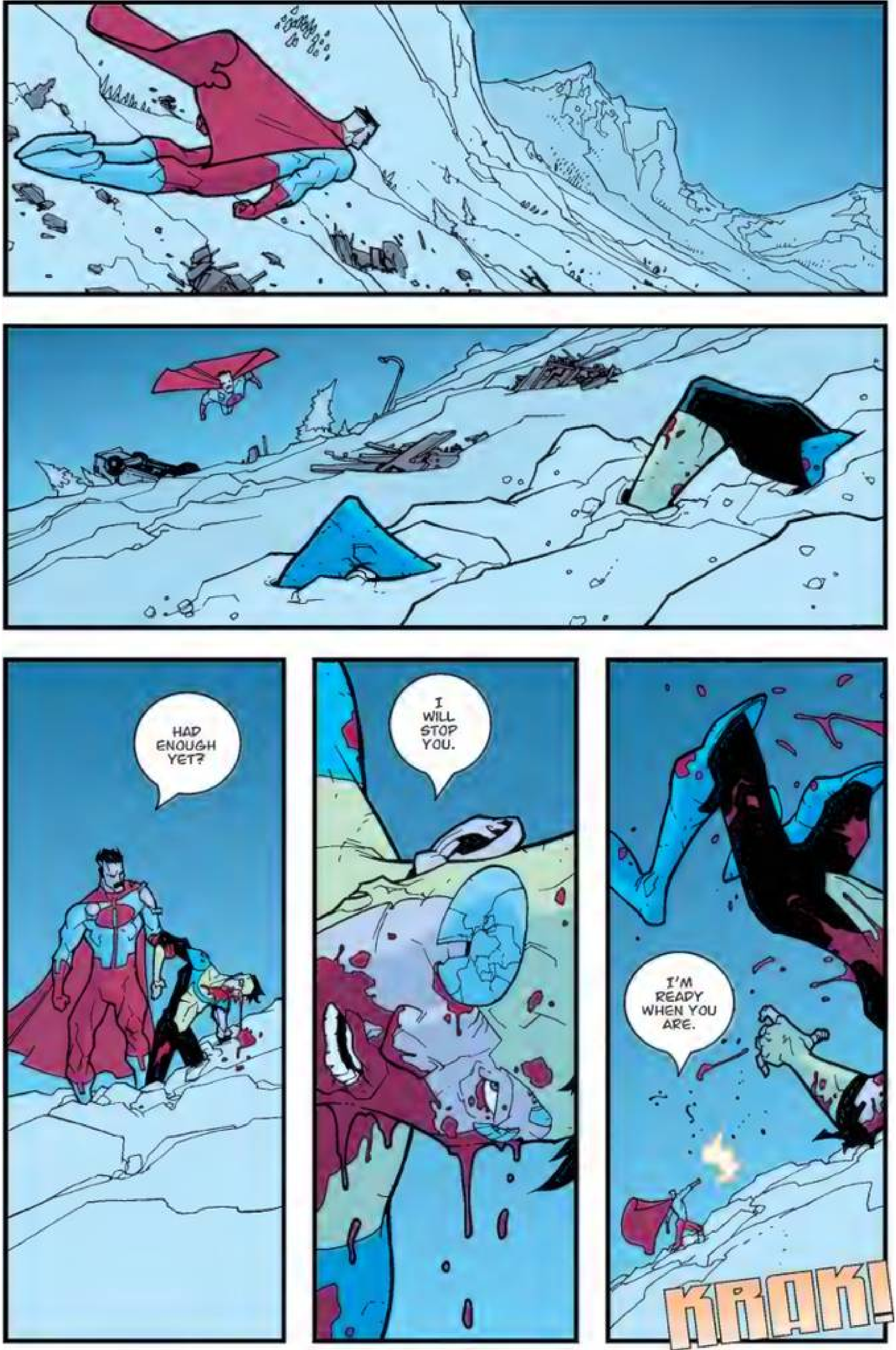

YOU BASTARD!
POW!
PLEASE.
WHAM!
KRAK!
WRAMM!

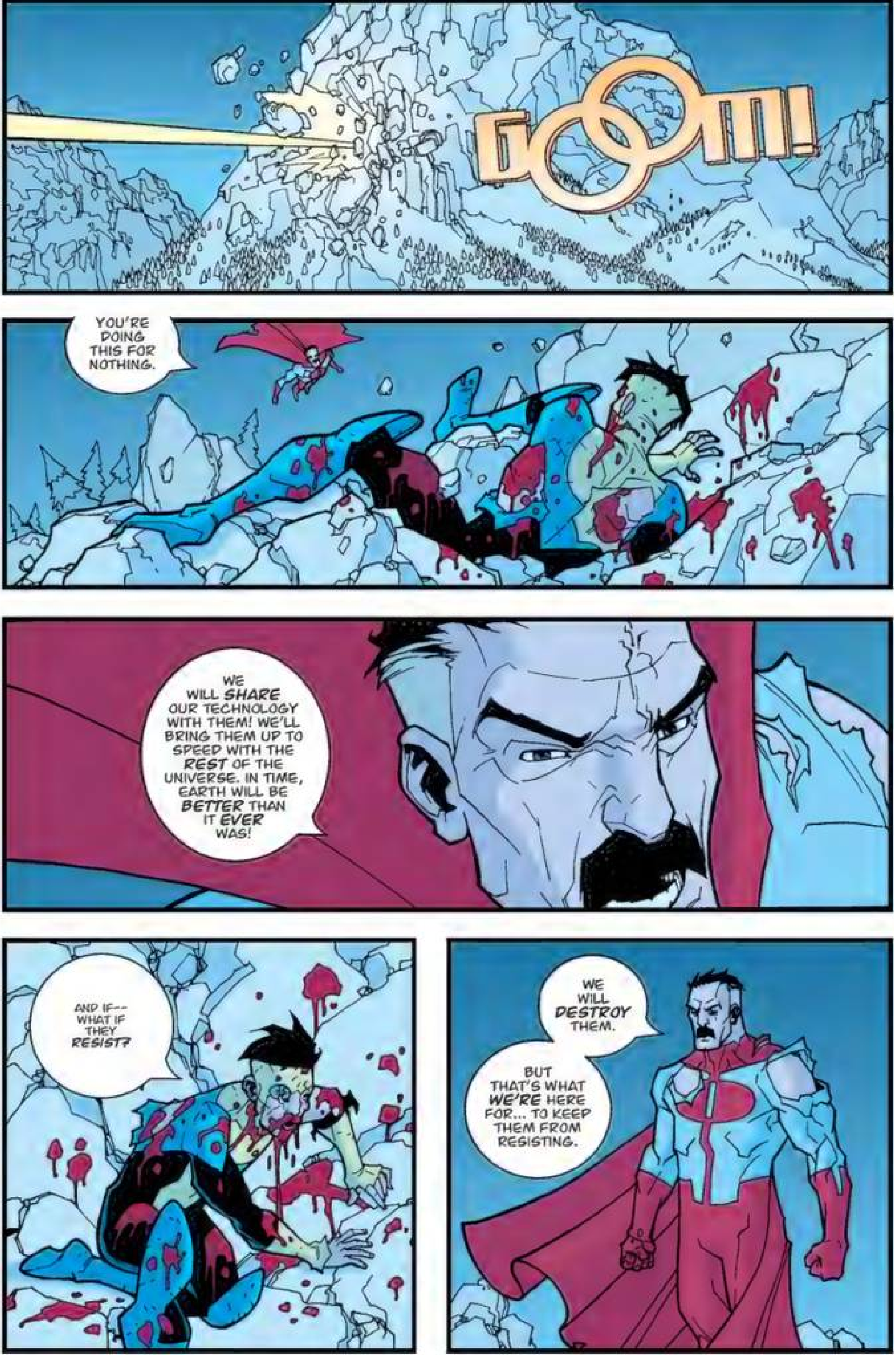

BASH!
GOOM!
CHOOM!
YOU ARE A FOOL TO OPPOSE ME.
I THOUGHT I TAUGHT YOU BETTER THAN THIS.
WRAKK!
YOU DISAPPOINT ME, MARK.

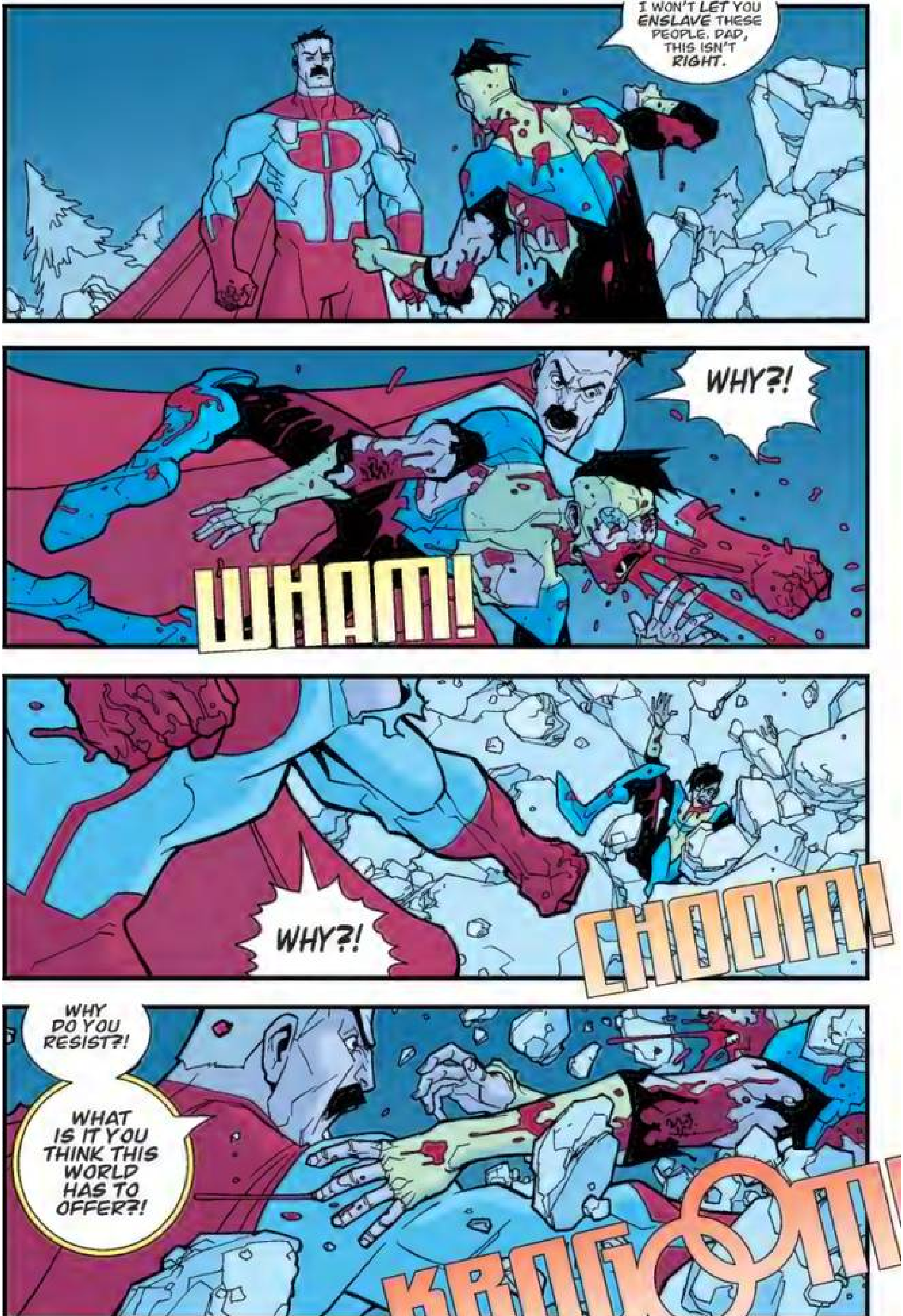

SPLOOSH!
BRAKKA-BA-DOOM!

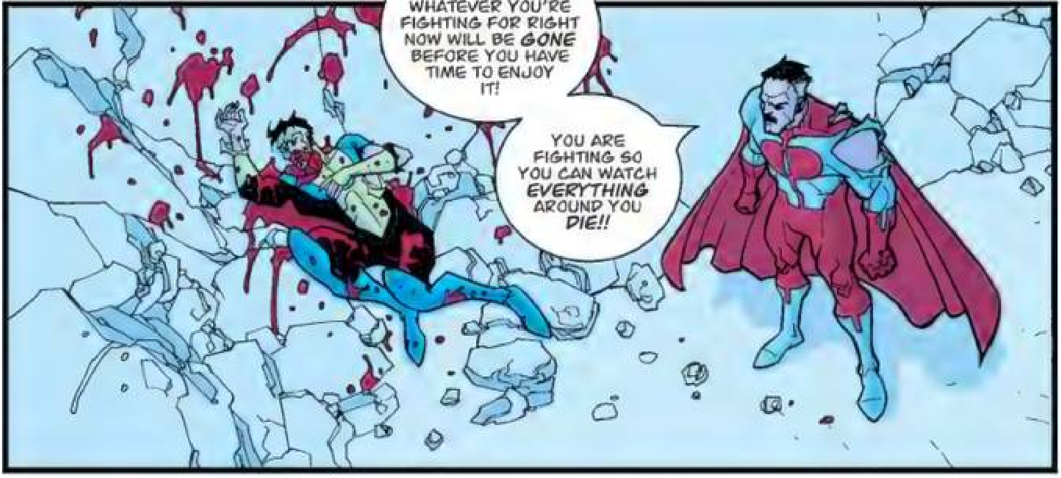
...
SPLOOSH!

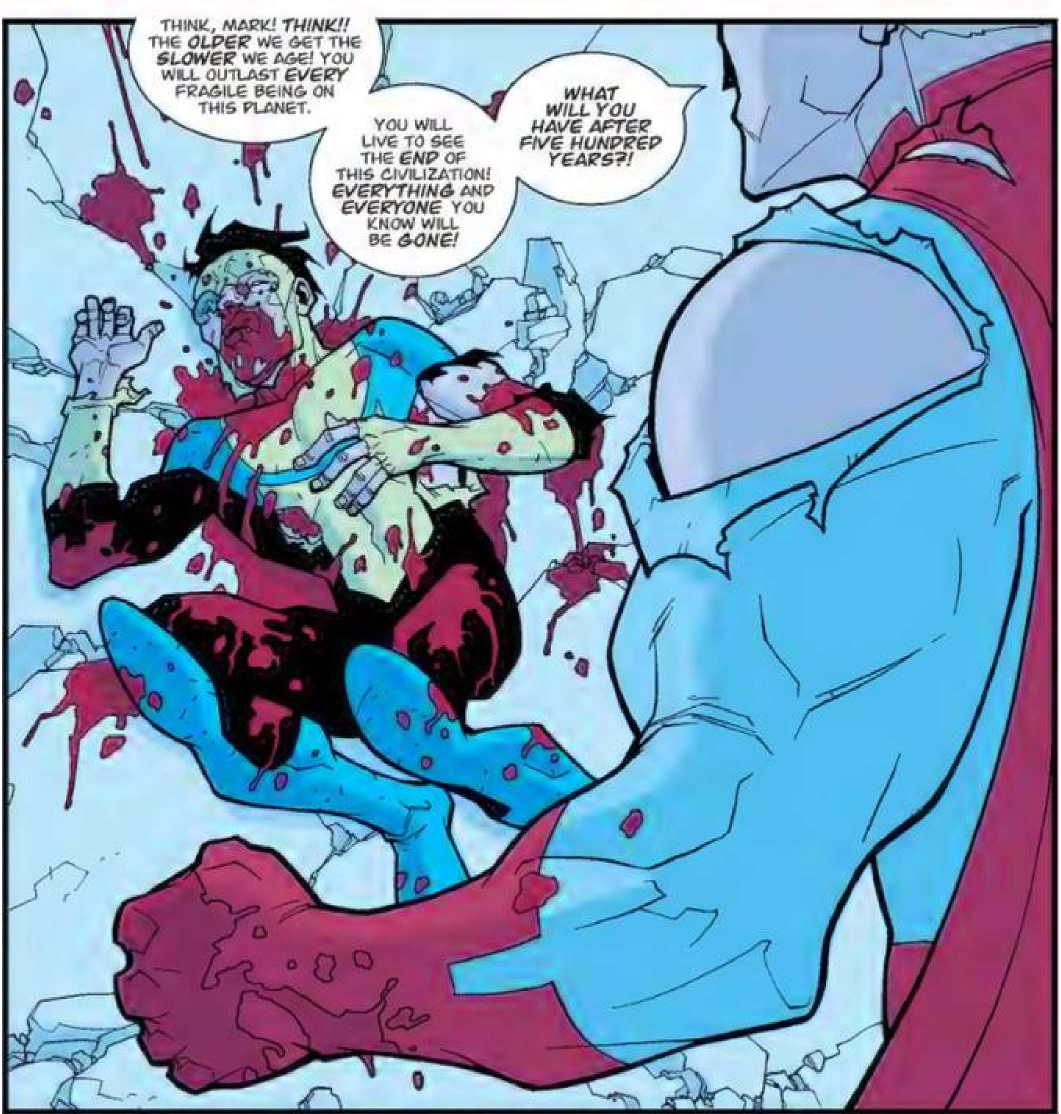

DOOM!
RRRUMMMMMMBLE!

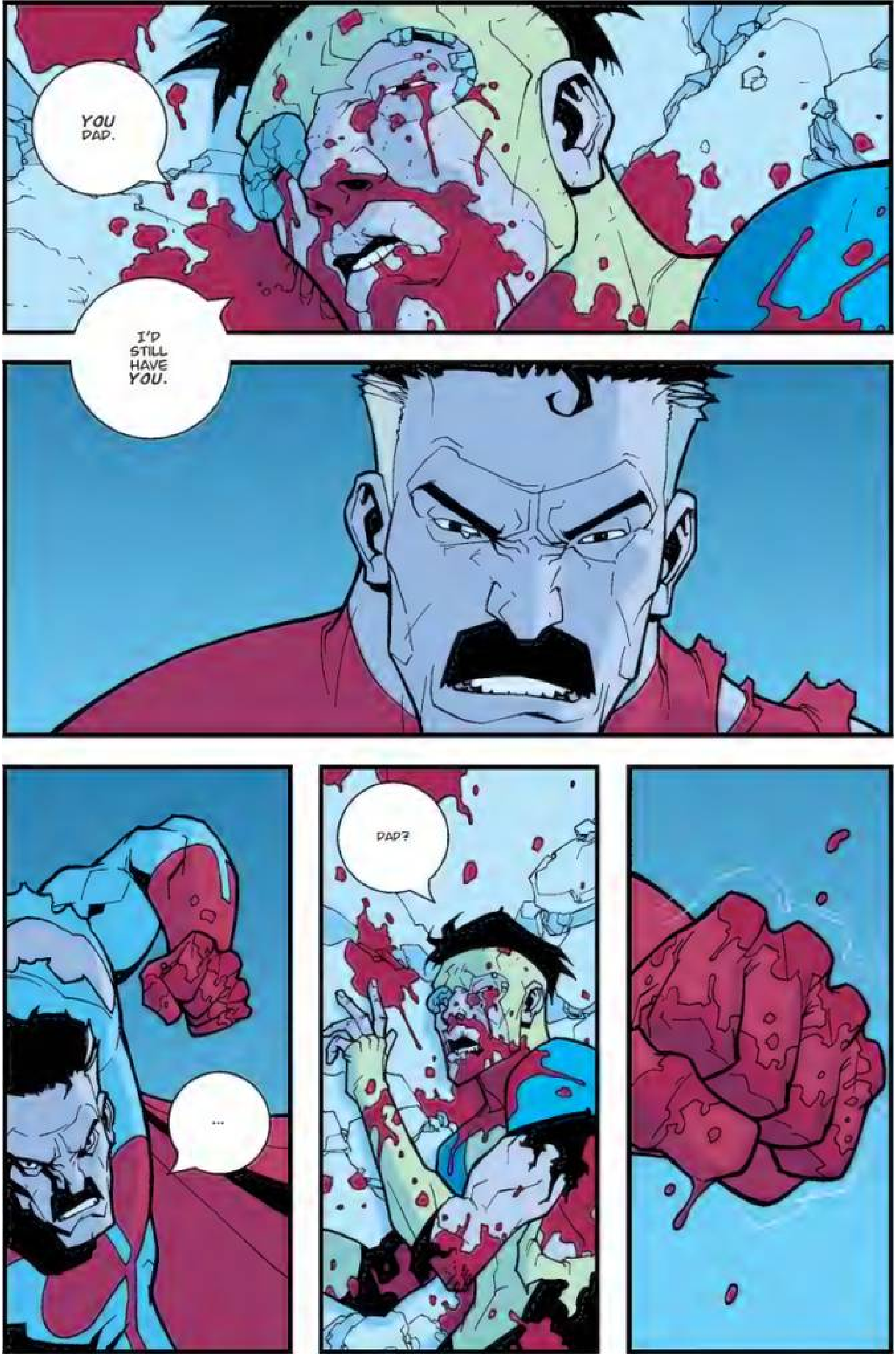

HAD ENOUGH YET?
I WILL STOP YOU.
I'M READY WHEN YOU ARE.
KRAK!

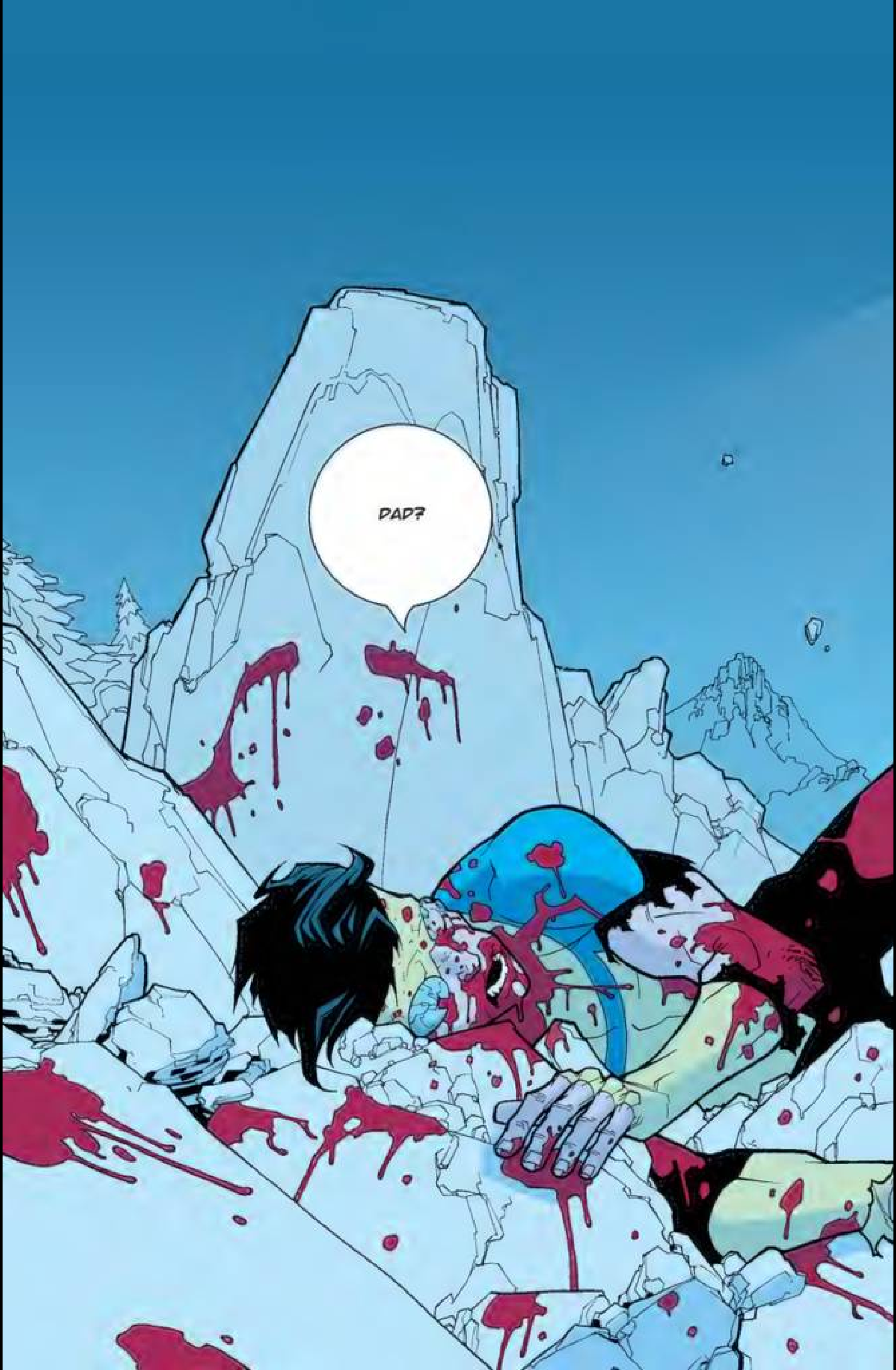

BOOM!
YOU'RE DOING THIS FOR NOTHING.
WE WILL SHARE OUR TECHNOLOGY WITH THEM! WE'LL BRING THEM UP TO SPEED WITH THE REST OF THE UNIVERSE. IN TIME, EARTH WILL BE BETTER THAN IT EVER WAS!
AND IF-- WHAT IF THEY RESIST?
WE WILL DESTROY THEM.
BUT THAT'S WHAT WE'RE HERE FOR... TO KEEP THEM FROM RESISTING.

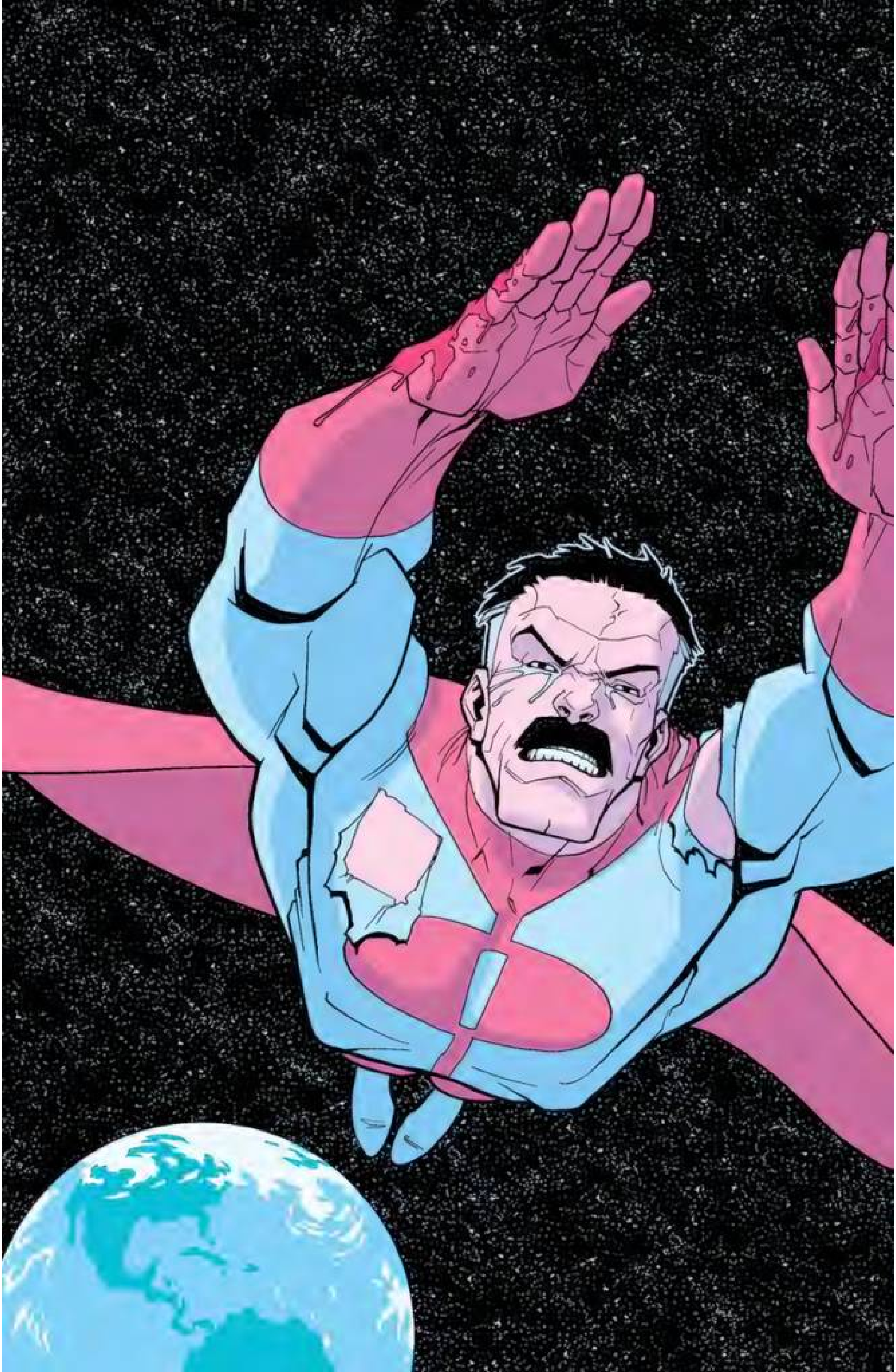

I WON'T LET YOU ENSLAVE THESE PEOPLE, DAD, THIS ISN'T RIGHT.
WHY?!
WHAM!
WHY?!
CHOOM!
WHY DO YOU RESIST?!
WHAT IS IT YOU THINK THIS WORLD HAS TO OFFER?!
KRAGOOM!

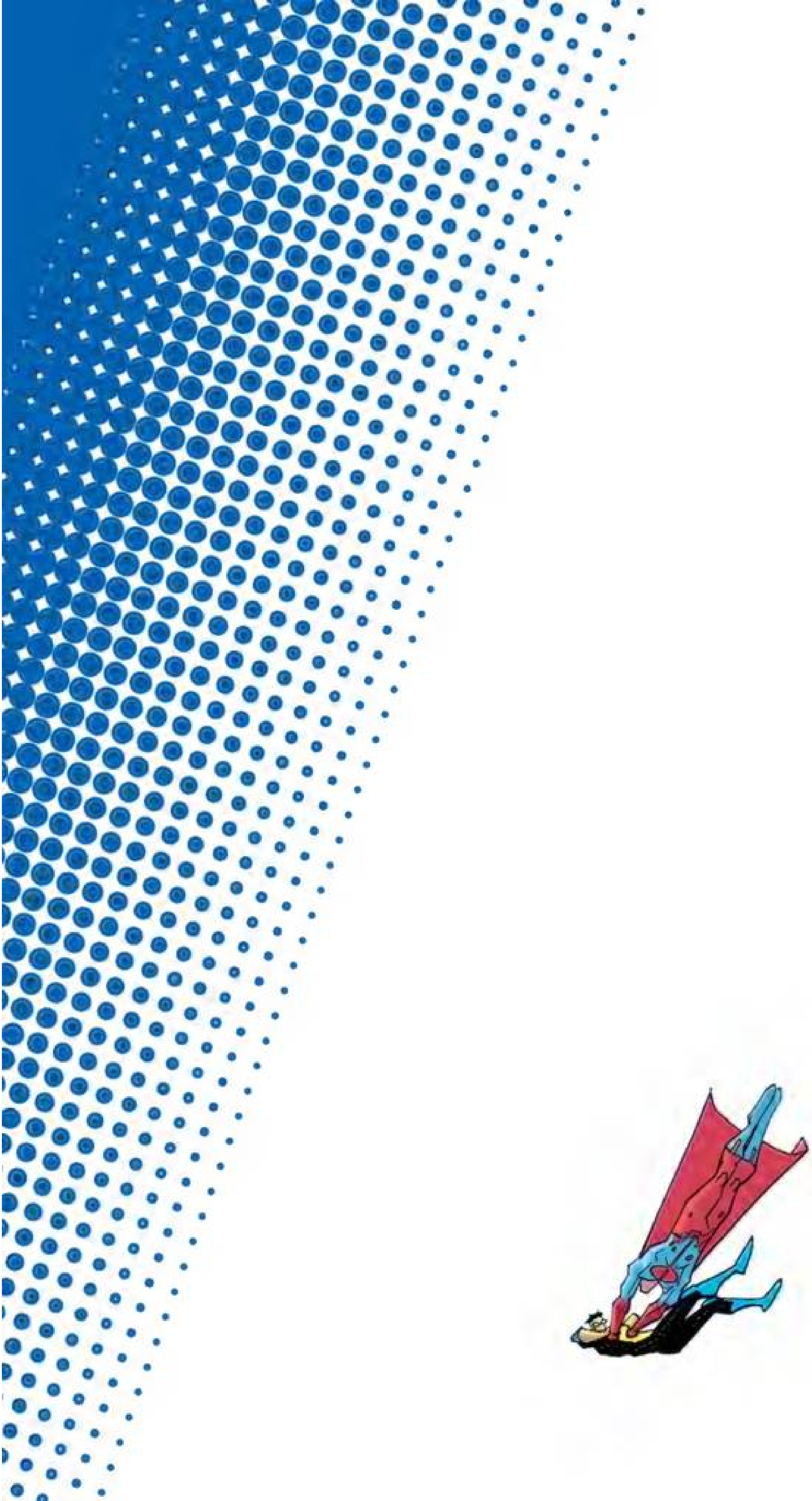

WHATEVER YOU'RE FIGHTING FOR RIGHT NOW WILL BE GONE BEFORE YOU HAVE TIME TO ENJOY IT!
YOU ARE FIGHTING SO YOU CAN WATCH EVERYTHING AROUND YOU DIE!!


THINK, MARK! THINK!! THE OLDER WE GET THE SLOWER WE AGE! YOU WILL OUTLAST EVERY FRAGILE BEING ON THIS PLANET.
YOU WILL LIVE TO SEE THE END OF THIS CIVILIZATION! EVERYTHING AND EVERYONE YOU KNOW WILL BE GONE!
WHAT WILL YOU HAVE AFTER FIVE HUNDRED YEARS?!

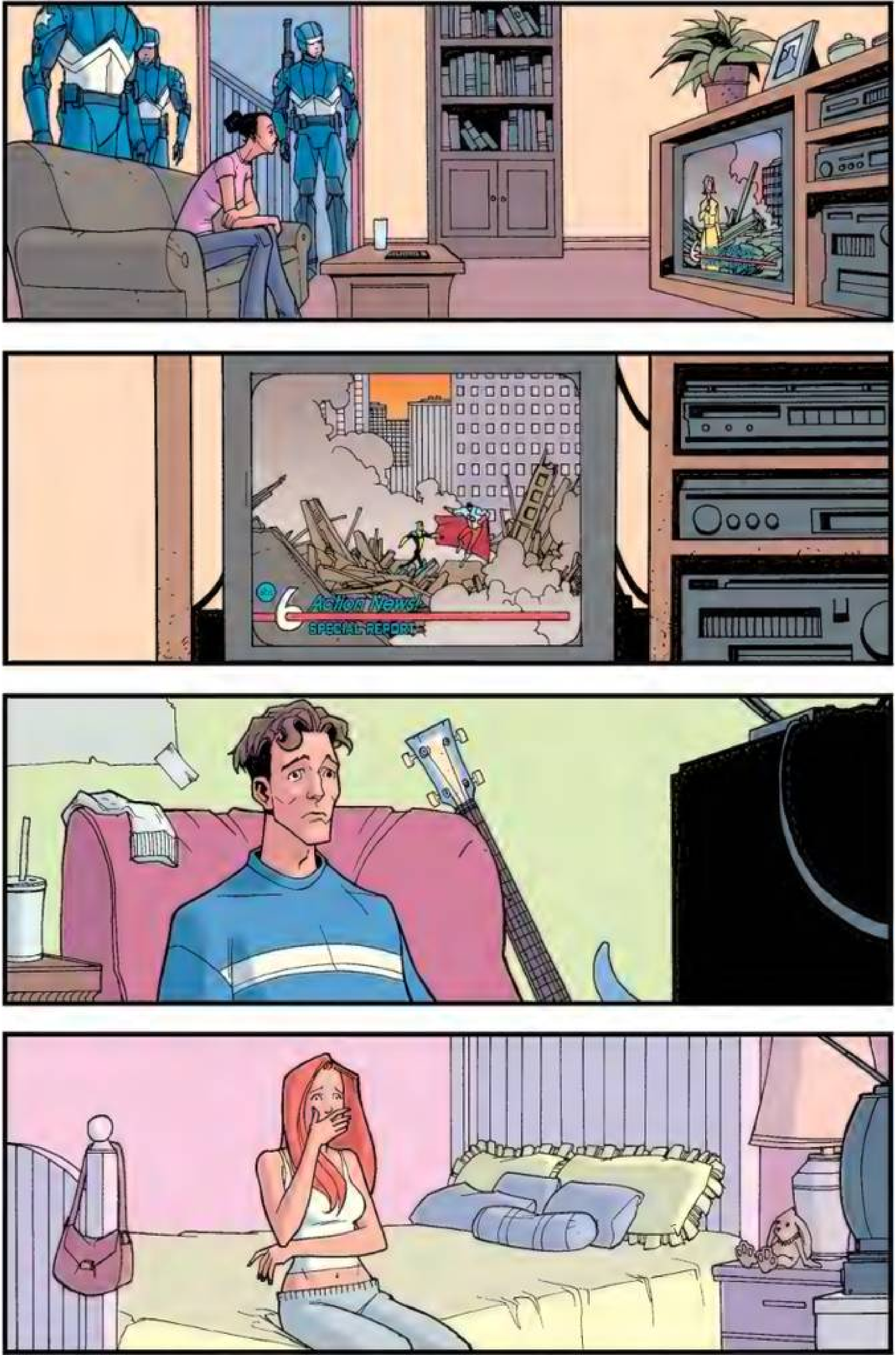

YOU DAD.
I'D STILL HAVE YOU.
...
DAD?

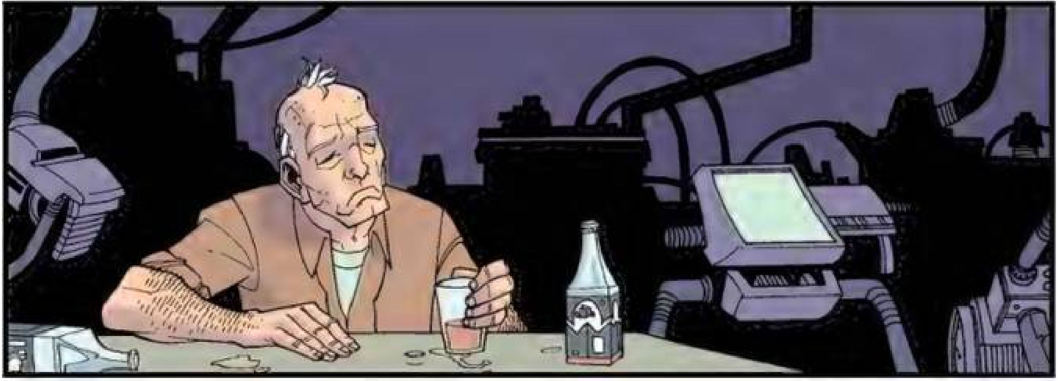

DAD?

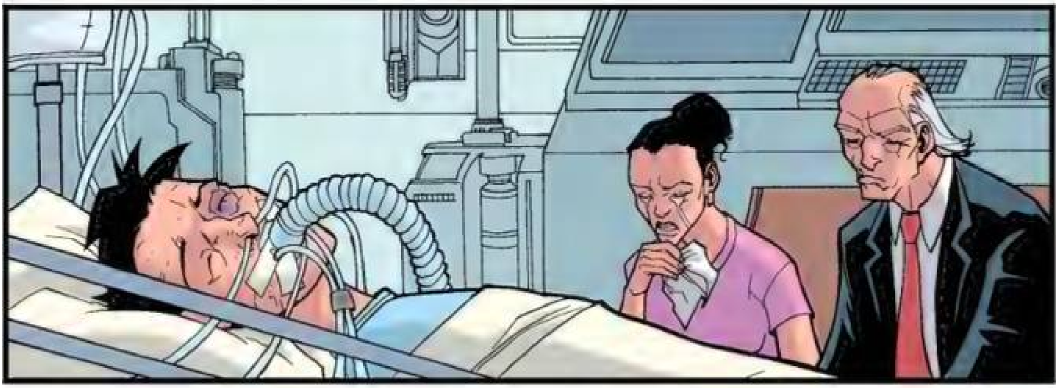


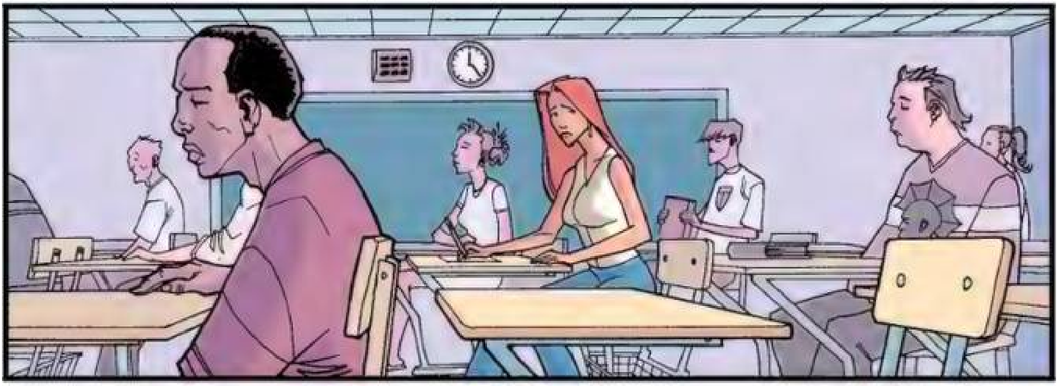


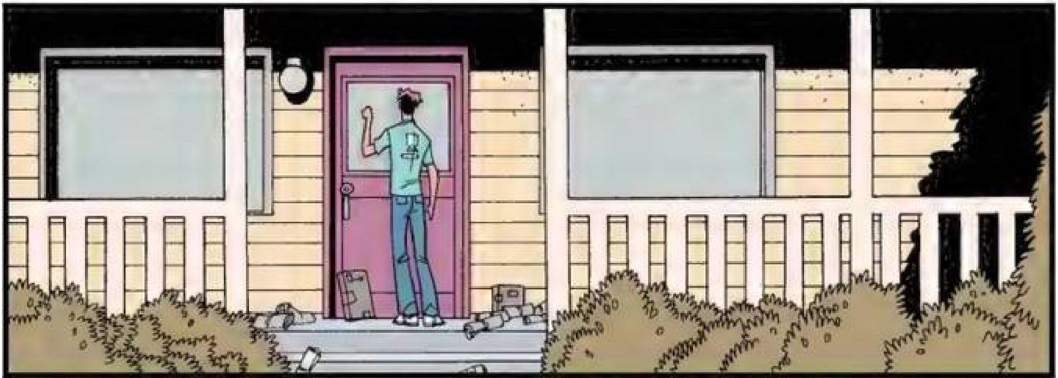
ISSUE THIRTEEN

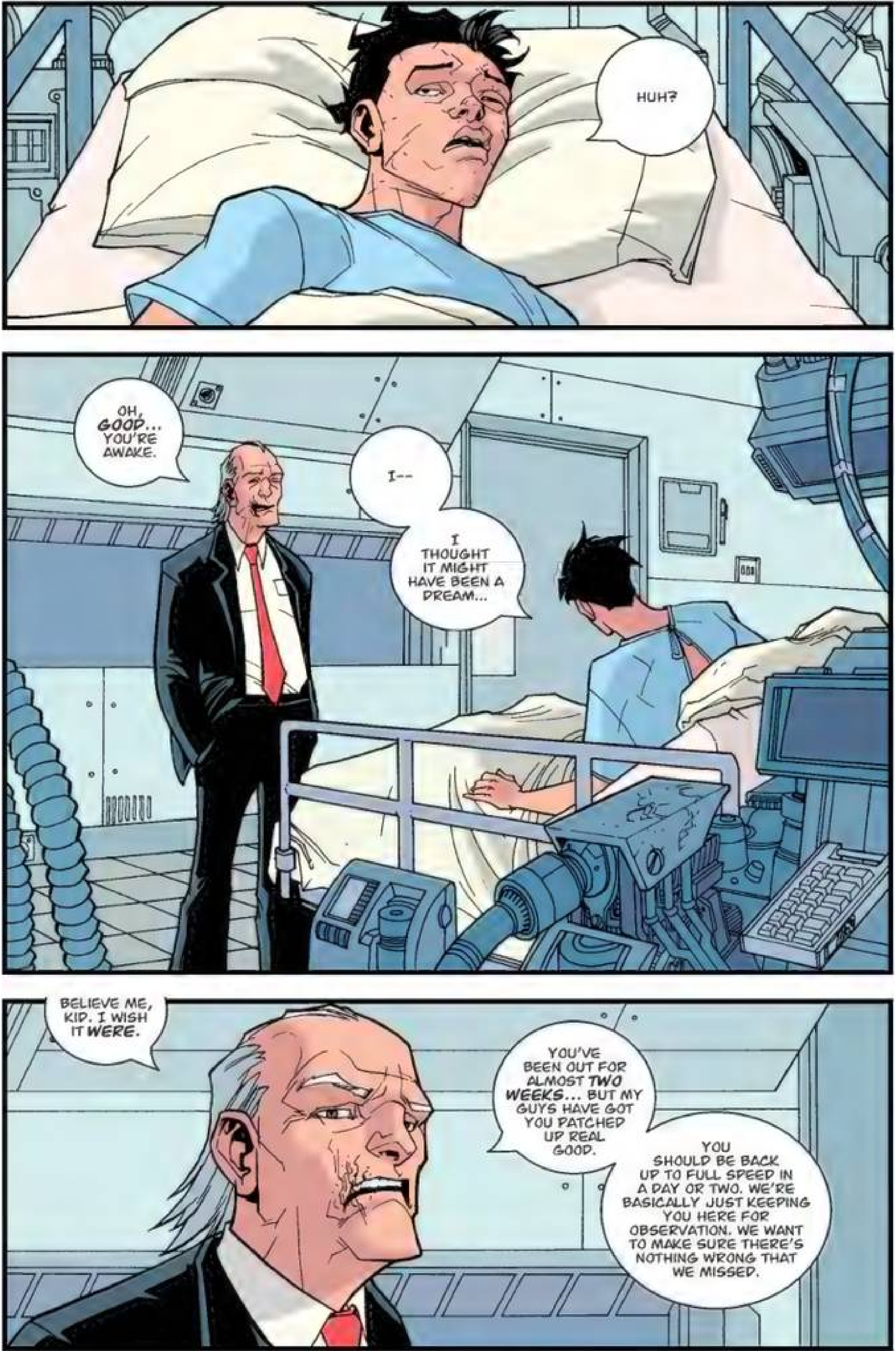

6
Action News!
SPECIAL REPORT

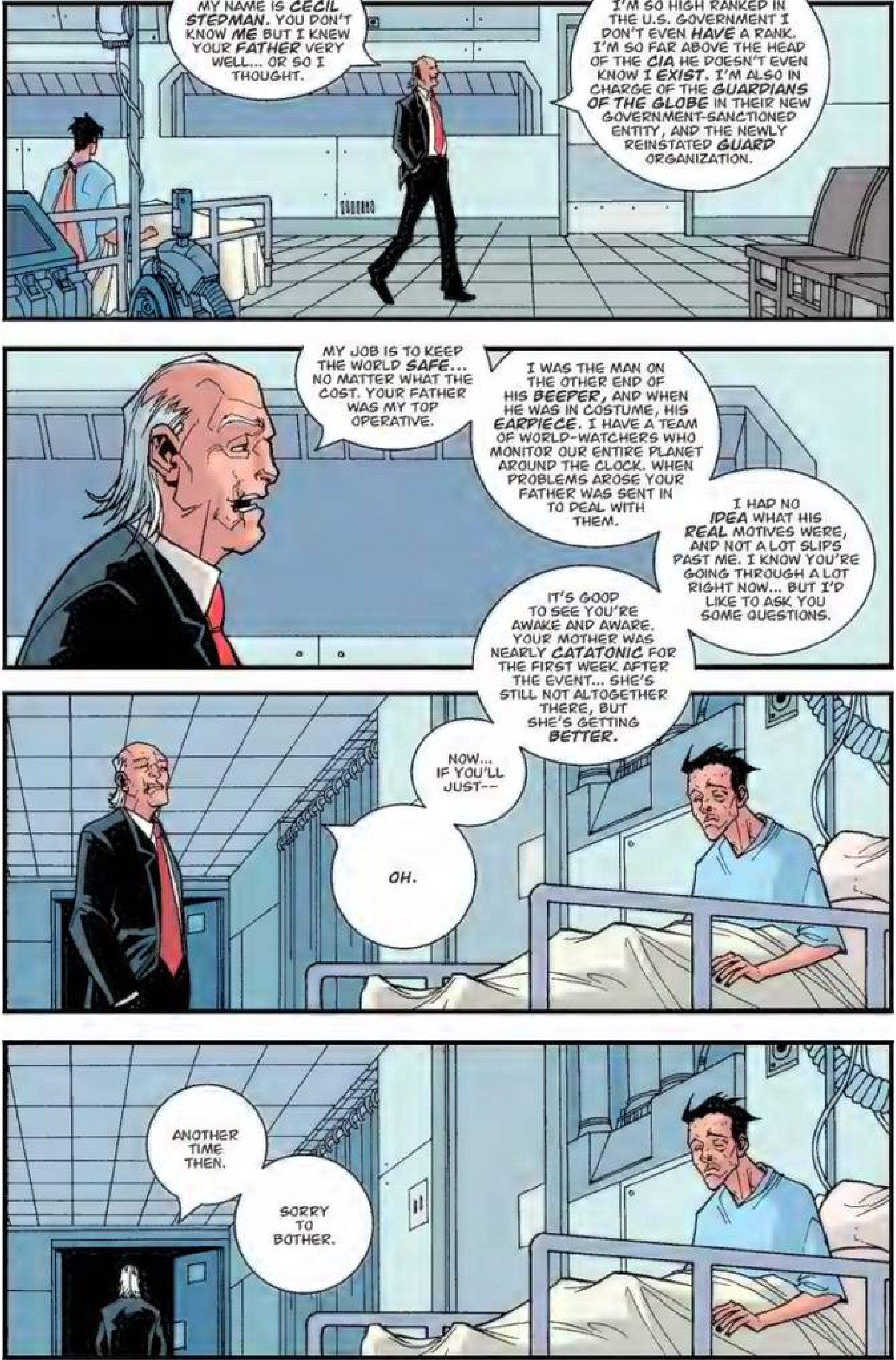


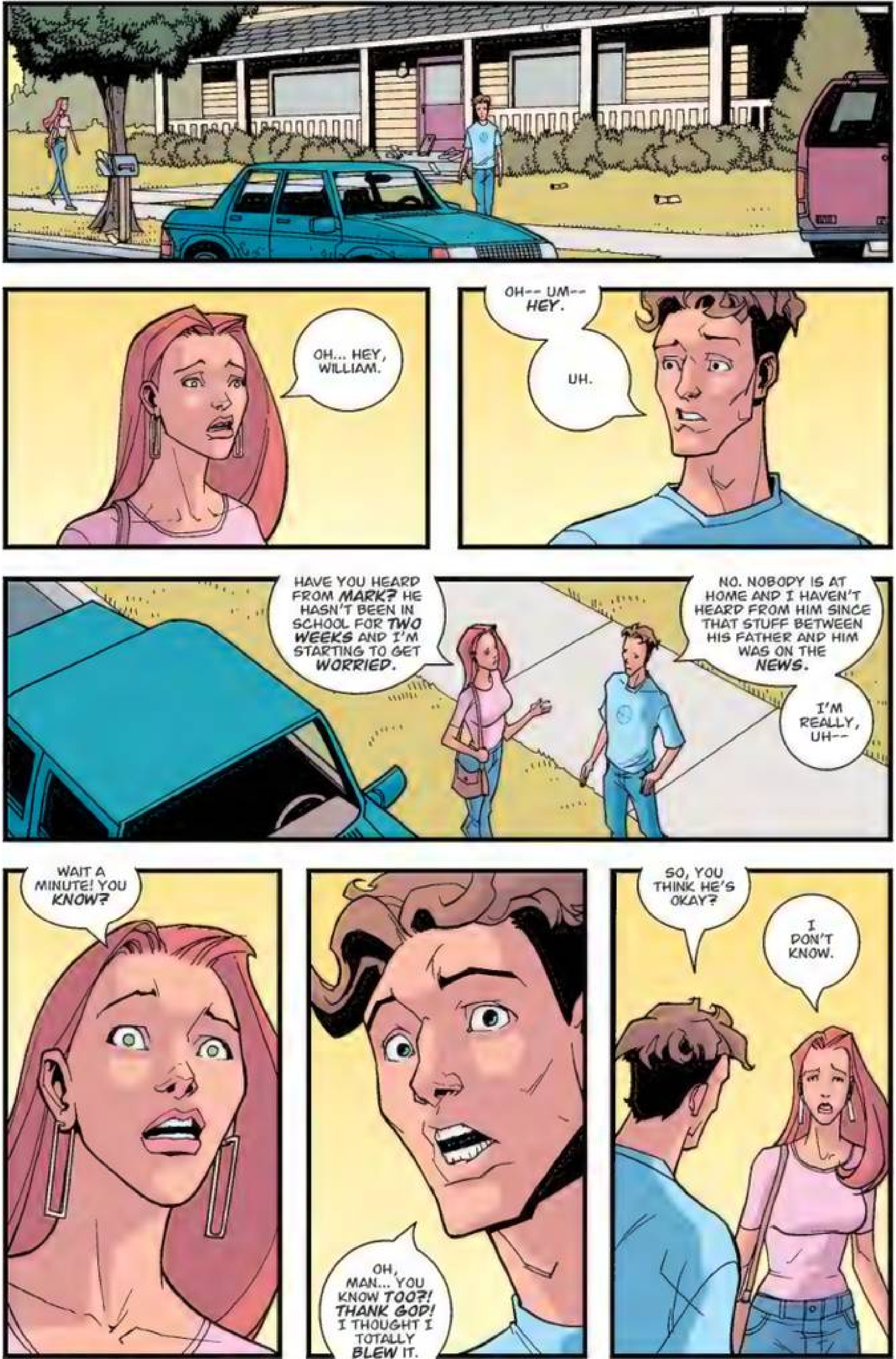


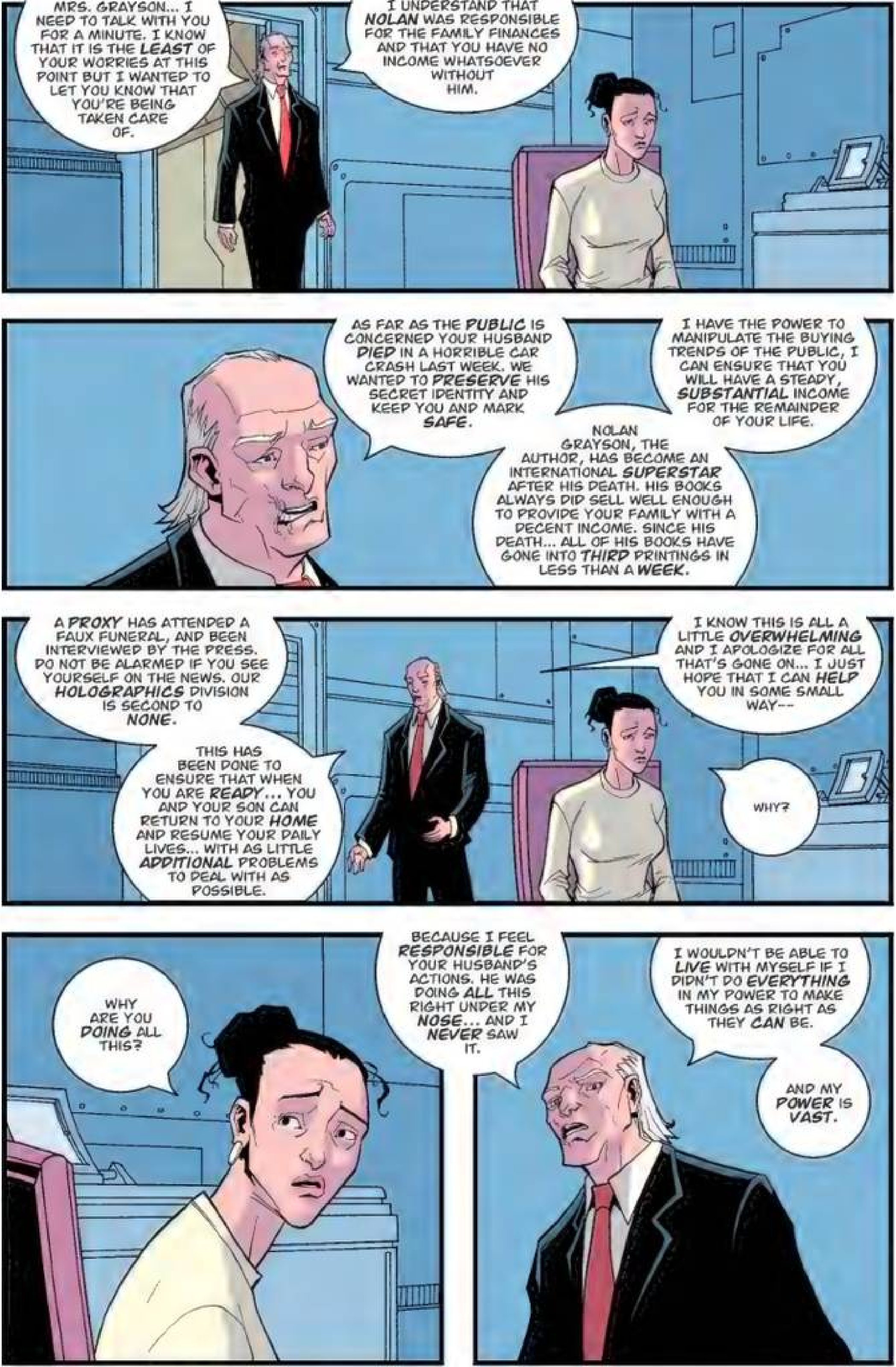


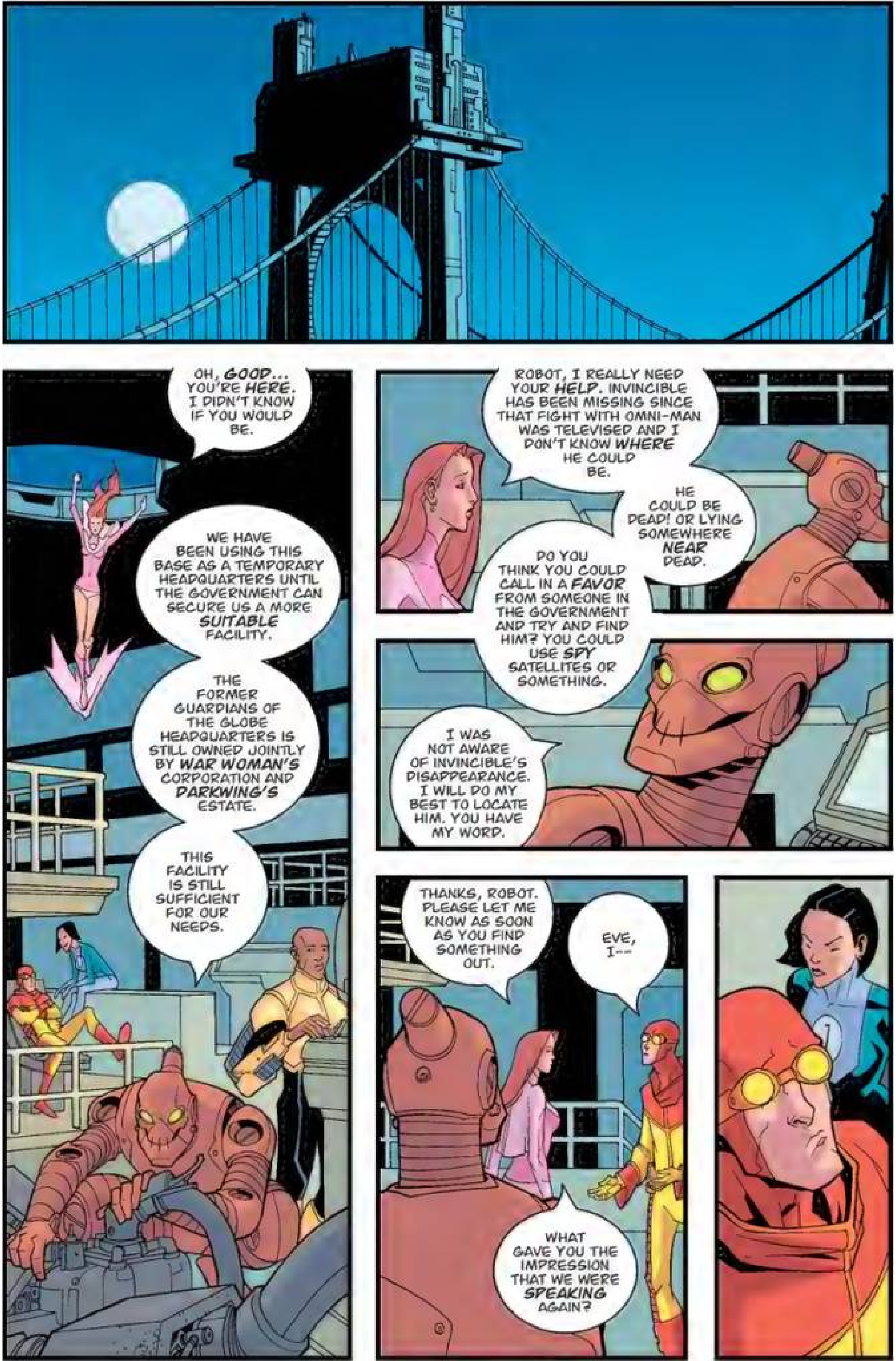


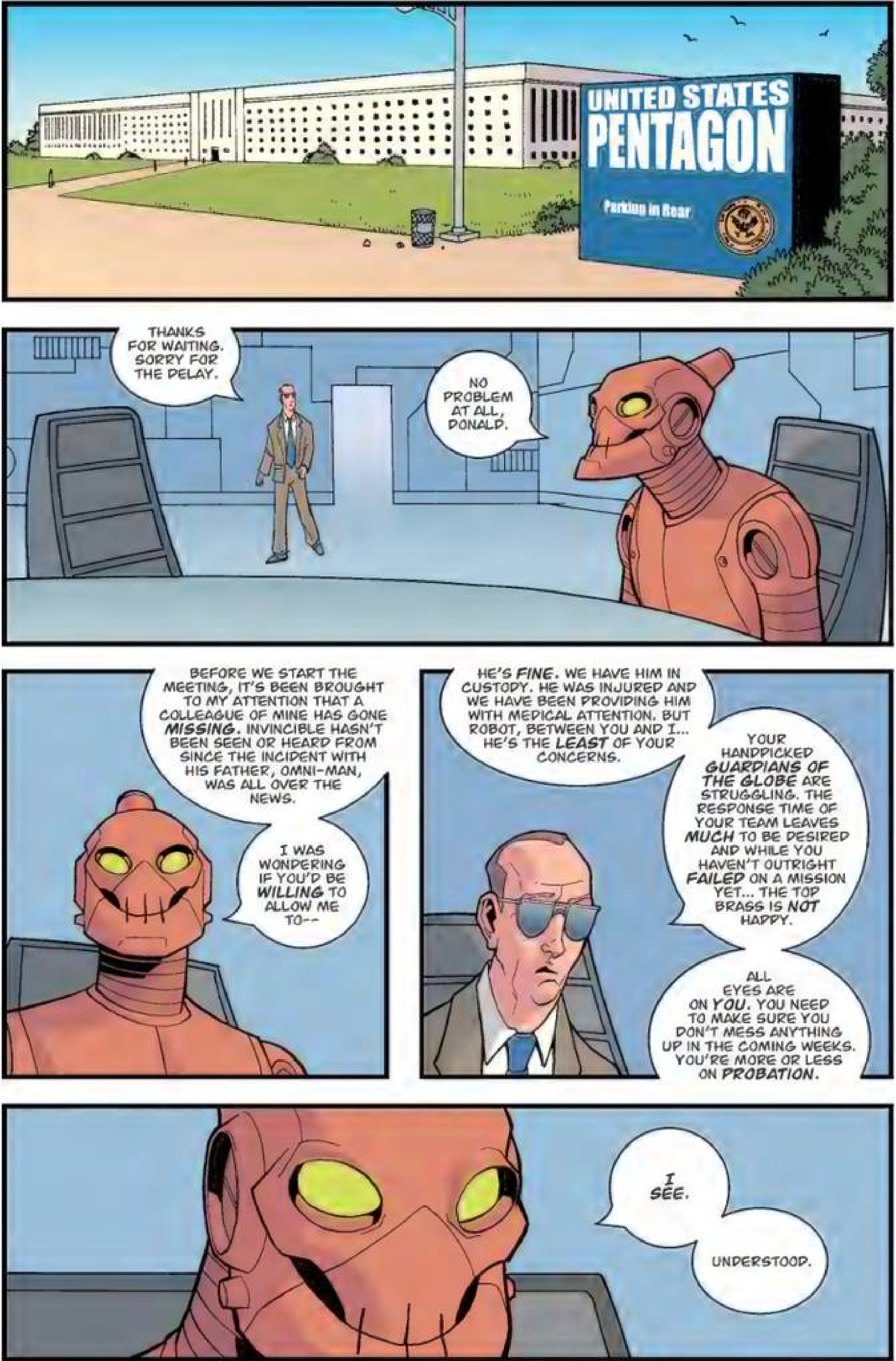

HUH?
OH, GOOD... YOU'RE AWAKE.
I--
I THOUGHT IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN A DREAM...
BELIEVE ME, KID. I WISH IT WERE.
YOU'VE BEEN OUT FOR ALMOST TWO WEEKS... BUT MY GUYS HAVE GOT YOU PATCHED UP REAL GOOD.
YOU SHOULD BE BACK UP TO FULL SPEED IN A DAY OR TWO. WE'RE BASICALLY JUST KEEPING YOU HERE FOR OBSERVATION. WE WANT TO MAKE SURE THERE'S NOTHING WRONG THAT WE MISSED.

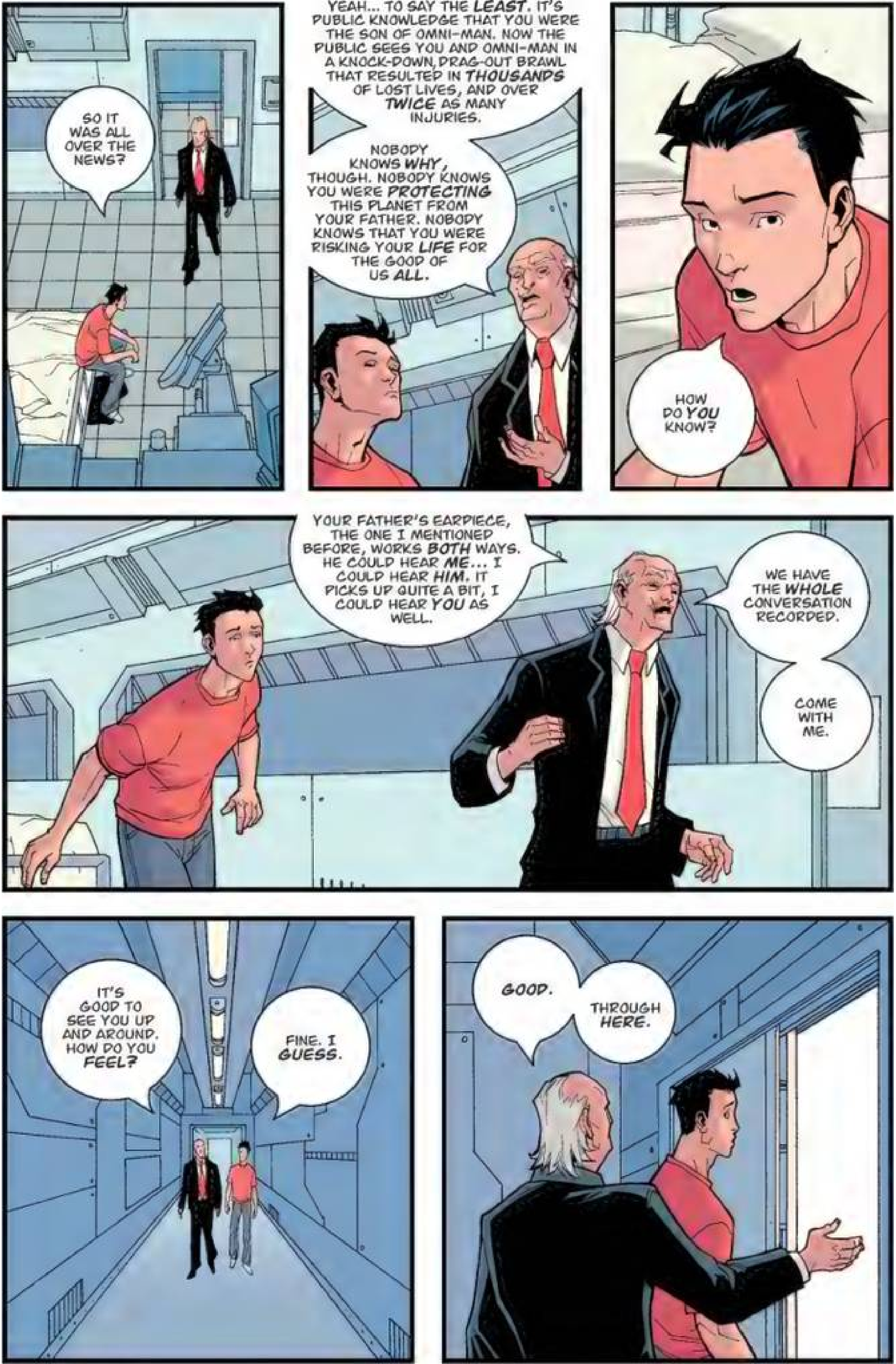

MY NAME IS CECIL STEDMAN. YOU DON'T KNOW ME BUT I KNEW YOUR FATHER VERY WELL... OR SO I THOUGHT.
I'M SO HIGH RANKED IN THE U.S. GOVERNMENT I DON'T EVEN HAVE A RANK. I'M SO FAR ABOVE THE HEAD OF THE CIA HE DOESN'T EVEN KNOW I EXIST. I'M ALSO IN CHARGE OF THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE IN THEIR NEW GOVERNMENT-SANCTIONED ENTITY, AND THE NEWLY REINSTATED GUARD ORGANIZATION.
MY JOB IS TO KEEP THE WORLD SAFE... NO MATTER WHAT THE COST. YOUR FATHER WAS MY TOP OPERATIVE.
I WAS THE MAN ON THE OTHER END OF HIS BEEPER, AND WHEN HE WAS IN COSTUME, HIS EARPIECE. I HAVE A TEAM OF WORLD-WATCHERS WHO MONITOR OUR ENTIRE PLANET AROUND THE CLOCK. WHEN PROBLEMS AROSE YOUR FATHER WAS SENT IN TO DEAL WITH THEM.
I HAD NO IDEA WHAT HIS REAL MOTIVES WERE, AND NOT A LOT SLIPS PAST ME. I KNOW YOU'RE GOING THROUGH A LOT RIGHT NOW... BUT I'D LIKE TO ASK YOU SOME QUESTIONS.
IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU'RE AWAKE AND AWARE. YOUR MOTHER WAS NEARLY CATATONIC FOR THE FIRST WEEK AFTER THE EVENT... SHE'S STILL NOT ALTOGETHER THERE, BUT SHE'S GETTING BETTER.
NOW... IF YOU'LL JUST--
OH.
ANOTHER TIME THEN.
SORRY TO BOTHER.

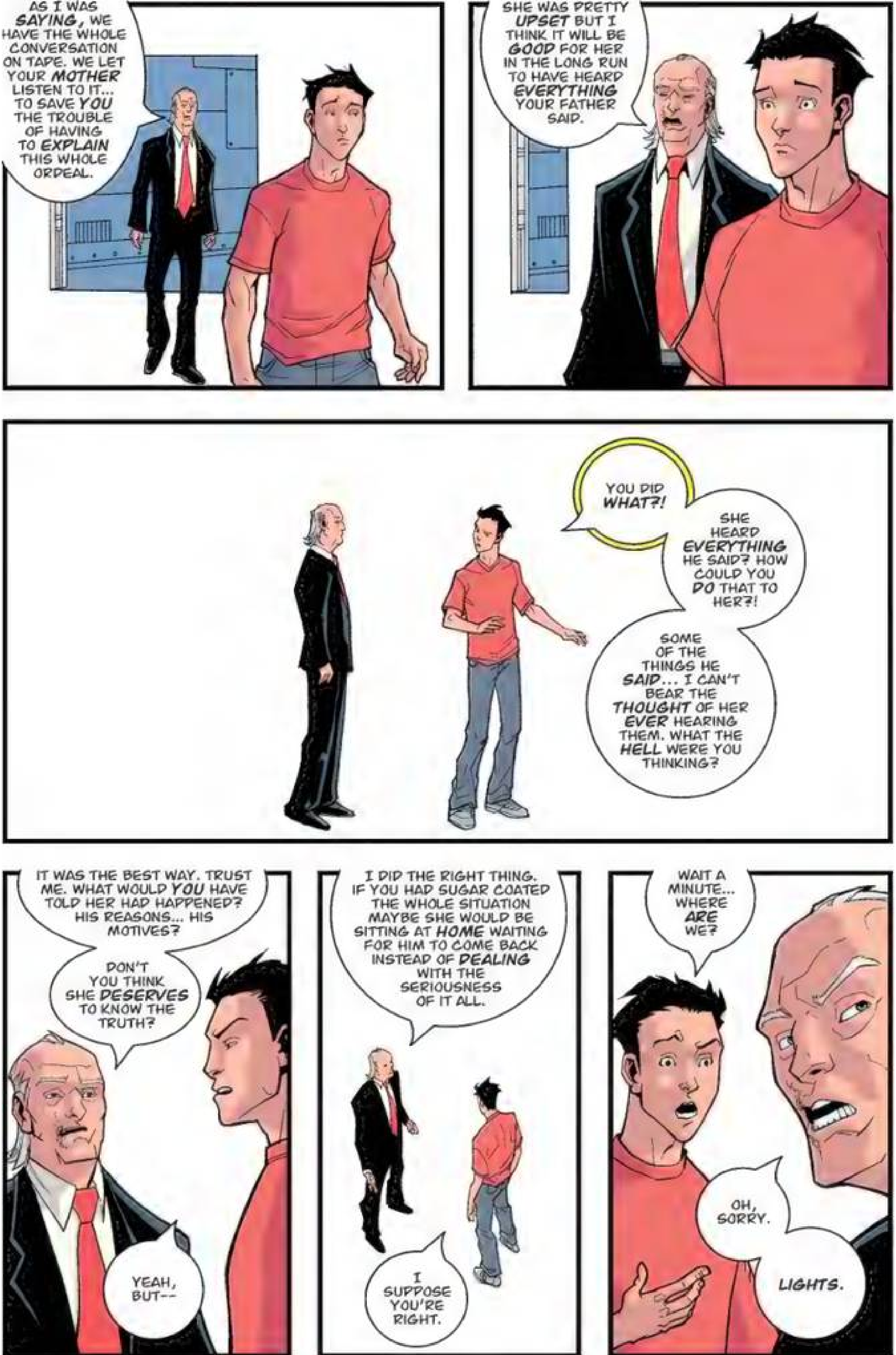

OH... HEY, WILLIAM.
OH-- UM-- *HEY.*
UH.
HAVE YOU HEARD FROM *MARK?* HE HASN'T BEEN IN SCHOOL FOR *TWO WEEKS* AND I'M STARTING TO GET *WORRIED.*
NO. NOBODY IS AT HOME AND I HAVEN'T HEARD FROM HIM SINCE THAT STUFF BETWEEN HIS FATHER AND HIM WAS ON THE *NEWS.*
I'M REALLY, UH--
WAIT A MINUTE! YOU *KNOW?*
OH, MAN... YOU KNOW *TOO?! THANK GOD!* I THOUGHT I TOTALLY *BLEW* IT.
SO, YOU THINK HE'S OKAY?
I DON'T KNOW.

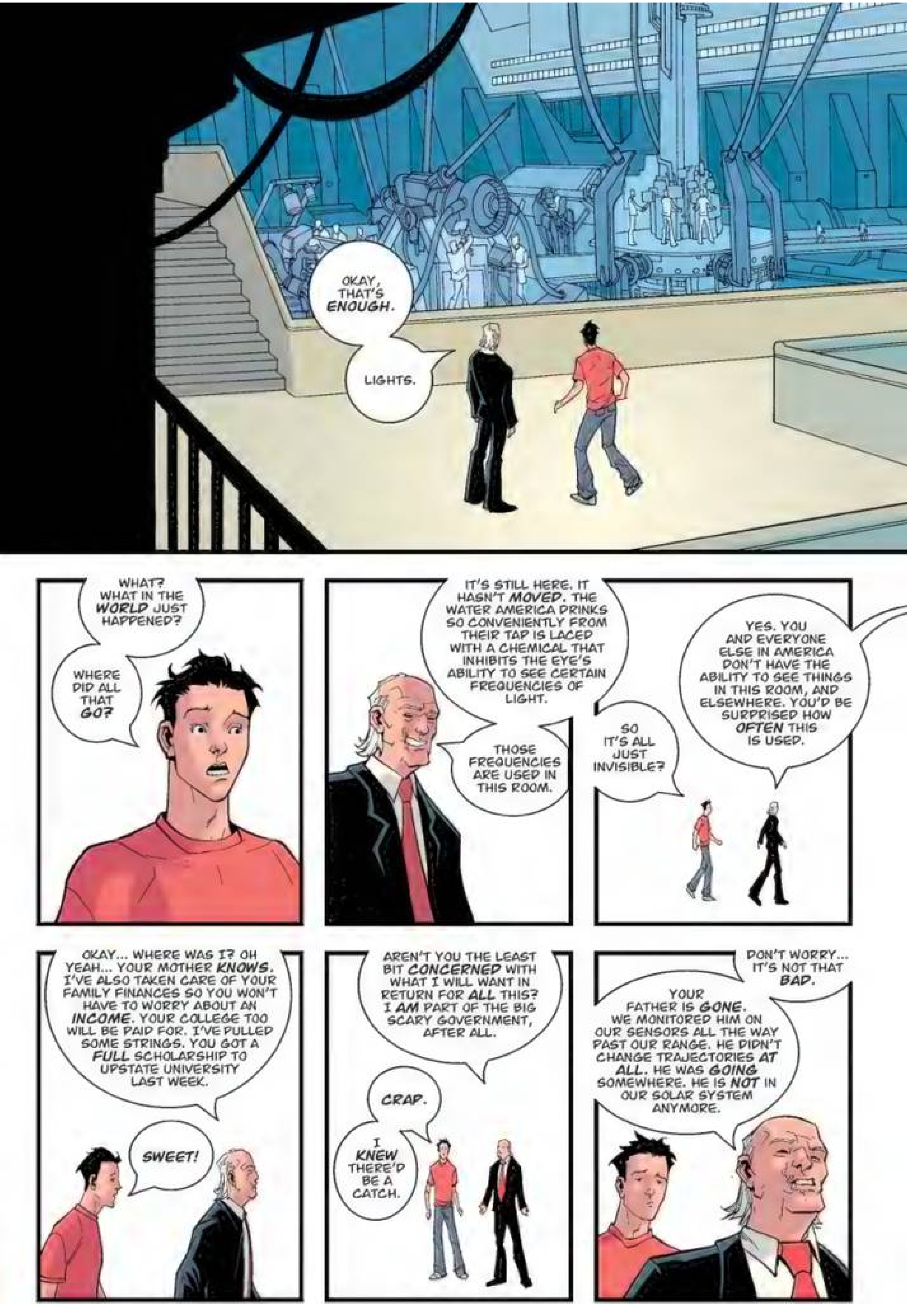

MRS. GRAYSON... I NEED TO TALK WITH YOU FOR A MINUTE. I KNOW THAT IT IS THE LEAST OF YOUR WORRIES AT THIS POINT BUT I WANTED TO LET YOU KNOW THAT YOU'RE BEING TAKEN CARE OF.
I UNDERSTAND THAT NOLAN WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE FAMILY FINANCES AND THAT YOU HAVE NO INCOME WHATSOEVER WITHOUT HIM.
AS FAR AS THE PUBLIC IS CONCERNED YOUR HUSBAND DIED IN A HORRIBLE CAR CRASH LAST WEEK. WE WANTED TO PRESERVE HIS SECRET IDENTITY AND KEEP YOU AND MARK SAFE.
I HAVE THE POWER TO MANIPULATE THE BUYING TRENDS OF THE PUBLIC, I CAN ENSURE THAT YOU WILL HAVE A STEADY, SUBSTANTIAL INCOME FOR THE REMAINDER OF YOUR LIFE.
NOLAN GRAYSON, THE AUTHOR, HAS BECOME AN INTERNATIONAL SUPERSTAR AFTER HIS DEATH. HIS BOOKS ALWAYS DID SELL WELL ENOUGH TO PROVIDE YOUR FAMILY WITH A DECENT INCOME. SINCE HIS DEATH... ALL OF HIS BOOKS HAVE GONE INTO THIRD PRINTINGS IN LESS THAN A WEEK.
A PROXY HAS ATTENDED A FAUX FUNERAL, AND BEEN INTERVIEWED BY THE PRESS. DO NOT BE ALARMED IF YOU SEE YOURSELF ON THE NEWS. OUR HOLOGRAPHICS DIVISION IS SECOND TO NONE.
THIS HAS BEEN DONE TO ENSURE THAT WHEN YOU ARE READY... YOU AND YOUR SON CAN RETURN TO YOUR HOME AND RESUME YOUR DAILY LIVES... WITH AS LITTLE ADDITIONAL PROBLEMS TO DEAL WITH AS POSSIBLE.
I KNOW THIS IS ALL A LITTLE OVERWHELMING AND I APOLOGIZE FOR ALL THAT'S GONE ON... I JUST HOPE THAT I CAN HELP YOU IN SOME SMALL WAY--
WHY?
WHY ARE YOU DOING ALL THIS?
BECAUSE I FEEL RESPONSIBLE FOR YOUR HUSBAND'S ACTIONS. HE WAS DOING ALL THIS RIGHT UNDER MY NOSE... AND I NEVER SAW IT.
I WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO LIVE WITH MYSELF IF I DIDN'T DO EVERYTHING IN MY POWER TO MAKE THINGS AS RIGHT AS THEY CAN BE.
AND MY POWER IS VAST.

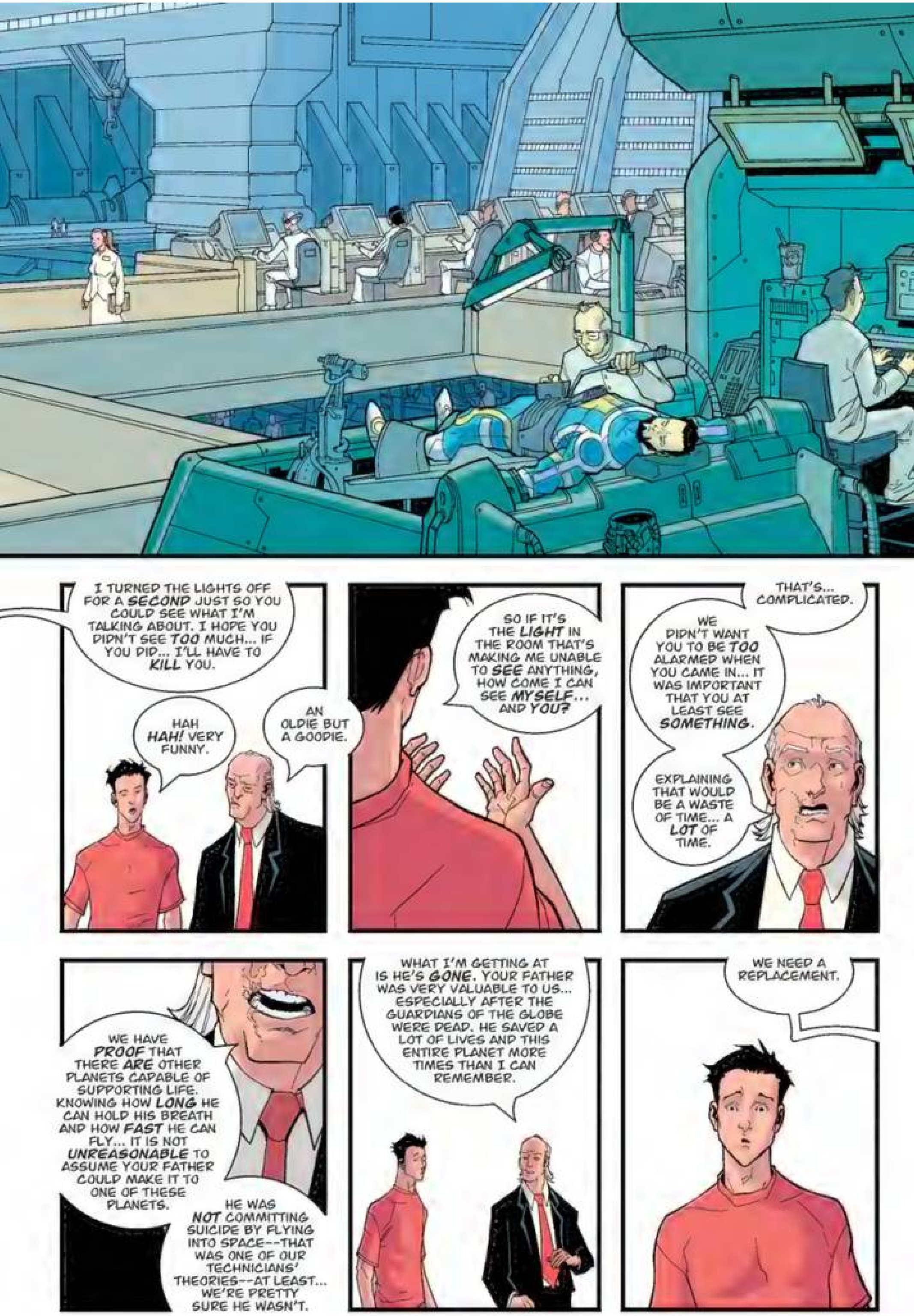

OH, GOOD... YOU'RE HERE. I DIDN'T KNOW IF YOU WOULD BE.
WE HAVE BEEN USING THIS BASE AS A TEMPORARY HEADQUARTERS UNTIL THE GOVERNMENT CAN SECURE US A MORE SUITABLE FACILITY.
THE FORMER GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE HEADQUARTERS IS STILL OWNED JOINTLY BY WAR WOMAN'S CORPORATION AND DARKWING'S ESTATE.
THIS FACILITY IS STILL SUFFICIENT FOR OUR NEEDS.
ROBOT, I REALLY NEED YOUR HELP. INVINCIBLE HAS BEEN MISSING SINCE THAT FIGHT WITH OMNI-MAN WAS TELEVISED AND I DON'T KNOW WHERE HE COULD BE.
HE COULD BE DEAD! OR LYING SOMEWHERE NEAR DEAD.
DO YOU THINK YOU COULD CALL IN A FAVOR FROM SOMEONE IN THE GOVERNMENT AND TRY AND FIND HIM? YOU COULD USE SPY SATELLITES OR SOMETHING.
I WAS NOT AWARE OF INVINCIBLE'S DISAPPEARANCE. I WILL DO MY BEST TO LOCATE HIM. YOU HAVE MY WORD.
THANKS, ROBOT. PLEASE LET ME KNOW AS SOON AS YOU FIND SOMETHING OUT.
EVE, I--
WHAT GAVE YOU THE IMPRESSION THAT WE WERE SPEAKING AGAIN?

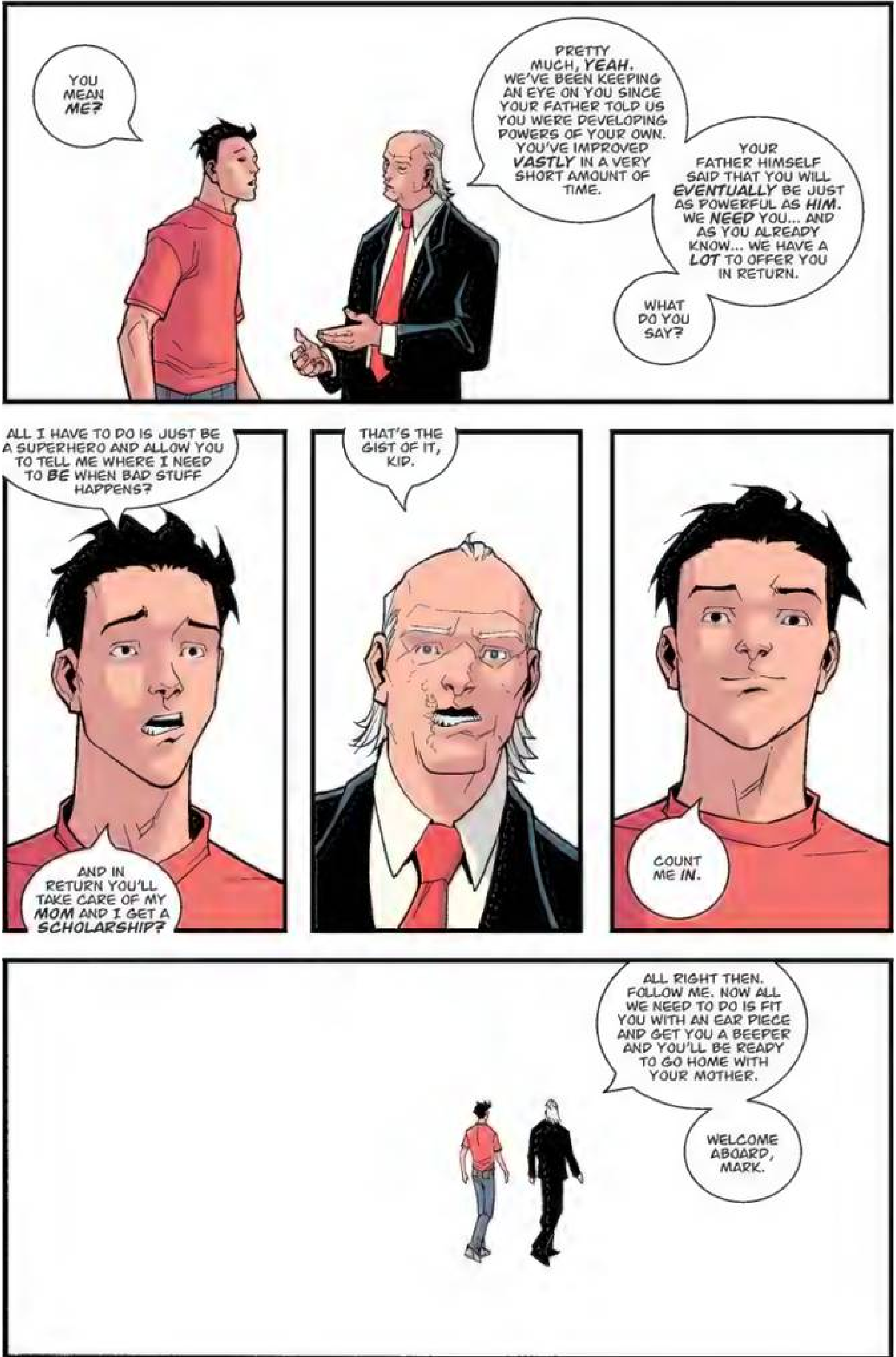

UNITED STATES PENTAGON
Parking in Rear
THANKS FOR WAITING. SORRY FOR THE DELAY.
NO PROBLEM AT ALL, DONALD.
BEFORE WE START THE MEETING, IT'S BEEN BROUGHT TO MY ATTENTION THAT A COLLEAGUE OF MINE HAS GONE *MISSING*. INVINCIBLE HASN'T BEEN SEEN OR HEARD FROM SINCE THE INCIDENT WITH HIS FATHER, OMNI-MAN, WAS ALL OVER THE NEWS.
I WAS WONDERING IF YOU'D BE *WILLING* TO ALLOW ME TO--
HE'S *FINE*. WE HAVE HIM IN CUSTODY. HE WAS INJURED AND WE HAVE BEEN PROVIDING HIM WITH MEDICAL ATTENTION. BUT ROBOT, BETWEEN YOU AND I... HE'S THE *LEAST* OF YOUR CONCERNS.
YOUR HANDPICKED *GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE* ARE STRUGGLING. THE RESPONSE TIME OF YOUR TEAM LEAVES *MUCH* TO BE DESIRED AND WHILE YOU HAVEN'T OUTRIGHT *FAILED* ON A MISSION YET... THE TOP BRASS IS *NOT* HAPPY.
ALL EYES ARE ON *YOU*. YOU NEED TO MAKE SURE YOU DON'T MESS ANYTHING UP IN THE COMING WEEKS. YOU'RE MORE OR LESS ON *PROBATION*.
I SEE.
UNDERSTOOD.

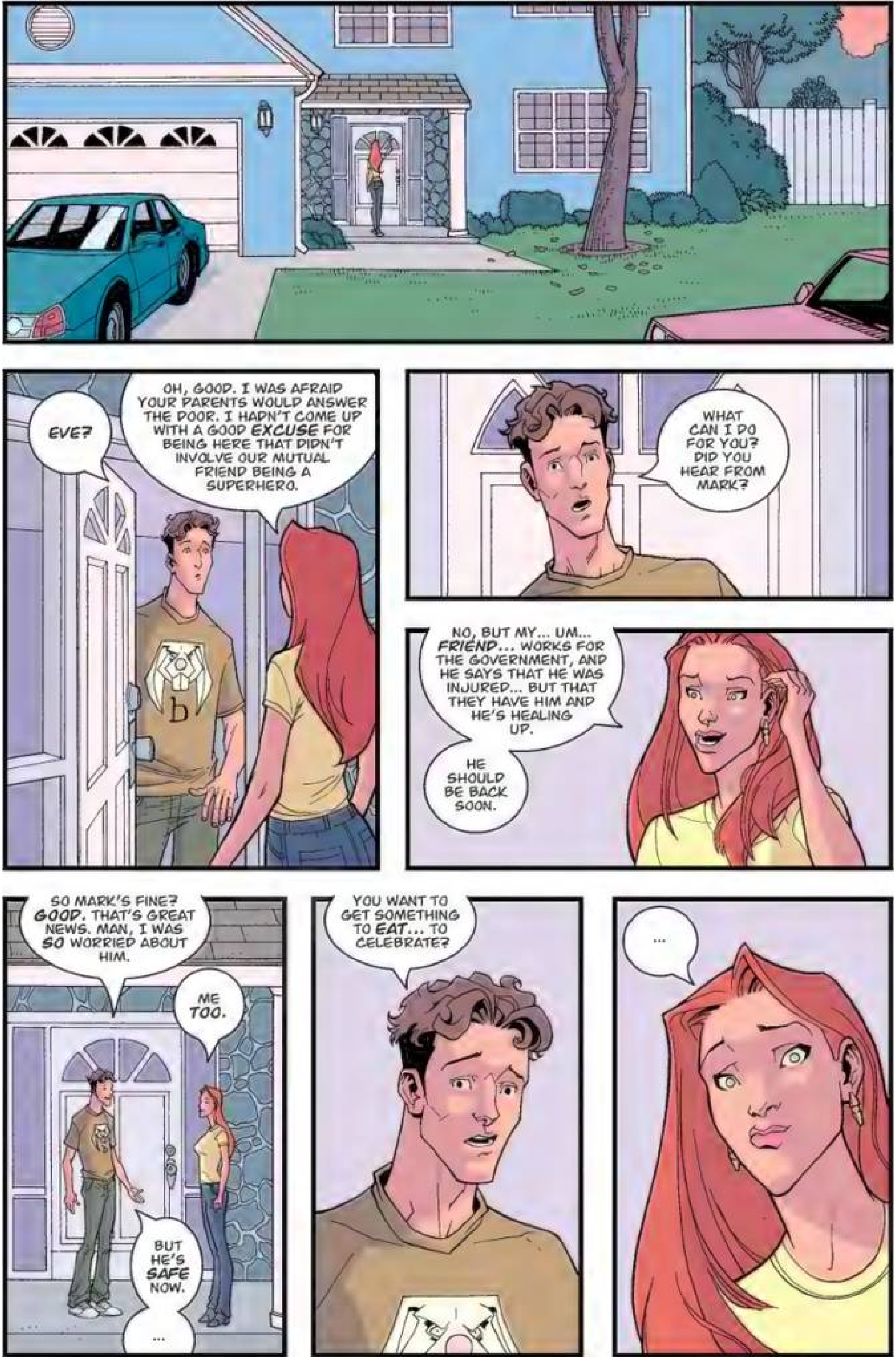

SO IT WAS ALL OVER THE NEWS?
YEAH... TO SAY THE LEAST. IT'S PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE THAT YOU WERE THE SON OF OMNI-MAN. NOW THE PUBLIC SEES YOU AND OMNI-MAN IN A KNOCK-DOWN, DRAG-OUT BRAWL THAT RESULTED IN THOUSANDS OF LOST LIVES, AND OVER TWICE AS MANY INJURIES.
NOBODY KNOWS WHY, THOUGH. NOBODY KNOWS YOU WERE PROTECTING THIS PLANET FROM YOUR FATHER. NOBODY KNOWS THAT YOU WERE RISKING YOUR LIFE FOR THE GOOD OF US ALL.
HOW DO YOU KNOW?
YOUR FATHER'S EARPIECE, THE ONE I MENTIONED BEFORE, WORKS BOTH WAYS. HE COULD HEAR ME... I COULD HEAR HIM. IT PICKS UP QUITE A BIT, I COULD HEAR YOU AS WELL.
WE HAVE THE WHOLE CONVERSATION RECORDED.
COME WITH ME.
IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU UP AND AROUND. HOW DO YOU FEEL?
FINE. I GUESS.
GOOD.
THROUGH HERE.

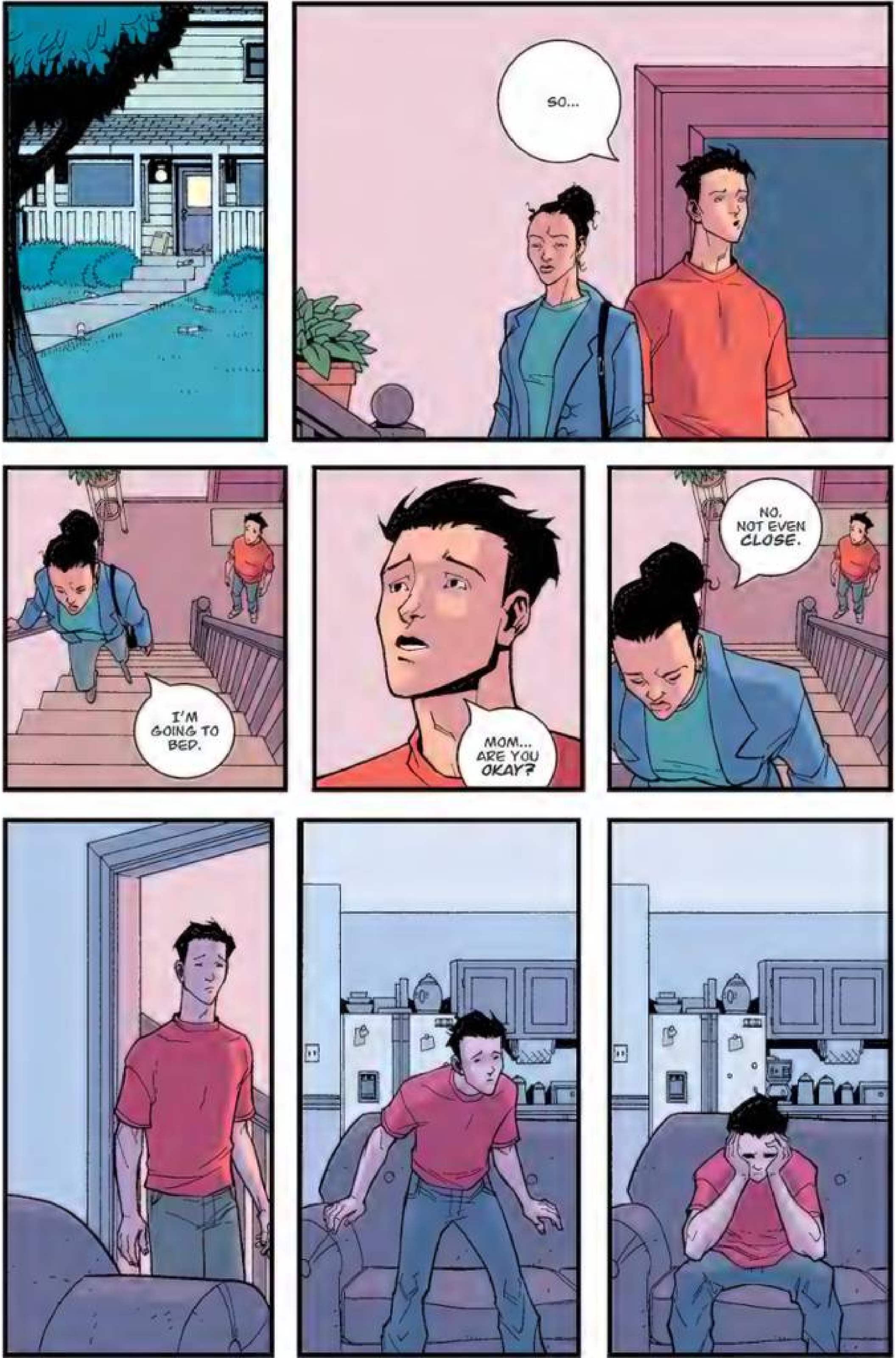

AS I WAS *SAYING*, WE HAVE THE WHOLE CONVERSATION ON TAPE. WE LET YOUR *MOTHER* LISTEN TO IT... TO SAVE *YOU* THE TROUBLE OF HAVING TO *EXPLAIN* THIS WHOLE ORDEAL.
SHE WAS PRETTY *UPSET* BUT I THINK IT WILL BE *GOOD* FOR HER IN THE LONG RUN TO HAVE HEARD *EVERYTHING* YOUR FATHER SAID.
YOU DID *WHAT?!*
SHE HEARD *EVERYTHING* HE SAID? HOW COULD YOU *DO* THAT TO HER?!
SOME OF THE THINGS HE *SAID*... I CAN'T BEAR THE *THOUGHT* OF HER *EVER* HEARING THEM. WHAT THE *HELL* WERE YOU THINKING?
IT WAS THE BEST WAY. TRUST ME. WHAT WOULD *YOU* HAVE TOLD HER HAD HAPPENED? HIS REASONS... HIS MOTIVES?
DON'T YOU THINK SHE *DESERVES* TO KNOW THE TRUTH?
YEAH, BUT--
I DID THE RIGHT THING. IF YOU HAD SUGAR COATED THE WHOLE SITUATION MAYBE SHE WOULD BE SITTING AT *HOME* WAITING FOR HIM TO COME BACK INSTEAD OF *DEALING* WITH THE SERIOUSNESS OF IT ALL.
I SUPPOSE YOU'RE RIGHT.
WAIT A MINUTE... WHERE *ARE* WE?
OH, SORRY.
LIGHTS.

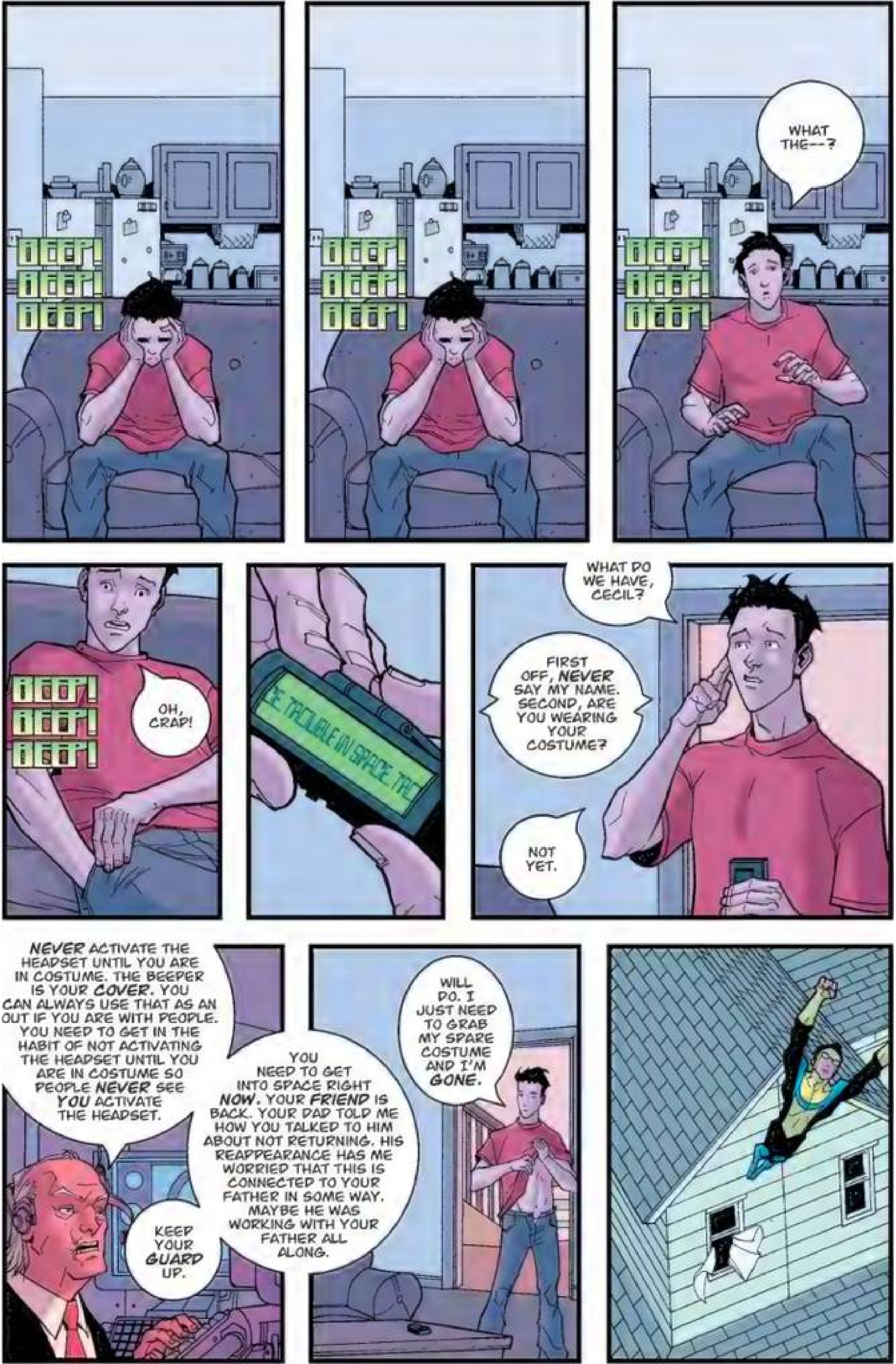

OKAY, THAT'S ENOUGH.
LIGHTS.
WHAT? WHAT IN THE WORLD JUST HAPPENED?
WHERE DID ALL THAT GO?
IT'S STILL HERE. IT HASN'T MOVED. THE WATER AMERICA DRINKS SO CONVENIENTLY FROM THEIR TAP IS LACED WITH A CHEMICAL THAT INHIBITS THE EYE'S ABILITY TO SEE CERTAIN FREQUENCIES OF LIGHT.
THOSE FREQUENCIES ARE USED IN THIS ROOM.
SO IT'S ALL JUST INVISIBLE?
YES. YOU AND EVERYONE ELSE IN AMERICA DON'T HAVE THE ABILITY TO SEE THINGS IN THIS ROOM, AND ELSEWHERE. YOU'D BE SURPRISED HOW OFTEN THIS IS USED.
OKAY... WHERE WAS I? OH YEAH... YOUR MOTHER KNOWS. I'VE ALSO TAKEN CARE OF YOUR FAMILY FINANCES SO YOU WON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT AN INCOME. YOUR COLLEGE TOO WILL BE PAID FOR. I'VE PULLED SOME STRINGS. YOU GOT A FULL SCHOLARSHIP TO UPSTATE UNIVERSITY LAST WEEK.
SWEET!
AREN'T YOU THE LEAST BIT CONCERNED WITH WHAT I WILL WANT IN RETURN FOR ALL THIS? I AM PART OF THE BIG SCARY GOVERNMENT, AFTER ALL.
CRAP.
I KNEW THERE'D BE A CATCH.
DON'T WORRY... IT'S NOT THAT BAD.
YOUR FATHER IS GONE. WE MONITORED HIM ON OUR SENSORS ALL THE WAY PAST OUR RANGE. HE DIDN'T CHANGE TRAJECTORIES AT ALL. HE WAS GOING SOMEWHERE. HE IS NOT IN OUR SOLAR SYSTEM ANYMORE.

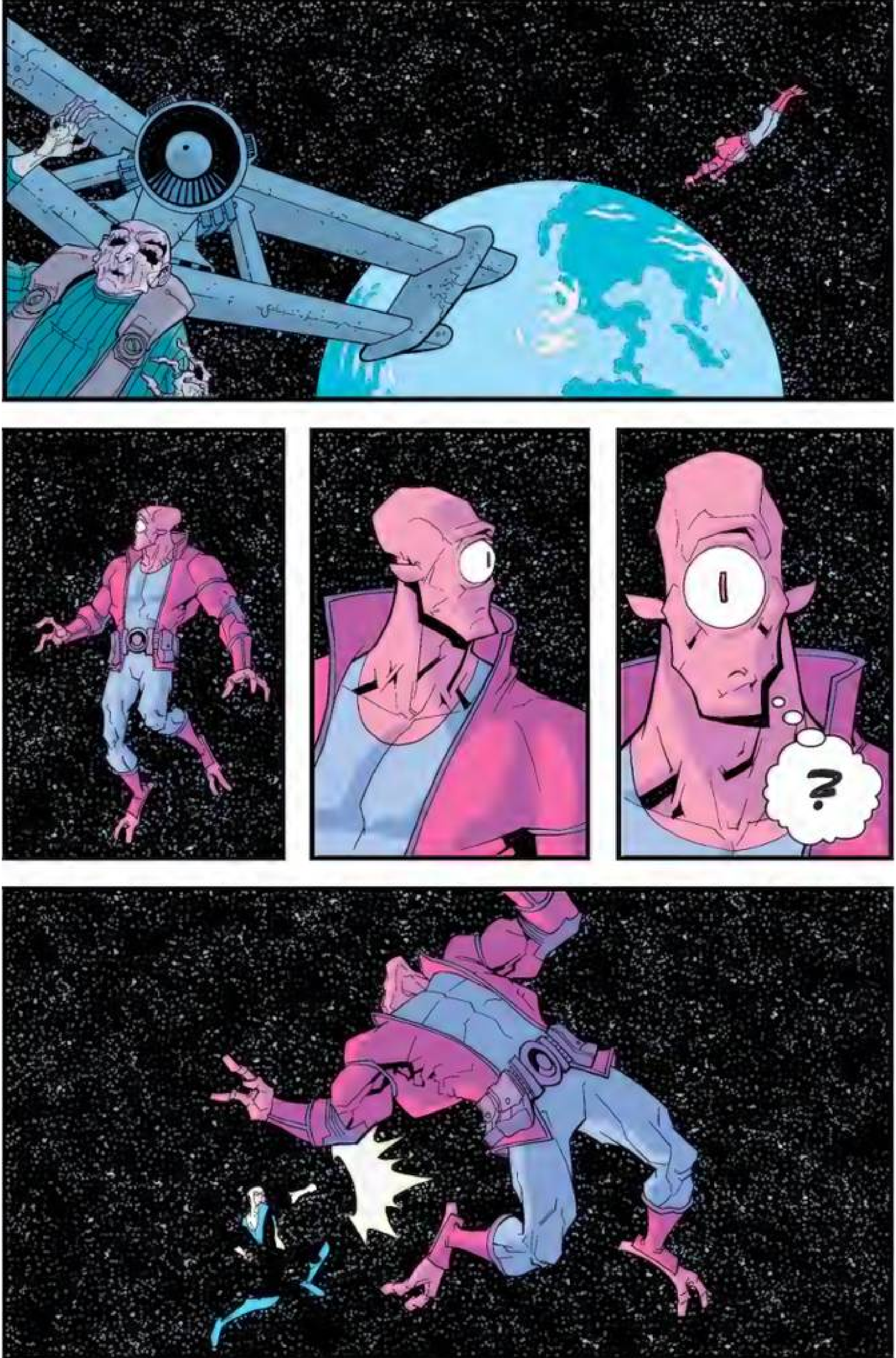

I TURNED THE LIGHTS OFF FOR A SECOND JUST SO YOU COULD SEE WHAT I'M TALKING ABOUT. I HOPE YOU DIDN'T SEE TOO MUCH... IF YOU DID... I'LL HAVE TO KILL YOU.
HAH HAH! VERY FUNNY.
AN OLDIE BUT A GOODIE.
SO IF IT'S THE LIGHT IN THE ROOM THAT'S MAKING ME UNABLE TO SEE ANYTHING, HOW COME I CAN SEE MYSELF... AND YOU?
THAT'S... COMPLICATED.
WE DIDN'T WANT YOU TO BE TOO ALARMED WHEN YOU CAME IN... IT WAS IMPORTANT THAT YOU AT LEAST SEE SOMETHING.
EXPLAINING THAT WOULD BE A WASTE OF TIME... A LOT OF TIME.
WE HAVE PROOF THAT THERE ARE OTHER PLANETS CAPABLE OF SUPPORTING LIFE. KNOWING HOW LONG HE CAN HOLD HIS BREATH AND HOW FAST HE CAN FLY... IT IS NOT UNREASONABLE TO ASSUME YOUR FATHER COULD MAKE IT TO ONE OF THESE PLANETS.
HE WAS NOT COMMITTING SUICIDE BY FLYING INTO SPACE--THAT WAS ONE OF OUR TECHNICIANS' THEORIES--AT LEAST... WE'RE PRETTY SURE HE WASN'T.
WHAT I'M GETTING AT IS HE'S GONE. YOUR FATHER WAS VERY VALUABLE TO US... ESPECIALLY AFTER THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE WERE DEAD. HE SAVED A LOT OF LIVES AND THIS ENTIRE PLANET MORE TIMES THAN I CAN REMEMBER.
WE NEED A REPLACEMENT.

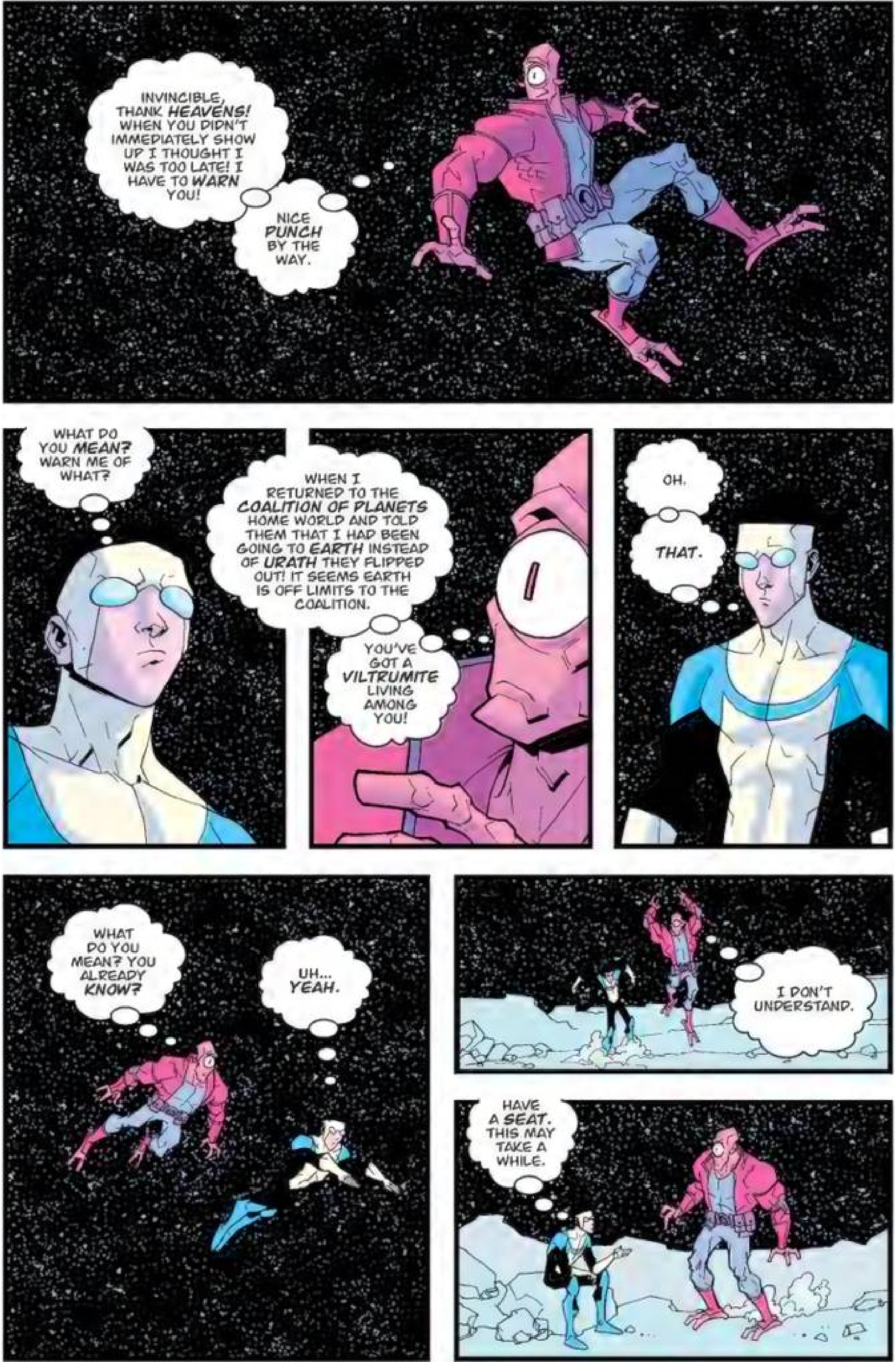

YOU MEAN *ME?*
PRETTY MUCH, *YEAH.* WE'VE BEEN KEEPING AN EYE ON YOU SINCE YOUR FATHER TOLD US YOU WERE DEVELOPING POWERS OF YOUR OWN. YOU'VE IMPROVED *VASTLY* IN A VERY SHORT AMOUNT OF TIME.
YOUR FATHER HIMSELF SAID THAT YOU WILL *EVENTUALLY* BE JUST AS POWERFUL AS *HIM.* WE *NEED* YOU... AND AS YOU ALREADY KNOW... WE HAVE A *LOT* TO OFFER YOU IN RETURN.
WHAT DO YOU SAY?
ALL I HAVE TO DO IS JUST BE A SUPERHERO AND ALLOW YOU TO TELL ME WHERE I NEED TO *BE* WHEN BAD STUFF HAPPENS?
AND IN RETURN YOU'LL TAKE CARE OF MY *MOM* AND I GET A *SCHOLARSHIP?*
THAT'S THE GIST OF IT, KID.
COUNT ME *IN.*
ALL RIGHT THEN. FOLLOW ME. NOW ALL WE NEED TO DO IS FIT YOU WITH AN EAR PIECE AND GET YOU A BEEPER AND YOU'LL BE READY TO GO HOME WITH YOUR MOTHER.
WELCOME ABOARD, MARK.

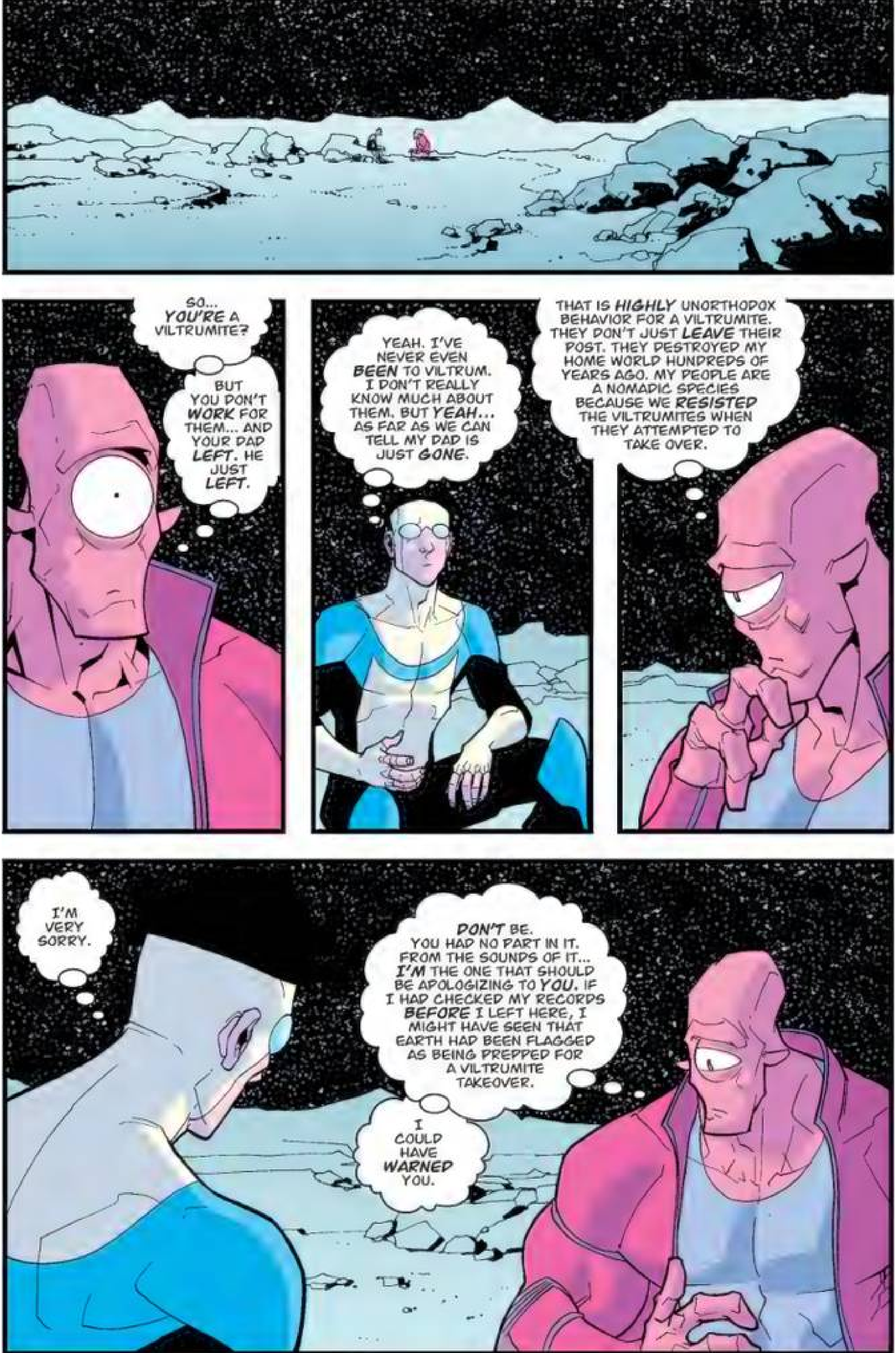

EVE?
OH, GOOD. I WAS AFRAID YOUR PARENTS WOULD ANSWER THE DOOR. I HADN'T COME UP WITH A GOOD EXCUSE FOR BEING HERE THAT DIDN'T INVOLVE OUR MUTUAL FRIEND BEING A SUPERHERO.
WHAT CAN I DO FOR YOU? DID YOU HEAR FROM MARK?
NO, BUT MY... UM... FRIEND... WORKS FOR THE GOVERNMENT, AND HE SAYS THAT HE WAS INJURED... BUT THAT THEY HAVE HIM AND HE'S HEALING UP.
HE SHOULD BE BACK SOON.
SO MARK'S FINE? GOOD. THAT'S GREAT NEWS. MAN, I WAS SO WORRIED ABOUT HIM.
ME TOO.
BUT HE'S SAFE NOW.
...
YOU WANT TO GET SOMETHING TO EAT... TO CELEBRATE?
...

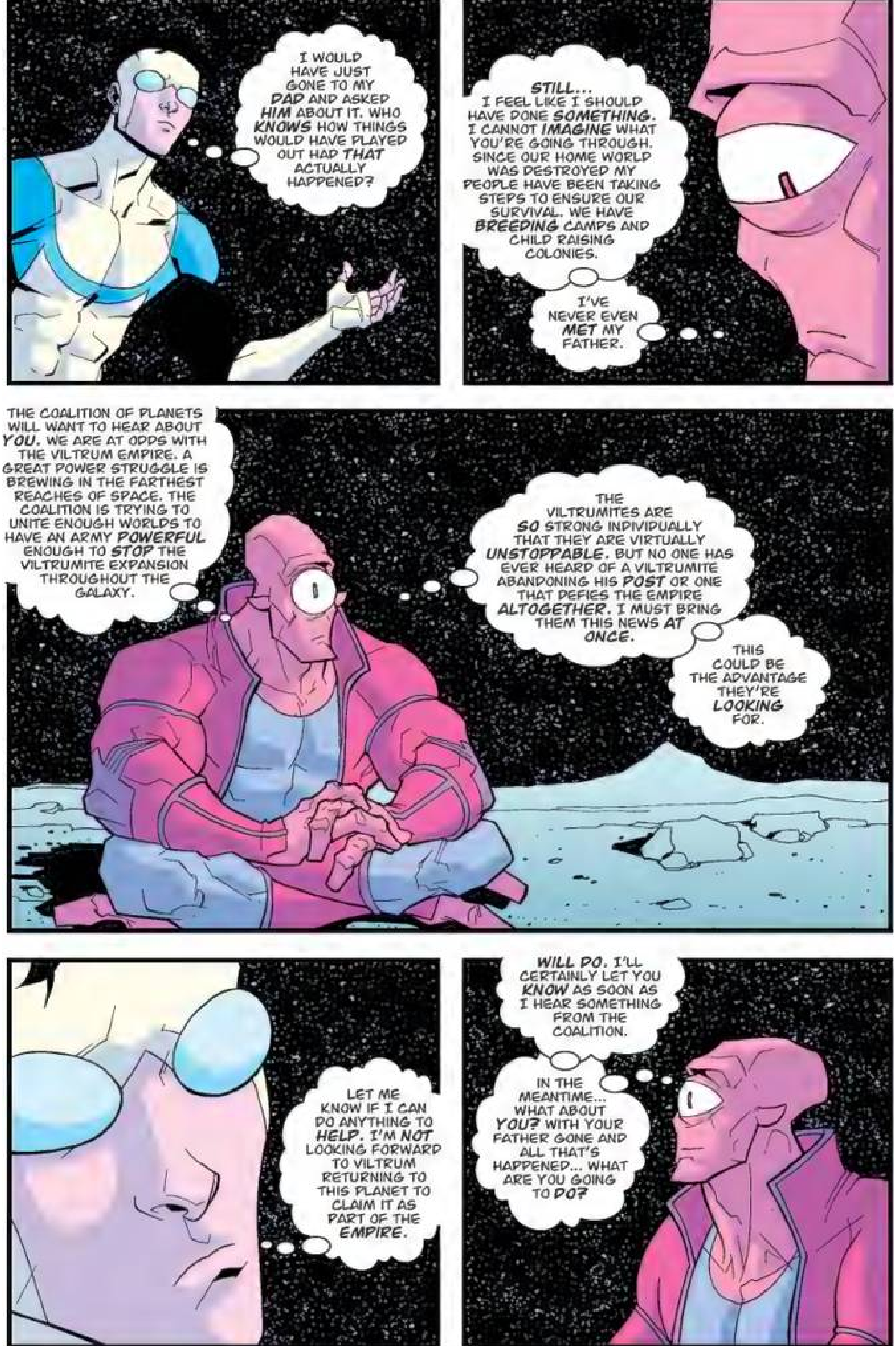

SO...
I'M GOING TO BED.
MOM... ARE YOU OKAY?
NO. NOT EVEN CLOSE.

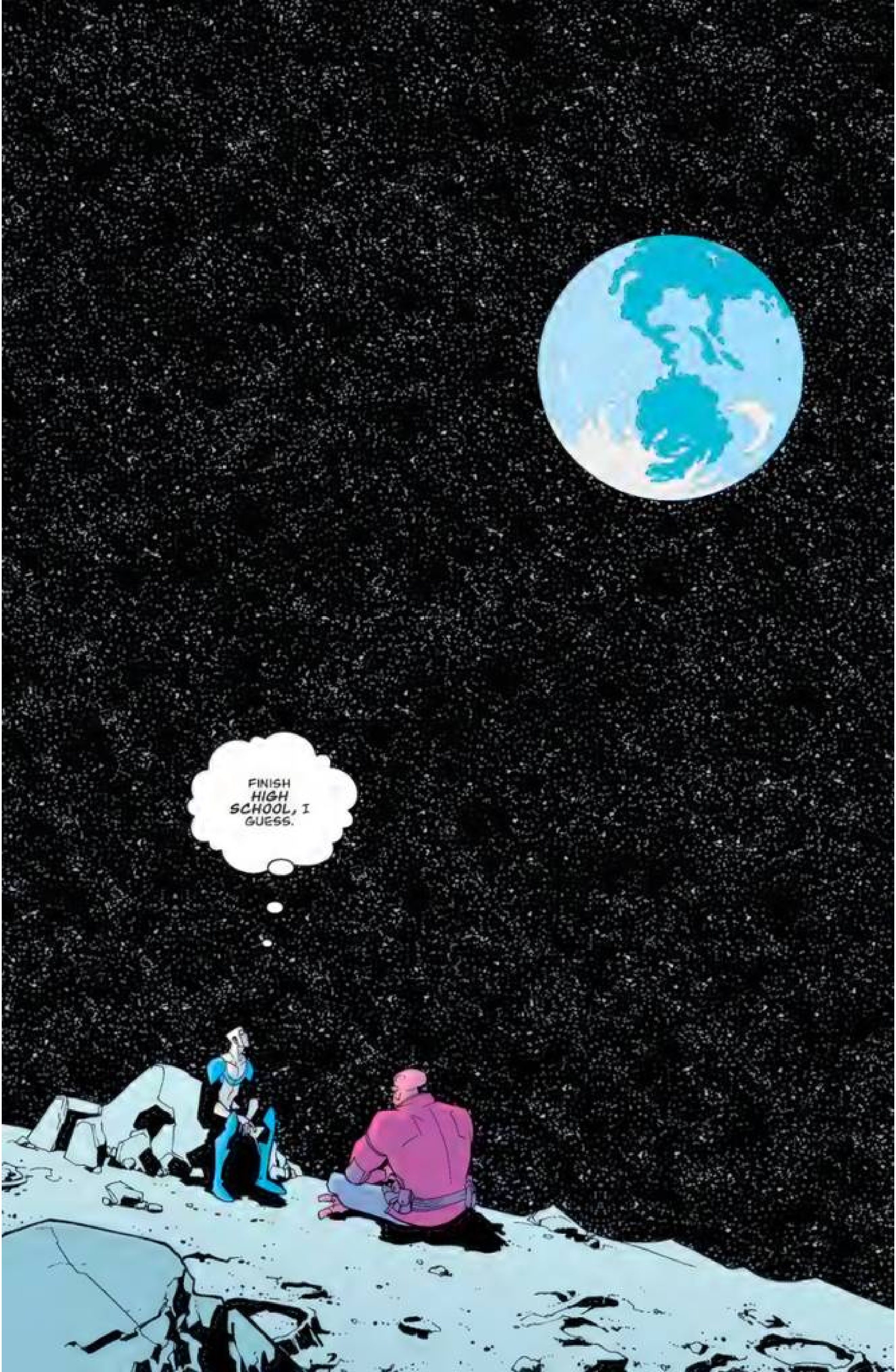

BEEP! BEEP! BEEP!
BEEP! BEEP! BEEP!
BEEP! BEEP! BEEP!
WHAT THE--?
BEEP! BEEP! BEEP!
OH, CRAP!
E TROUBLE IN SPACE TRO
WHAT DO WE HAVE, CECIL?
FIRST OFF, NEVER SAY MY NAME. SECOND, ARE YOU WEARING YOUR COSTUME?
NOT YET.
NEVER ACTIVATE THE HEADSET UNTIL YOU ARE IN COSTUME. THE BEEPER IS YOUR COVER. YOU CAN ALWAYS USE THAT AS AN OUT IF YOU ARE WITH PEOPLE. YOU NEED TO GET IN THE HABIT OF NOT ACTIVATING THE HEADSET UNTIL YOU ARE IN COSTUME SO PEOPLE NEVER SEE YOU ACTIVATE THE HEADSET.
KEEP YOUR GUARD UP.
YOU NEED TO GET INTO SPACE RIGHT NOW. YOUR FRIEND IS BACK. YOUR DAD TOLD ME HOW YOU TALKED TO HIM ABOUT NOT RETURNING. HIS REAPPEARANCE HAS ME WORRIED THAT THIS IS CONNECTED TO YOUR FATHER IN SOME WAY. MAYBE HE WAS WORKING WITH YOUR FATHER ALL ALONG.
WILL DO. I JUST NEED TO GRAB MY SPARE COSTUME AND I'M GONE.



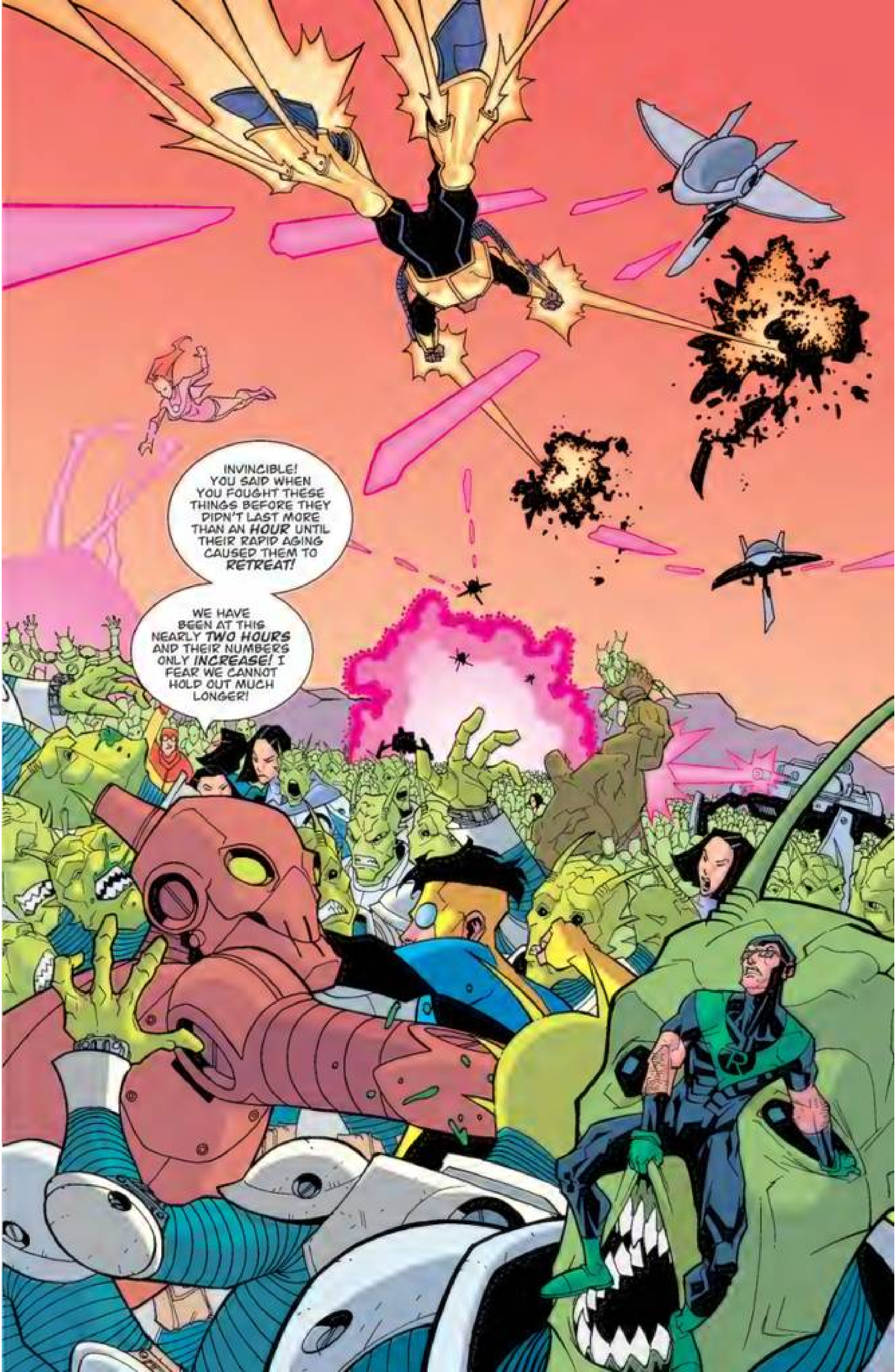

INVINCIBLE, THANK HEAVENS! WHEN YOU DIDN'T IMMEDIATELY SHOW UP I THOUGHT I WAS TOO LATE! I HAVE TO WARN YOU!
NICE PUNCH BY THE WAY.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN? WARN ME OF WHAT?
WHEN I RETURNED TO THE COALITION OF PLANETS HOME WORLD AND TOLD THEM THAT I HAD BEEN GOING TO EARTH INSTEAD OF URATH THEY FLIPPED OUT! IT SEEMS EARTH IS OFF LIMITS TO THE COALITION.
YOU'VE GOT A VILTRUMITE LIVING AMONG YOU!
OH.
THAT.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN? YOU ALREADY KNOW?
UH... YEAH.
I DON'T UNDERSTAND.
HAVE A SEAT. THIS MAY TAKE A WHILE.

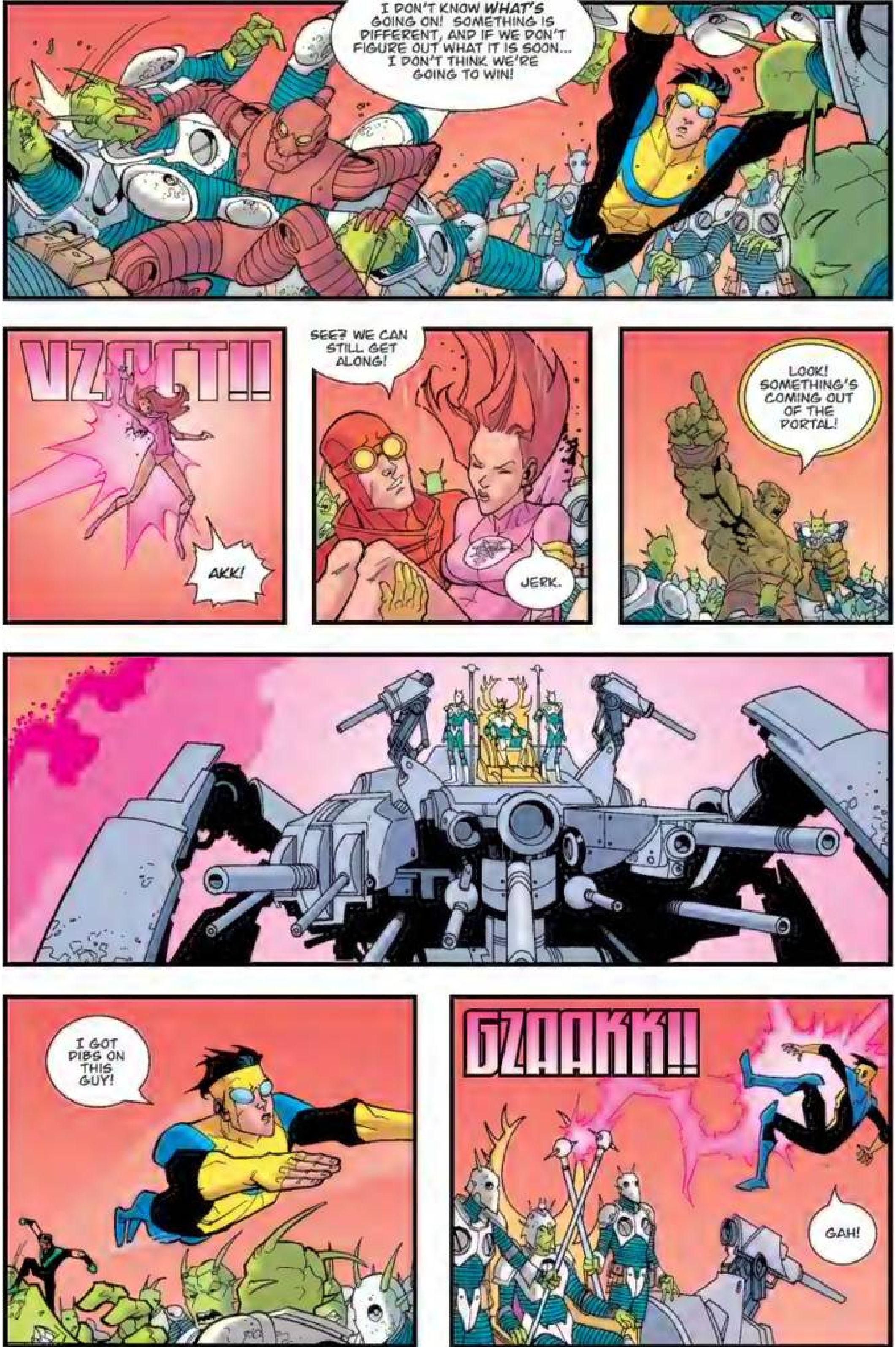

SO... YOU'RE A VILTRUMITE?
BUT YOU DON'T WORK FOR THEM... AND YOUR DAD LEFT. HE JUST LEFT.
YEAH. I'VE NEVER EVEN BEEN TO VILTRUM. I DON'T REALLY KNOW MUCH ABOUT THEM. BUT YEAH... AS FAR AS WE CAN TELL MY DAD IS JUST GONE.
THAT IS HIGHLY UNORTHODOX BEHAVIOR FOR A VILTRUMITE. THEY DON'T JUST LEAVE THEIR POST. THEY DESTROYED MY HOME WORLD HUNDREDS OF YEARS AGO. MY PEOPLE ARE A NOMADIC SPECIES BECAUSE WE RESISTED THE VILTRUMITES WHEN THEY ATTEMPTED TO TAKE OVER.
I'M VERY SORRY.
DON'T BE. YOU HAD NO PART IN IT. FROM THE SOUNDS OF IT... I'M THE ONE THAT SHOULD BE APOLOGIZING TO YOU. IF I HAD CHECKED MY RECORDS BEFORE I LEFT HERE, I MIGHT HAVE SEEN THAT EARTH HAD BEEN FLAGGED AS BEING PREPPED FOR A VILTRUMITE TAKEOVER.
I COULD HAVE WARNED YOU.

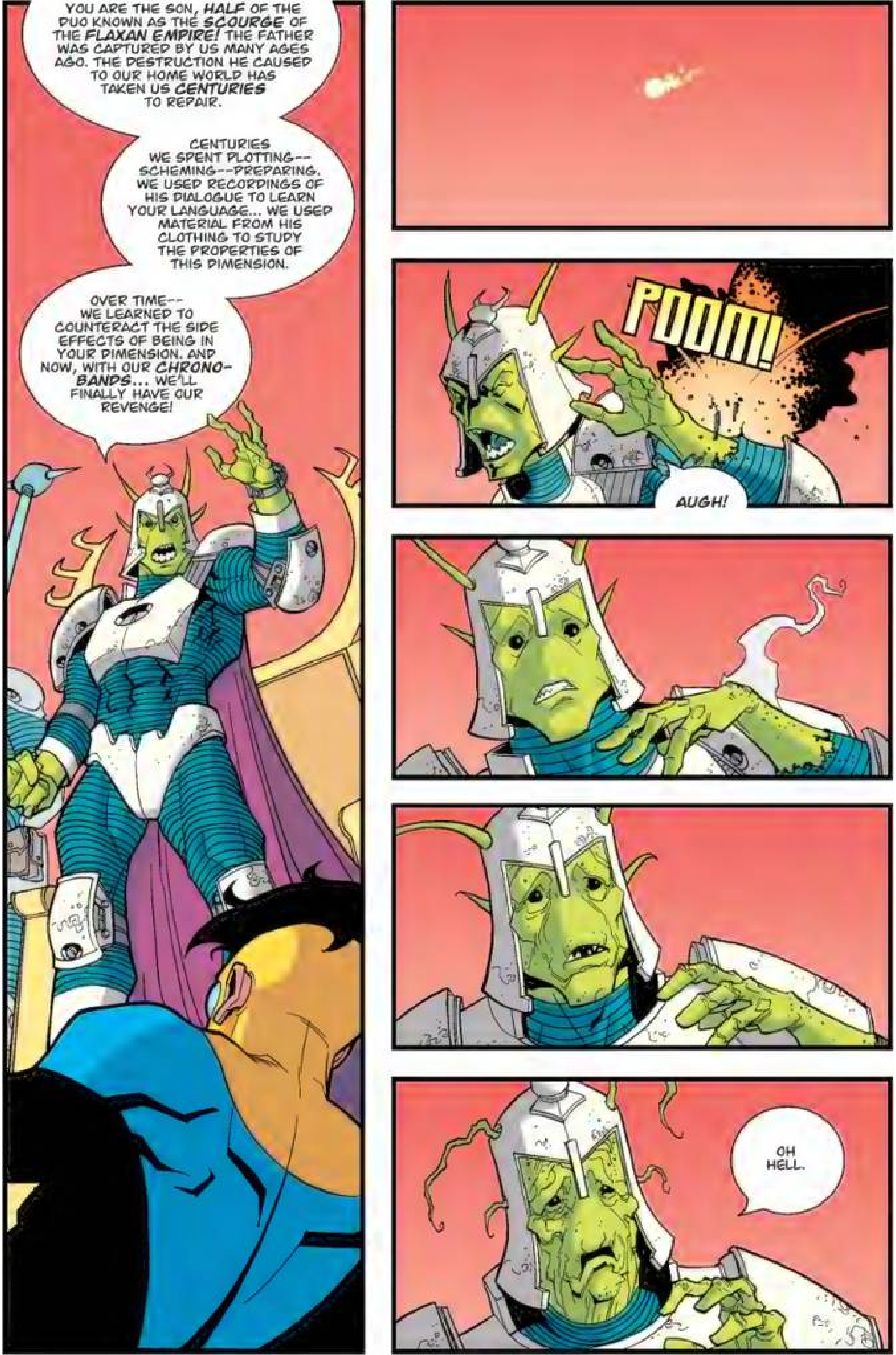

I WOULD HAVE JUST GONE TO MY **DAD** AND ASKED **HIM** ABOUT IT. WHO **KNOWS** HOW THINGS WOULD HAVE PLAYED OUT HAD **THAT** ACTUALLY HAPPENED?
STILL... I FEEL LIKE I SHOULD HAVE DONE **SOMETHING.** I CANNOT **IMAGINE** WHAT YOU'RE GOING THROUGH. SINCE OUR HOME WORLD WAS DESTROYED MY PEOPLE HAVE BEEN TAKING STEPS TO ENSURE OUR SURVIVAL. WE HAVE **BREEDING** CAMPS AND CHILD RAISING COLONIES.
I'VE NEVER EVEN **MET** MY FATHER.
THE COALITION OF PLANETS WILL WANT TO HEAR ABOUT **YOU.** WE ARE AT ODDS WITH THE VILTRUM EMPIRE. A GREAT POWER STRUGGLE IS BREWING IN THE FARTHEST REACHES OF SPACE. THE COALITION IS TRYING TO UNITE ENOUGH WORLDS TO HAVE AN ARMY **POWERFUL** ENOUGH TO **STOP** THE VILTRUMITE EXPANSION THROUGHOUT THE GALAXY.
THE VILTRUMITES ARE **SO** STRONG INDIVIDUALLY THAT THEY ARE VIRTUALLY **UNSTOPPABLE.** BUT NO ONE HAS EVER HEARD OF A VILTRUMITE ABANDONING HIS **POST** OR ONE THAT DEFIES THE EMPIRE **ALTOGETHER.** I MUST BRING THEM THIS NEWS **AT ONCE.**
THIS COULD BE THE ADVANTAGE THEY'RE **LOOKING** FOR.
LET ME KNOW IF I CAN DO ANYTHING TO **HELP.** I'M **NOT** LOOKING FORWARD TO VILTRUM RETURNING TO THIS PLANET TO CLAIM IT AS PART OF THE **EMPIRE.**
WILL DO. I'LL CERTAINLY LET YOU **KNOW** AS SOON AS I HEAR SOMETHING FROM THE COALITION.
IN THE MEANTIME... WHAT ABOUT **YOU?** WITH YOUR FATHER GONE AND ALL THAT'S HAPPENED... WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO **DO?**

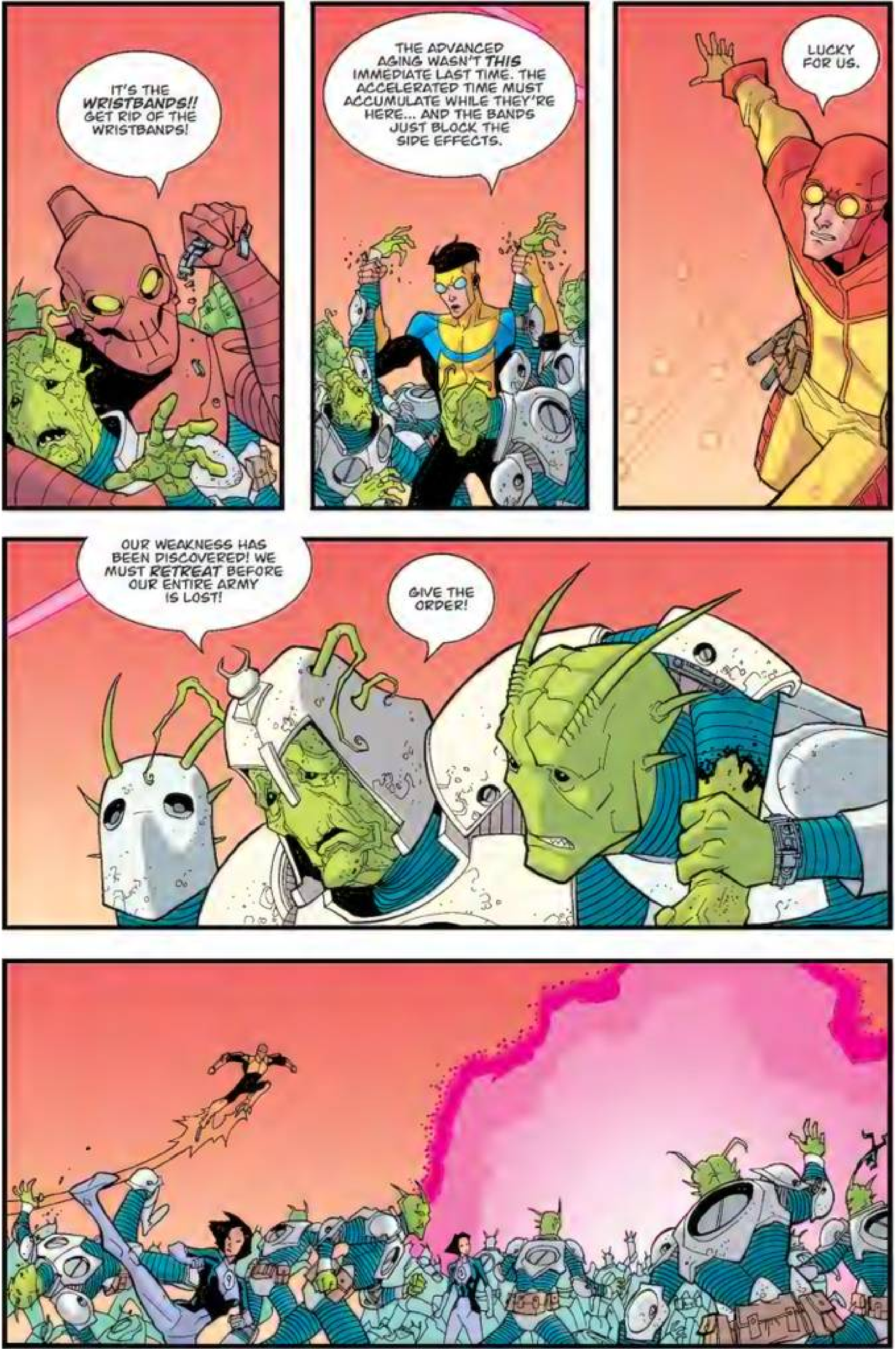

FINISH HIGH SCHOOL, I GUESS.

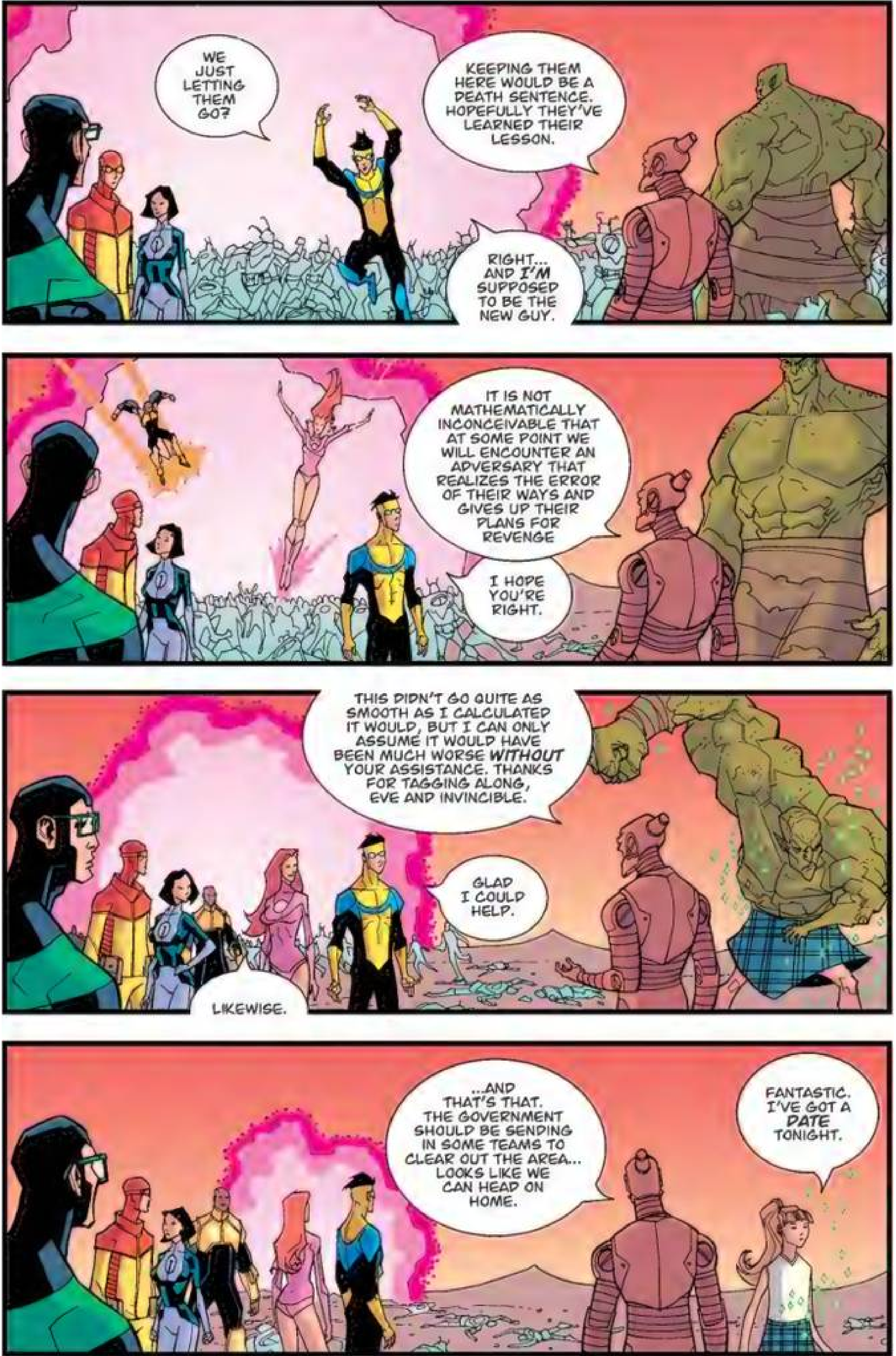
ISSUE FOURTEEN

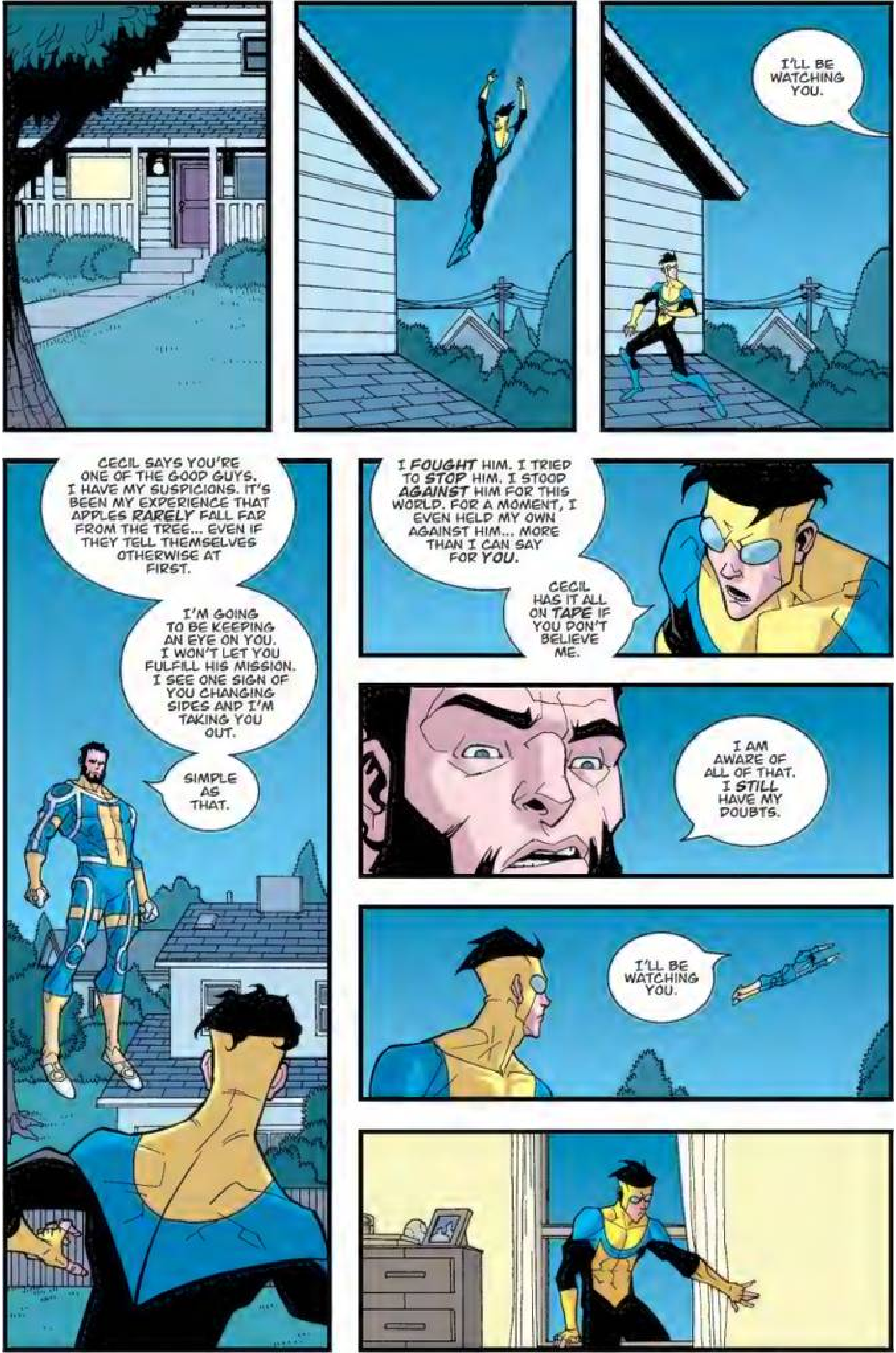

INVINCIBLE! YOU SAID WHEN YOU FOUGHT THESE THINGS BEFORE THEY DIDN'T LAST MORE THAN AN *HOUR* UNTIL THEIR RAPID AGING CAUSED THEM TO *RETREAT!*
WE HAVE BEEN AT THIS NEARLY *TWO HOURS* AND THEIR NUMBERS ONLY *INCREASE!* I FEAR WE CANNOT HOLD OUT MUCH LONGER!

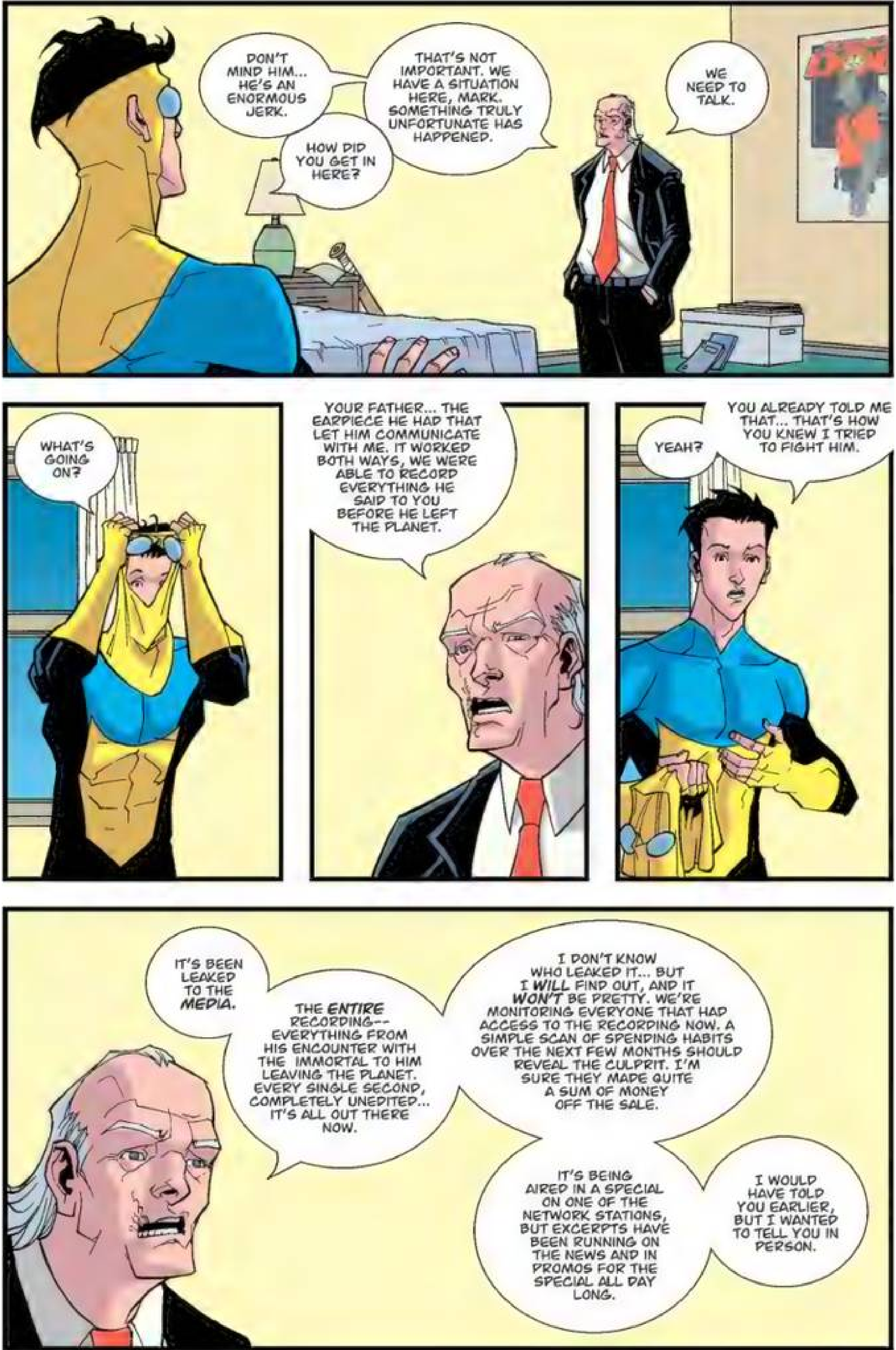

I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON! SOMETHING IS DIFFERENT, AND IF WE DON'T FIGURE OUT WHAT IT IS SOON... I DON'T THINK WE'RE GOING TO WIN!
VZACT!!
AKK!
SEE? WE CAN STILL GET ALONG!
JERK.
LOOK! SOMETHING'S COMING OUT OF THE PORTAL!
I GOT DIBS ON THIS GUY!
GZAAKK!!
GAH!

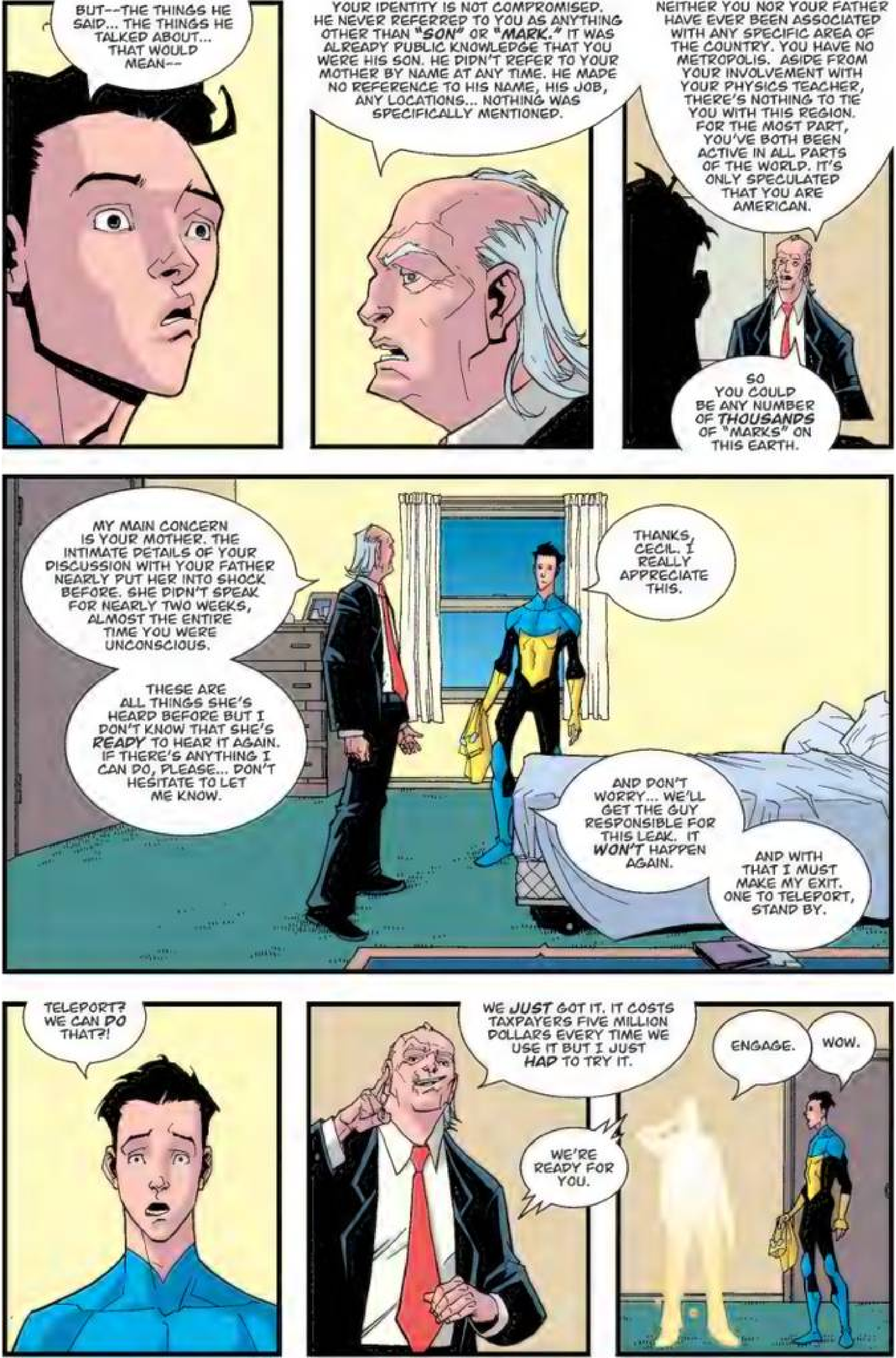

YOU ARE THE SON, HALF OF THE DUO KNOWN AS THE SCOURGE OF THE FLAXAN EMPIRE! THE FATHER WAS CAPTURED BY US MANY AGES AGO. THE DESTRUCTION HE CAUSED TO OUR HOME WORLD HAS TAKEN US CENTURIES TO REPAIR.
CENTURIES WE SPENT PLOTTING-- SCHEMING--PREPARING. WE USED RECORDINGS OF HIS DIALOGUE TO LEARN YOUR LANGUAGE... WE USED MATERIAL FROM HIS CLOTHING TO STUDY THE PROPERTIES OF THIS DIMENSION.
OVER TIME-- WE LEARNED TO COUNTERACT THE SIDE EFFECTS OF BEING IN YOUR DIMENSION. AND NOW, WITH OUR CHRONO-BANDS... WE'LL FINALLY HAVE OUR REVENGE!
POOM!
AUGH!
OH HELL.

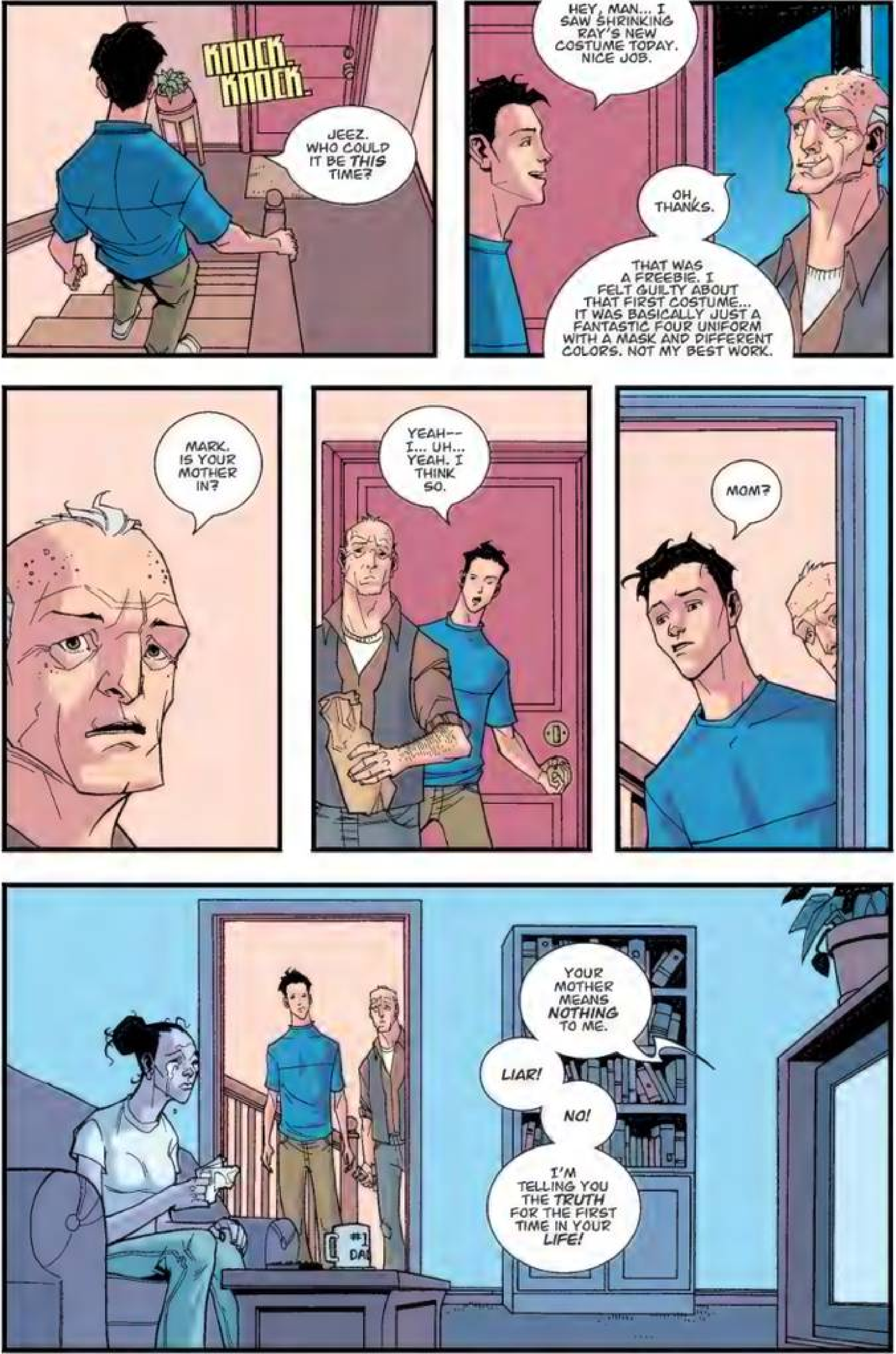

IT'S THE *WRISTBANDS!!* GET RID OF THE WRISTBANDS!
THE ADVANCED AGING WASN'T *THIS* IMMEDIATE LAST TIME. THE ACCELERATED TIME MUST ACCUMULATE WHILE THEY'RE HERE... AND THE BANDS JUST BLOCK THE SIDE EFFECTS.
LUCKY FOR US.
OUR WEAKNESS HAS BEEN DISCOVERED! WE MUST *RETREAT* BEFORE OUR ENTIRE ARMY IS LOST!
GIVE THE ORDER!

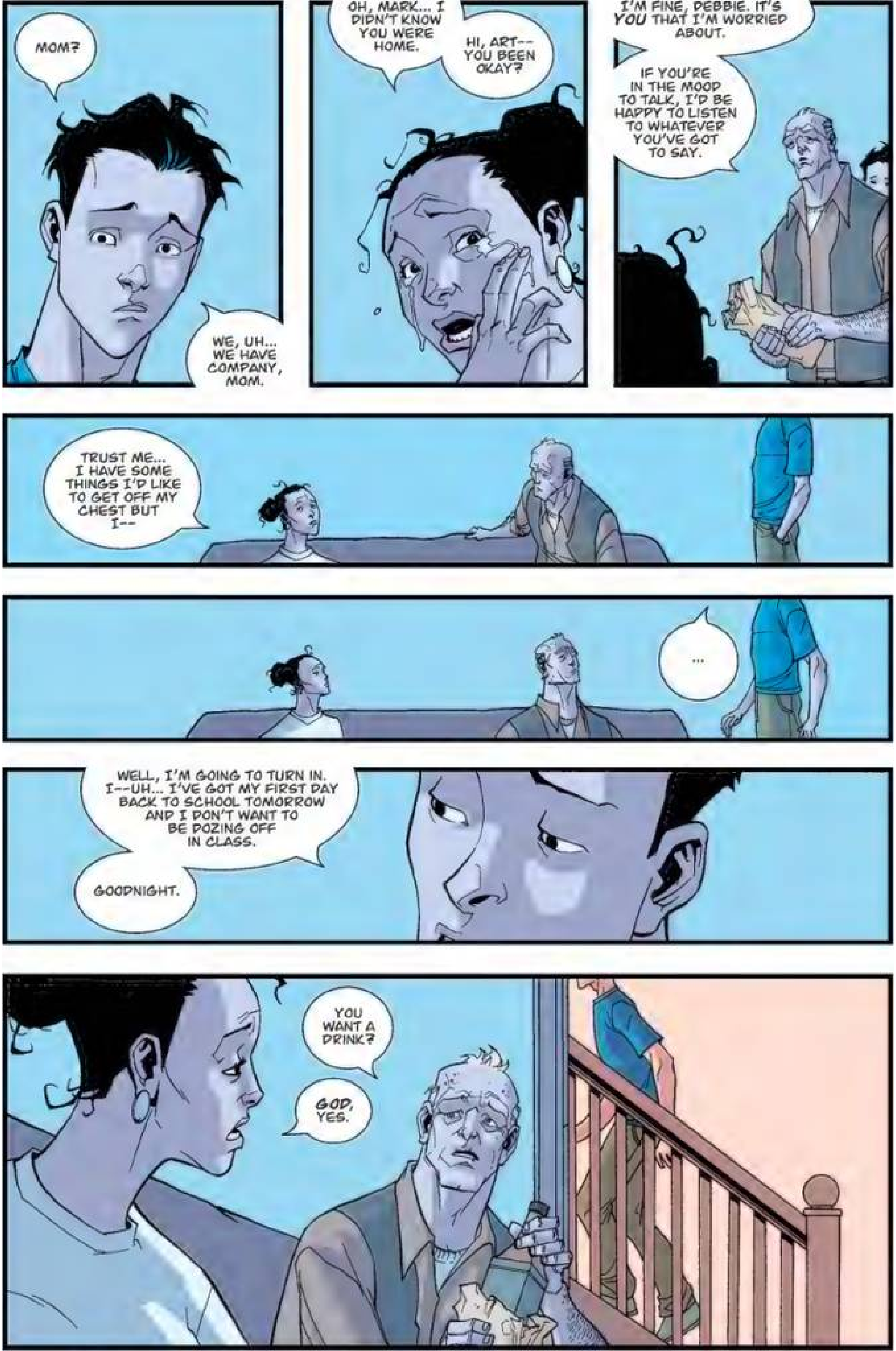

WE JUST LETTING THEM GO?
KEEPING THEM HERE WOULD BE A DEATH SENTENCE. HOPEFULLY THEY'VE LEARNED THEIR LESSON.
RIGHT... AND *I'M* SUPPOSED TO BE THE NEW GUY.
IT IS NOT MATHEMATICALLY INCONCEIVABLE THAT AT SOME POINT WE WILL ENCOUNTER AN ADVERSARY THAT REALIZES THE ERROR OF THEIR WAYS AND GIVES UP THEIR PLANS FOR REVENGE
I HOPE YOU'RE RIGHT.
THIS DIDN'T GO QUITE AS SMOOTH AS I CALCULATED IT WOULD, BUT I CAN ONLY ASSUME IT WOULD HAVE BEEN MUCH WORSE *WITHOUT* YOUR ASSISTANCE. THANKS FOR TAGGING ALONG, EVE AND INVINCIBLE.
GLAD I COULD HELP.
LIKEWISE.
...AND THAT'S THAT. THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD BE SENDING IN SOME TEAMS TO CLEAR OUT THE AREA... LOOKS LIKE WE CAN HEAD ON HOME.
FANTASTIC. I'VE GOT A *DATE* TONIGHT.

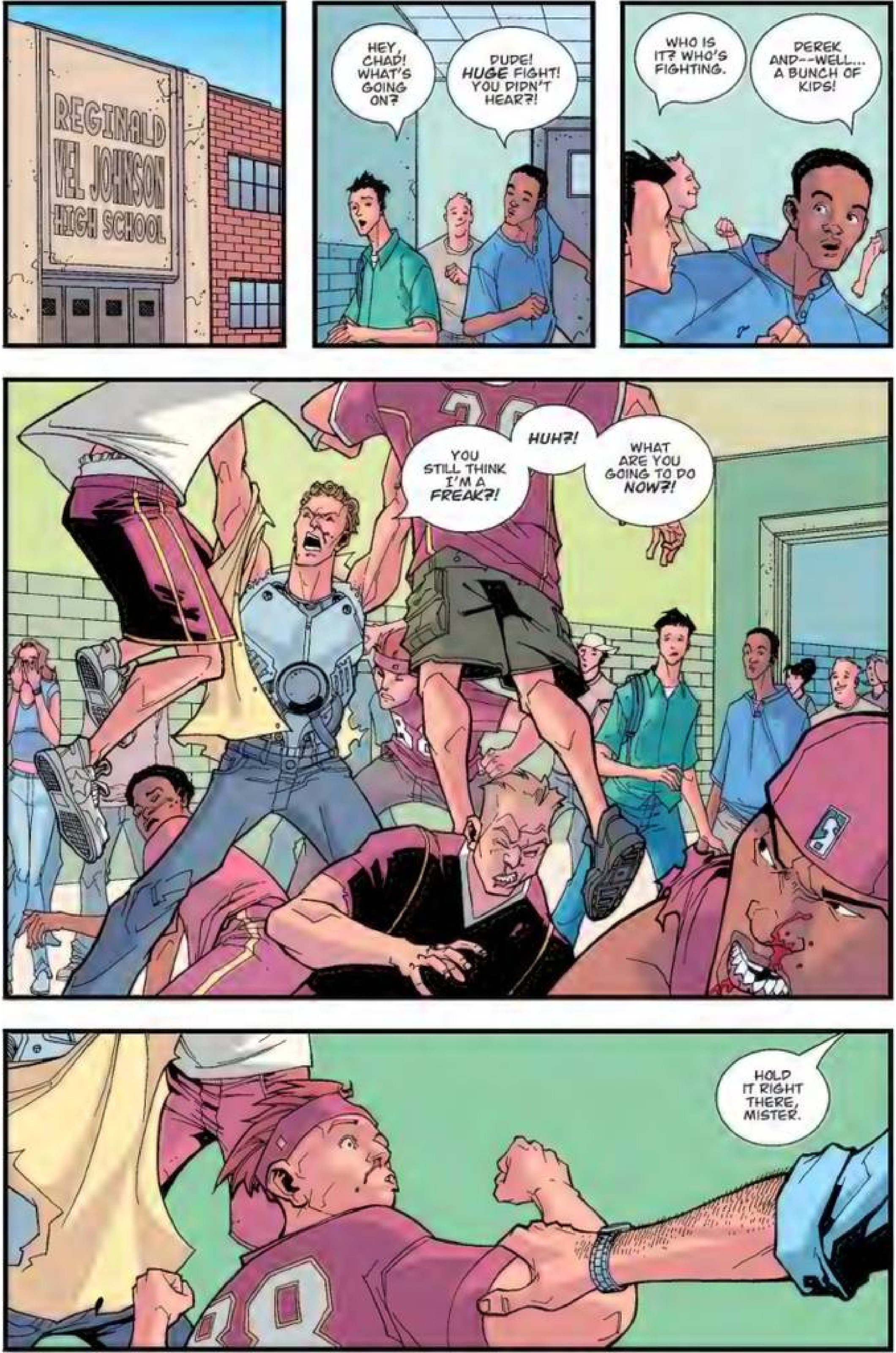

I'LL BE WATCHING YOU.
CECIL SAYS YOU'RE ONE OF THE GOOD GUYS. I HAVE MY SUSPICIONS. IT'S BEEN MY EXPERIENCE THAT APPLES **RARELY** FALL FAR FROM THE TREE... EVEN IF THEY TELL THEMSELVES OTHERWISE AT FIRST.
I'M GOING TO BE KEEPING AN EYE ON YOU. I WON'T LET YOU FULFILL HIS MISSION. I SEE ONE SIGN OF YOU CHANGING SIDES AND I'M TAKING YOU OUT.
SIMPLE AS THAT.
I **FOUGHT** HIM. I TRIED TO **STOP** HIM. I STOOD **AGAINST** HIM FOR THIS WORLD. FOR A MOMENT, I EVEN HELD MY OWN AGAINST HIM... MORE THAN I CAN SAY FOR **YOU**.
CECIL HAS IT ALL ON **TAPE** IF YOU DON'T BELIEVE ME.
I AM AWARE OF ALL OF THAT. I **STILL** HAVE MY DOUBTS.
I'LL BE WATCHING YOU.

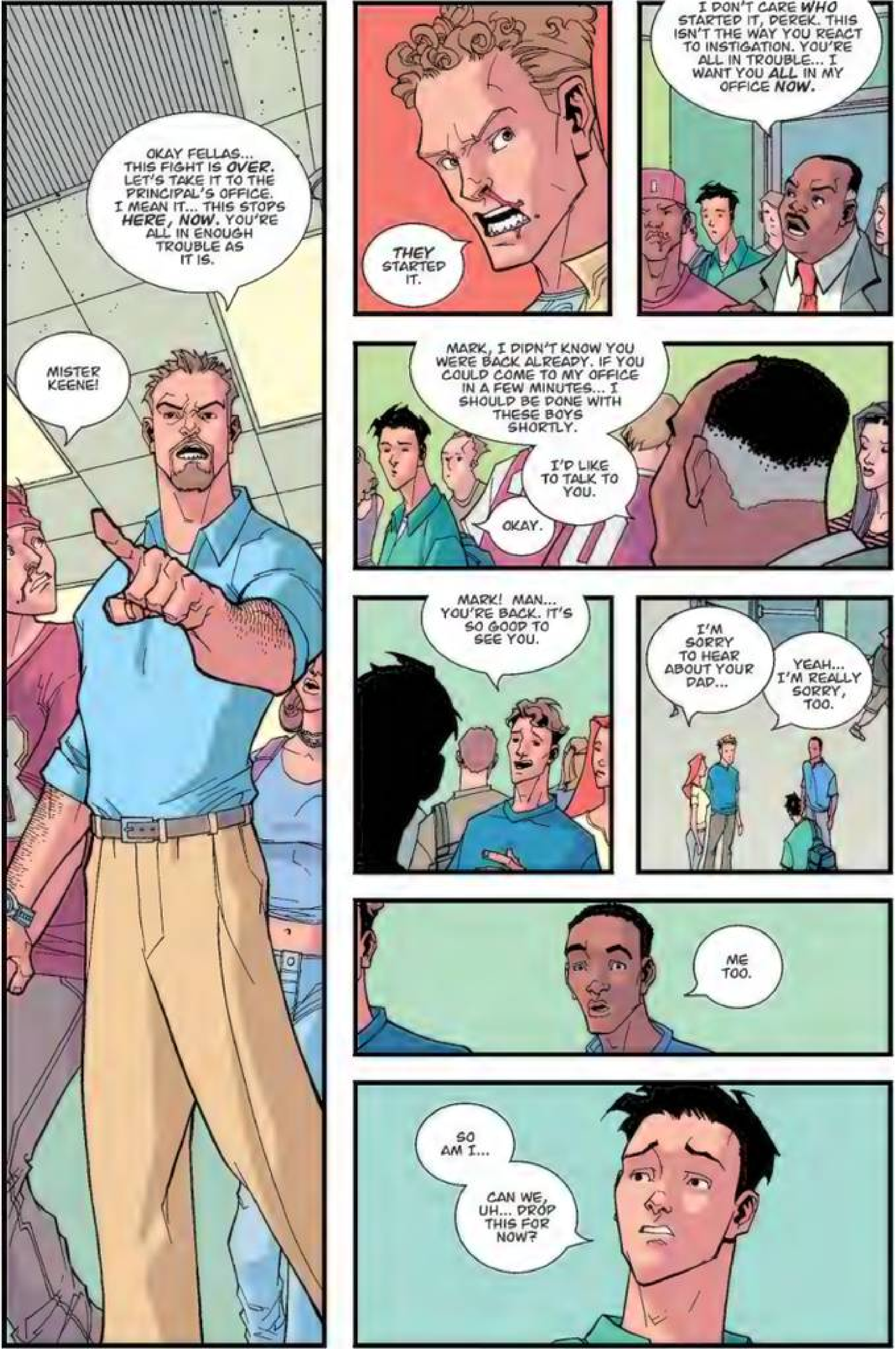

DON'T MIND HIM... HE'S AN ENORMOUS JERK.
HOW DID YOU GET IN HERE?
THAT'S NOT IMPORTANT. WE HAVE A SITUATION HERE, MARK. SOMETHING TRULY UNFORTUNATE HAS HAPPENED.
WE NEED TO TALK.
WHAT'S GOING ON?
YOUR FATHER... THE EARPIECE HE HAD THAT LET HIM COMMUNICATE WITH ME. IT WORKED BOTH WAYS, WE WERE ABLE TO RECORD EVERYTHING HE SAID TO YOU BEFORE HE LEFT THE PLANET.
YEAH?
YOU ALREADY TOLD ME THAT... THAT'S HOW YOU KNEW I TRIED TO FIGHT HIM.
IT'S BEEN LEAKED TO THE *MEDIA*.
THE *ENTIRE* RECORDING-- EVERYTHING FROM HIS ENCOUNTER WITH THE IMMORTAL TO HIM LEAVING THE PLANET. EVERY SINGLE SECOND, COMPLETELY UNEDITED... IT'S ALL OUT THERE NOW.
I DON'T KNOW WHO LEAKED IT... BUT I *WILL* FIND OUT, AND IT *WON'T* BE PRETTY. WE'RE MONITORING EVERYONE THAT HAD ACCESS TO THE RECORDING NOW. A SIMPLE SCAN OF SPENDING HABITS OVER THE NEXT FEW MONTHS SHOULD REVEAL THE CULPRIT. I'M SURE THEY MADE QUITE A SUM OF MONEY OFF THE SALE.
IT'S BEING AIRED IN A SPECIAL ON ONE OF THE NETWORK STATIONS, BUT EXCERPTS HAVE BEEN RUNNING ON THE NEWS AND IN PROMOS FOR THE SPECIAL ALL DAY LONG.
I WOULD HAVE TOLD YOU EARLIER, BUT I WANTED TO TELL YOU IN PERSON.

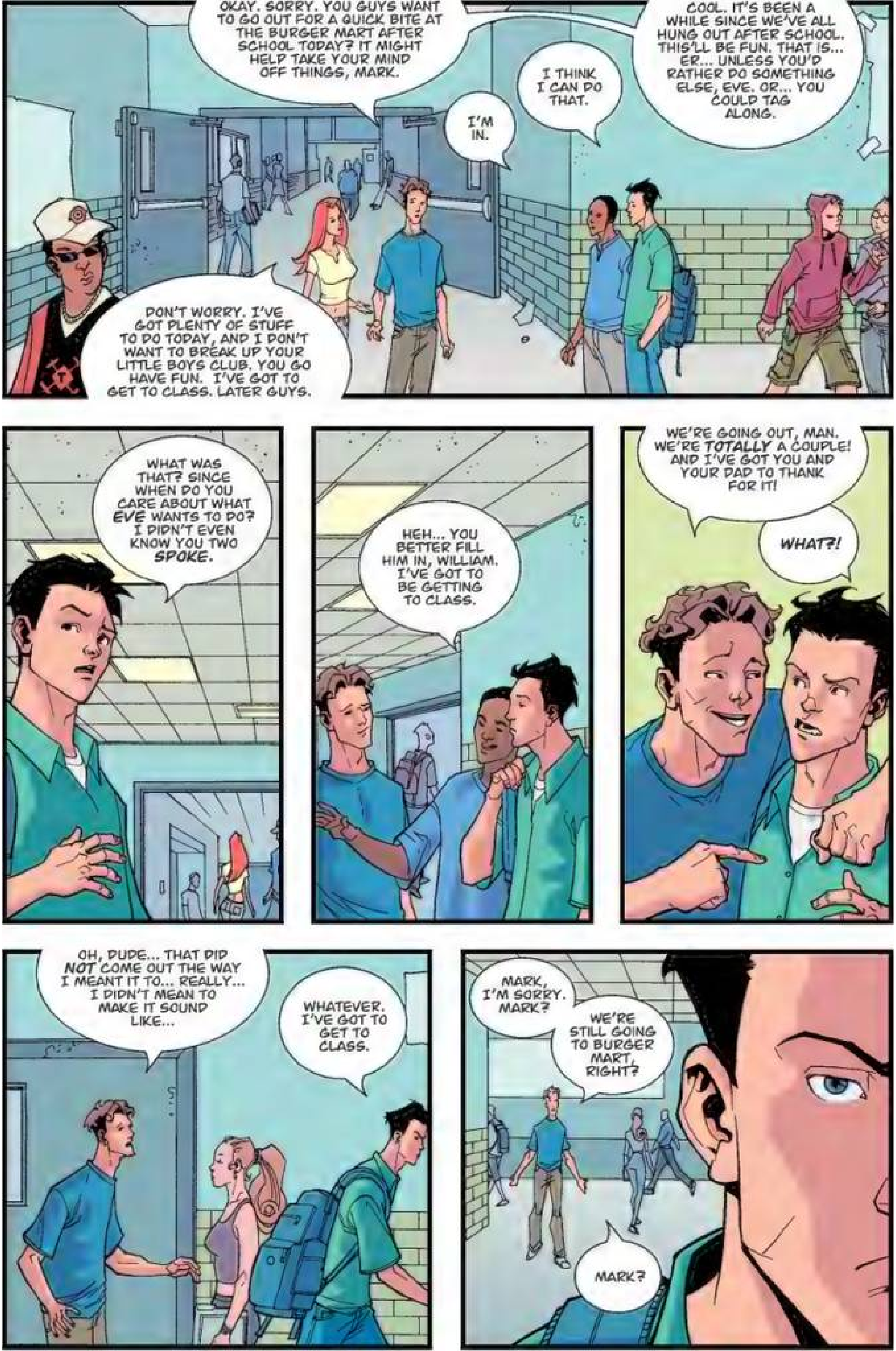

BUT--THE THINGS HE SAID... THE THINGS HE TALKED ABOUT... THAT WOULD MEAN--
YOUR IDENTITY IS NOT COMPROMISED. HE NEVER REFERRED TO YOU AS ANYTHING OTHER THAN "SON" OR "MARK." IT WAS ALREADY PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE THAT YOU WERE HIS SON. HE DIDN'T REFER TO YOUR MOTHER BY NAME AT ANY TIME. HE MADE NO REFERENCE TO HIS NAME, HIS JOB, ANY LOCATIONS... NOTHING WAS SPECIFICALLY MENTIONED.
NEITHER YOU NOR YOUR FATHER HAVE EVER BEEN ASSOCIATED WITH ANY SPECIFIC AREA OF THE COUNTRY. YOU HAVE NO METROPOLIS. ASIDE FROM YOUR INVOLVEMENT WITH YOUR PHYSICS TEACHER, THERE'S NOTHING TO TIE YOU WITH THIS REGION. FOR THE MOST PART, YOU'VE BOTH BEEN ACTIVE IN ALL PARTS OF THE WORLD. IT'S ONLY SPECULATED THAT YOU ARE AMERICAN.
SO YOU COULD BE ANY NUMBER OF THOUSANDS OF "MARKS" ON THIS EARTH.
MY MAIN CONCERN IS YOUR MOTHER. THE INTIMATE DETAILS OF YOUR DISCUSSION WITH YOUR FATHER NEARLY PUT HER INTO SHOCK BEFORE. SHE DIDN'T SPEAK FOR NEARLY TWO WEEKS, ALMOST THE ENTIRE TIME YOU WERE UNCONSCIOUS.
THESE ARE ALL THINGS SHE'S HEARD BEFORE BUT I DON'T KNOW THAT SHE'S READY TO HEAR IT AGAIN. IF THERE'S ANYTHING I CAN DO, PLEASE... DON'T HESITATE TO LET ME KNOW.
THANKS, CECIL. I REALLY APPRECIATE THIS.
AND DON'T WORRY... WE'LL GET THE GUY RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS LEAK. IT WON'T HAPPEN AGAIN.
AND WITH THAT I MUST MAKE MY EXIT. ONE TO TELEPORT, STAND BY.
TELEPORT? WE CAN DO THAT?!
WE JUST GOT IT. IT COSTS TAXPAYERS FIVE MILLION DOLLARS EVERY TIME WE USE IT BUT I JUST HAD TO TRY IT.
WE'RE READY FOR YOU.
ENGAGE.
WOW.

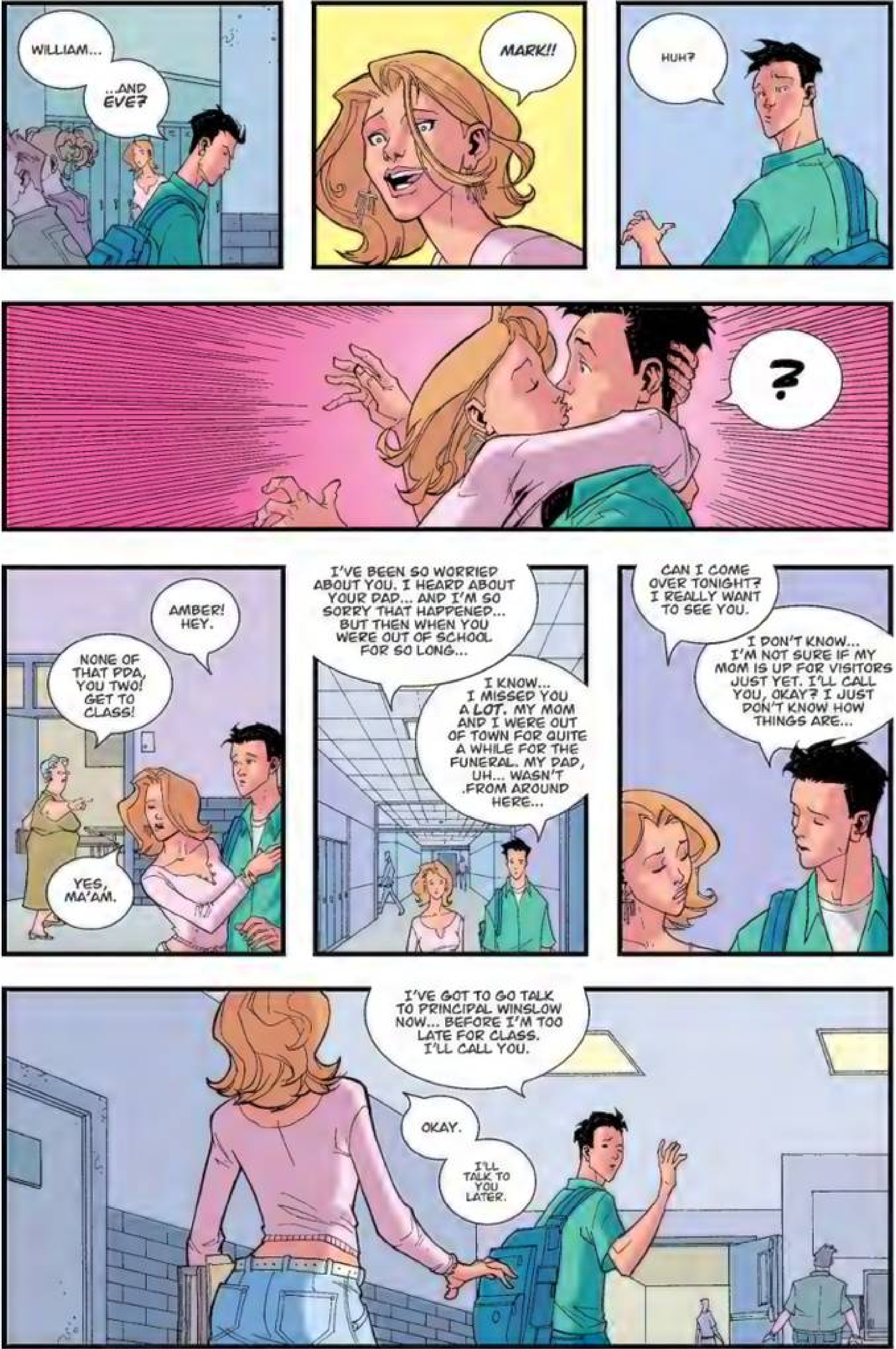

KNOCK. KNOCK.
JEEZ. WHO COULD IT BE *THIS* TIME?
HEY, MAN... I SAW SHRINKING RAY'S NEW COSTUME TODAY. NICE JOB.
OH, THANKS.
THAT WAS A FREEBIE. I FELT GUILTY ABOUT THAT FIRST COSTUME... IT WAS BASICALLY JUST A FANTASTIC FOUR UNIFORM WITH A MASK AND DIFFERENT COLORS. NOT MY BEST WORK.
MARK. IS YOUR MOTHER IN?
YEAH-- I... UH... YEAH. I THINK SO.
MOM?
#1 DA
YOUR MOTHER MEANS *NOTHING* TO ME.
LIAR!
NO!
I'M TELLING YOU THE *TRUTH* FOR THE FIRST TIME IN YOUR *LIFE!*

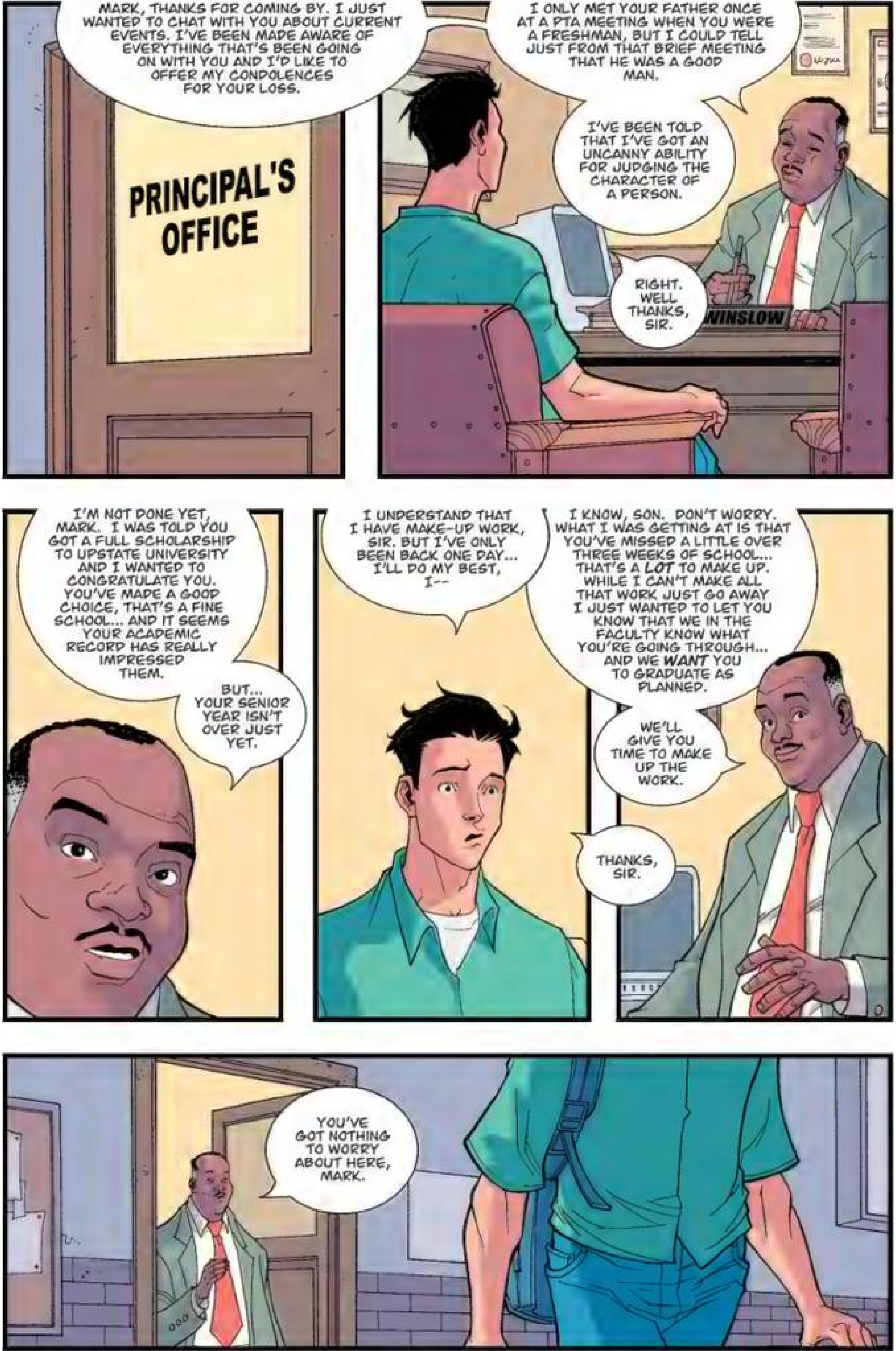

MOM?
WE, UH... WE HAVE COMPANY, MOM.
OH, MARK... I DIDN'T KNOW YOU WERE HOME.
HI, ART-- YOU BEEN OKAY?
I'M FINE, DEBBIE. IT'S YOU THAT I'M WORRIED ABOUT.
IF YOU'RE IN THE MOOD TO TALK, I'D BE HAPPY TO LISTEN TO WHATEVER YOU'VE GOT TO SAY.
TRUST ME... I HAVE SOME THINGS I'D LIKE TO GET OFF MY CHEST BUT I--
...
WELL, I'M GOING TO TURN IN. I--UH... I'VE GOT MY FIRST DAY BACK TO SCHOOL TOMORROW AND I DON'T WANT TO BE DOZING OFF IN CLASS.
GOODNIGHT.
YOU WANT A DRINK?
GOD, YES.

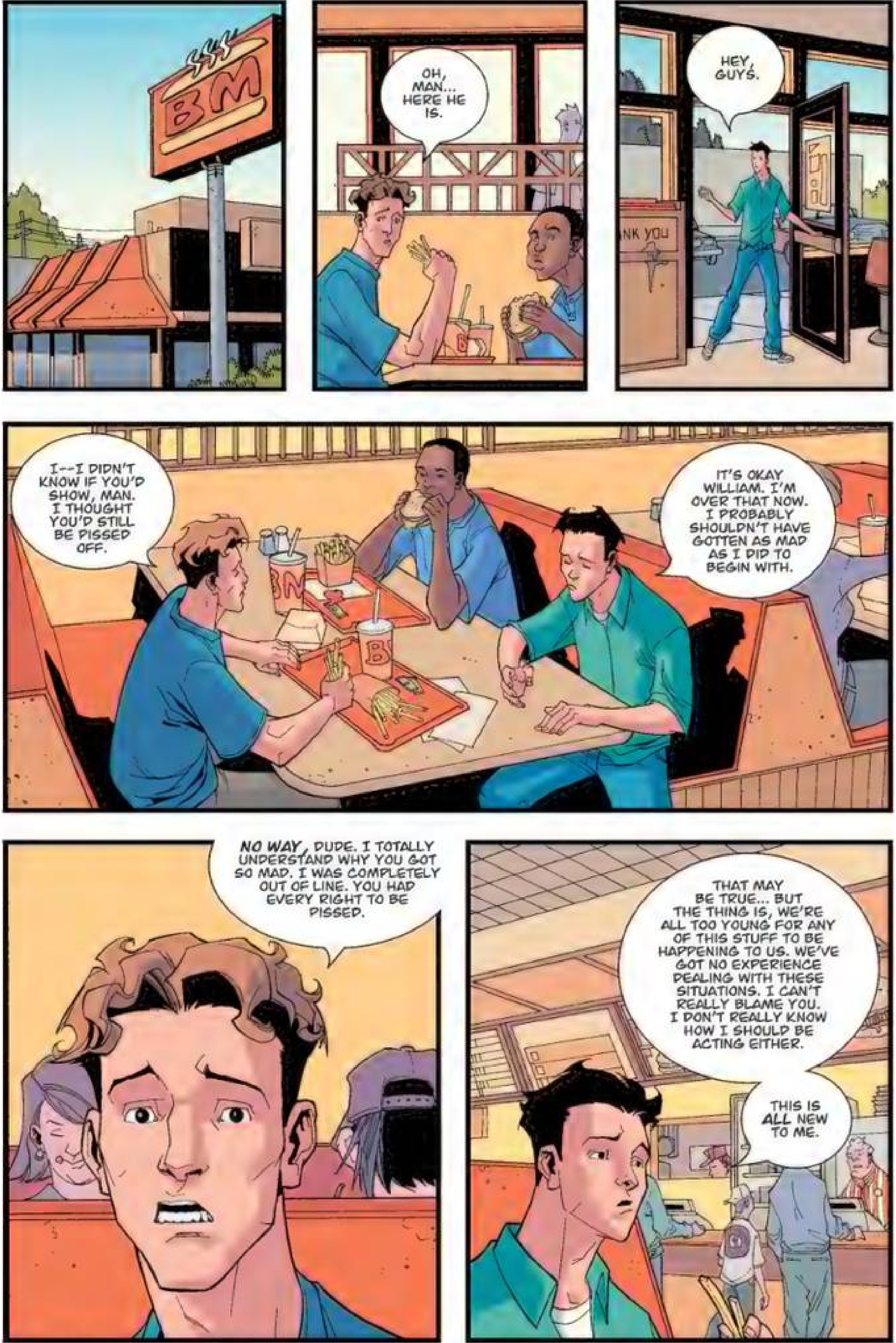

REGINALD VEL JOHNSON HIGH SCHOOL
HEY, CHAD! WHAT'S GOING ON?
DUDE! *HUGE* FIGHT! YOU DIDN'T HEAR?!
WHO IS IT? WHO'S FIGHTING.
DEREK AND--WELL... A BUNCH OF KIDS!
YOU STILL THINK I'M A *FREAK?!*
HUH?!
WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO *NOW?!*
HOLD IT RIGHT THERE, MISTER.

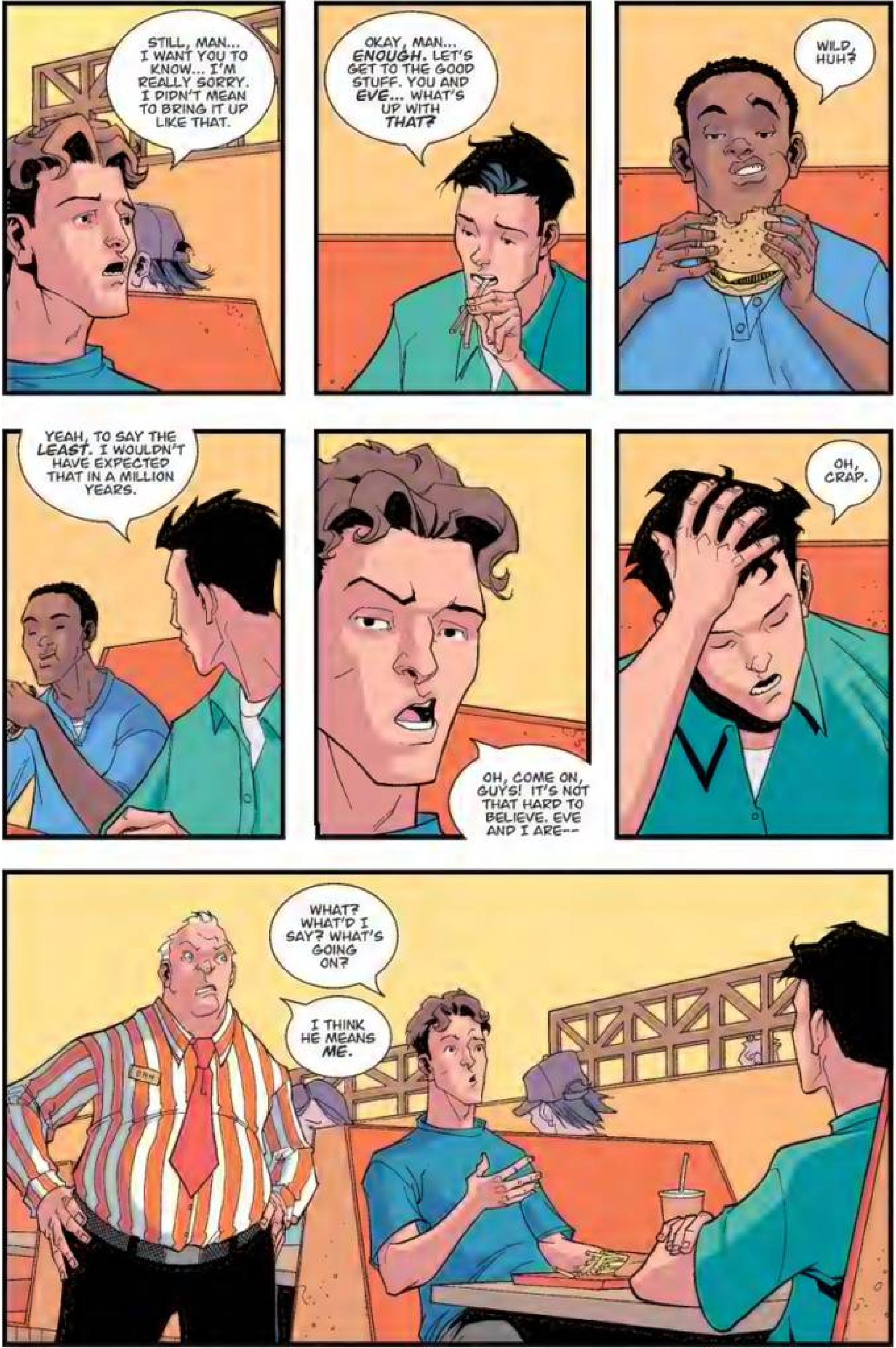

OKAY FELLAS... THIS FIGHT IS **OVER**. LET'S TAKE IT TO THE PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE. I MEAN IT... THIS STOPS **HERE, NOW**. YOU'RE ALL IN ENOUGH TROUBLE AS IT IS.
MISTER KEENE!
THEY STARTED IT.
I DON'T CARE **WHO** STARTED IT, DEREK. THIS ISN'T THE WAY YOU REACT TO INSTIGATION. YOU'RE ALL IN TROUBLE... I WANT YOU **ALL** IN MY OFFICE **NOW**.
MARK, I DIDN'T KNOW YOU WERE BACK ALREADY. IF YOU COULD COME TO MY OFFICE IN A FEW MINUTES... I SHOULD BE DONE WITH THESE BOYS SHORTLY.
I'D LIKE TO TALK TO YOU.
OKAY.
MARK! MAN... YOU'RE BACK. IT'S SO GOOD TO SEE YOU.
I'M SORRY TO HEAR ABOUT YOUR DAD...
YEAH... I'M REALLY SORRY, TOO.
ME TOO.
SO AM I...
CAN WE, UH... DROP THIS FOR NOW?

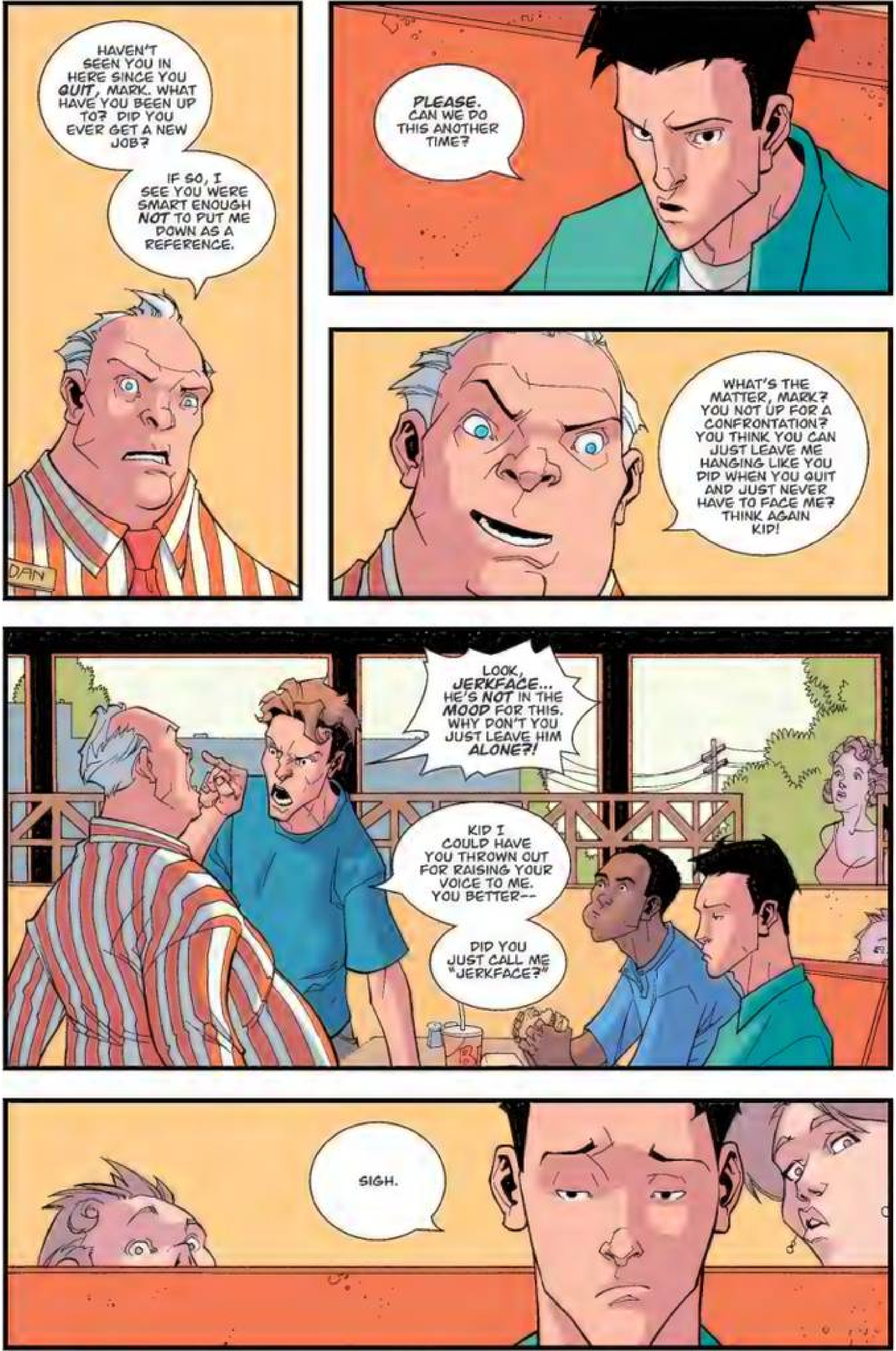

OKAY. SORRY. YOU GUYS WANT TO GO OUT FOR A QUICK BITE AT THE BURGER MART AFTER SCHOOL TODAY? IT MIGHT HELP TAKE YOUR MIND OFF THINGS, MARK.
I'M IN.
I THINK I CAN DO THAT.
COOL. IT'S BEEN A WHILE SINCE WE'VE ALL HUNG OUT AFTER SCHOOL. THIS'LL BE FUN. THAT IS... ER... UNLESS YOU'D RATHER DO SOMETHING ELSE, EVE. OR... YOU COULD TAG ALONG.
DON'T WORRY. I'VE GOT PLENTY OF STUFF TO DO TODAY, AND I DON'T WANT TO BREAK UP YOUR LITTLE BOYS CLUB. YOU GO HAVE FUN. I'VE GOT TO GET TO CLASS. LATER GUYS.
WHAT WAS THAT? SINCE WHEN DO YOU CARE ABOUT WHAT EVE WANTS TO DO? I DIDN'T EVEN KNOW YOU TWO SPOKE.
HEH... YOU BETTER FILL HIM IN, WILLIAM. I'VE GOT TO BE GETTING TO CLASS.
WE'RE GOING OUT, MAN. WE'RE TOTALLY A COUPLE! AND I'VE GOT YOU AND YOUR DAD TO THANK FOR IT!
WHAT?!
OH, DUDE... THAT DID NOT COME OUT THE WAY I MEANT IT TO... REALLY... I DIDN'T MEAN TO MAKE IT SOUND LIKE...
WHATEVER. I'VE GOT TO GET TO CLASS.
MARK, I'M SORRY. MARK?
WE'RE STILL GOING TO BURGER MART, RIGHT?
MARK?

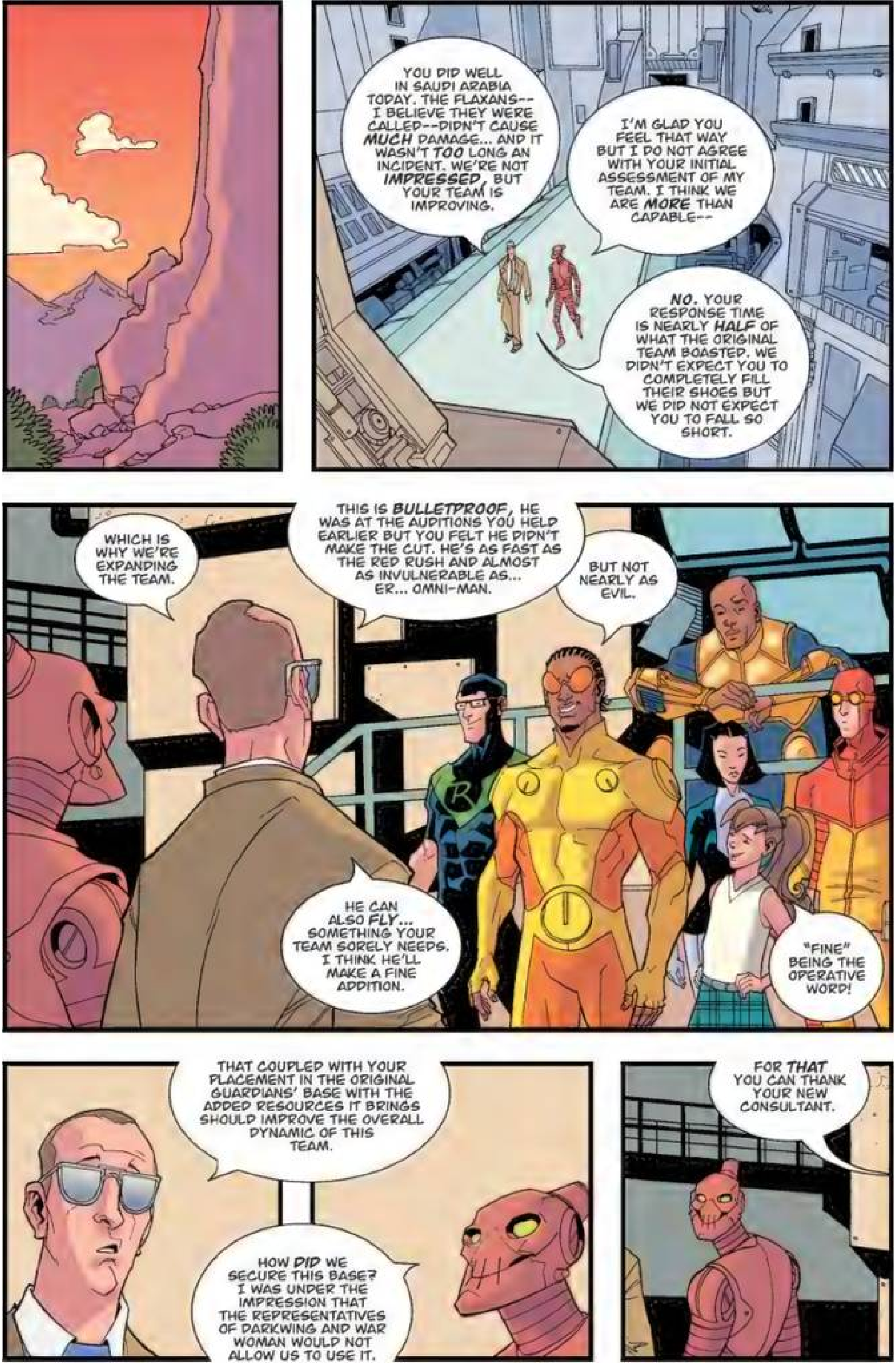

WILLIAM...
...AND EVE?
MARK!!
HUH?
?
AMBER! HEY.
NONE OF THAT PDA, YOU TWO! GET TO CLASS!
YES, MA'AM.
I'VE BEEN SO WORRIED ABOUT YOU. I HEARD ABOUT YOUR DAD... AND I'M SO SORRY THAT HAPPENED... BUT THEN WHEN YOU WERE OUT OF SCHOOL FOR SO LONG...
I KNOW... I MISSED YOU A LOT. MY MOM AND I WERE OUT OF TOWN FOR QUITE A WHILE FOR THE FUNERAL. MY DAD, UH... WASN'T FROM AROUND HERE...
CAN I COME OVER TONIGHT? I REALLY WANT TO SEE YOU.
I DON'T KNOW... I'M NOT SURE IF MY MOM IS UP FOR VISITORS JUST YET. I'LL CALL YOU, OKAY? I JUST DON'T KNOW HOW THINGS ARE...
I'VE GOT TO GO TALK TO PRINCIPAL WINSLOW NOW... BEFORE I'M TOO LATE FOR CLASS. I'LL CALL YOU.
OKAY.
I'LL TALK TO YOU LATER.

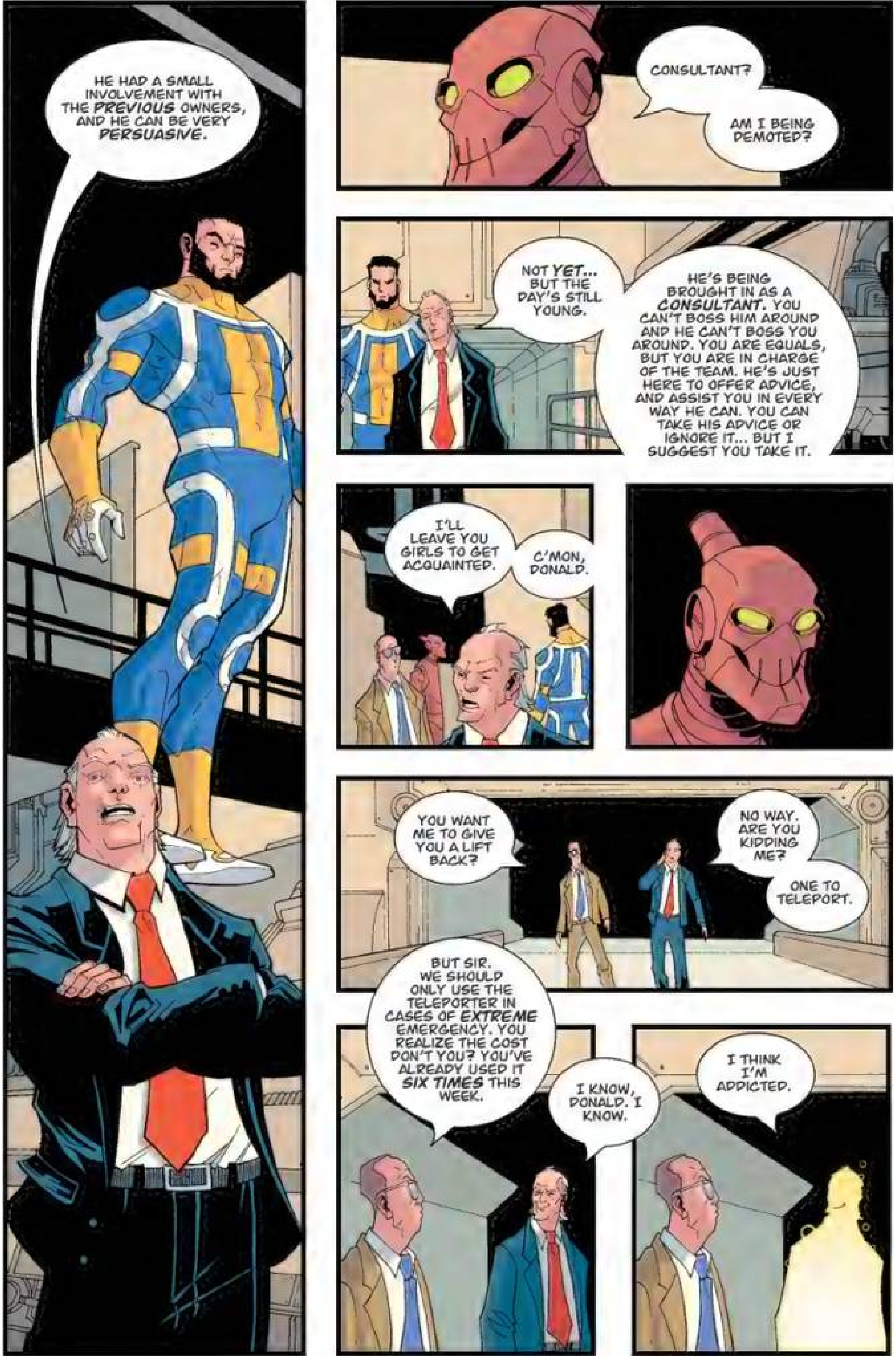

MARK, THANKS FOR COMING BY. I JUST WANTED TO CHAT WITH YOU ABOUT CURRENT EVENTS. I'VE BEEN MADE AWARE OF EVERYTHING THAT'S BEEN GOING ON WITH YOU AND I'D LIKE TO OFFER MY CONDOLENCES FOR YOUR LOSS.
PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE
I ONLY MET YOUR FATHER ONCE AT A PTA MEETING WHEN YOU WERE A FRESHMAN, BUT I COULD TELL JUST FROM THAT BRIEF MEETING THAT HE WAS A GOOD MAN.
I'VE BEEN TOLD THAT I'VE GOT AN UNCANNY ABILITY FOR JUDGING THE CHARACTER OF A PERSON.
RIGHT. WELL THANKS, SIR.
WINSLOW
I'M NOT DONE YET, MARK. I WAS TOLD YOU GOT A FULL SCHOLARSHIP TO UPSTATE UNIVERSITY AND I WANTED TO CONGRATULATE YOU. YOU'VE MADE A GOOD CHOICE, THAT'S A FINE SCHOOL... AND IT SEEMS YOUR ACADEMIC RECORD HAS REALLY IMPRESSED THEM.
BUT... YOUR SENIOR YEAR ISN'T OVER JUST YET.
I UNDERSTAND THAT I HAVE MAKE-UP WORK, SIR. BUT I'VE ONLY BEEN BACK ONE DAY... I'LL DO MY BEST, I--
I KNOW, SON. DON'T WORRY. WHAT I WAS GETTING AT IS THAT YOU'VE MISSED A LITTLE OVER THREE WEEKS OF SCHOOL... THAT'S A *LOT* TO MAKE UP. WHILE I CAN'T MAKE ALL THAT WORK JUST GO AWAY I JUST WANTED TO LET YOU KNOW THAT WE IN THE FACULTY KNOW WHAT YOU'RE GOING THROUGH... AND WE *WANT* YOU TO GRADUATE AS PLANNED.
WE'LL GIVE YOU TIME TO MAKE UP THE WORK.
THANKS, SIR.
YOU'VE GOT NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT HERE, MARK.

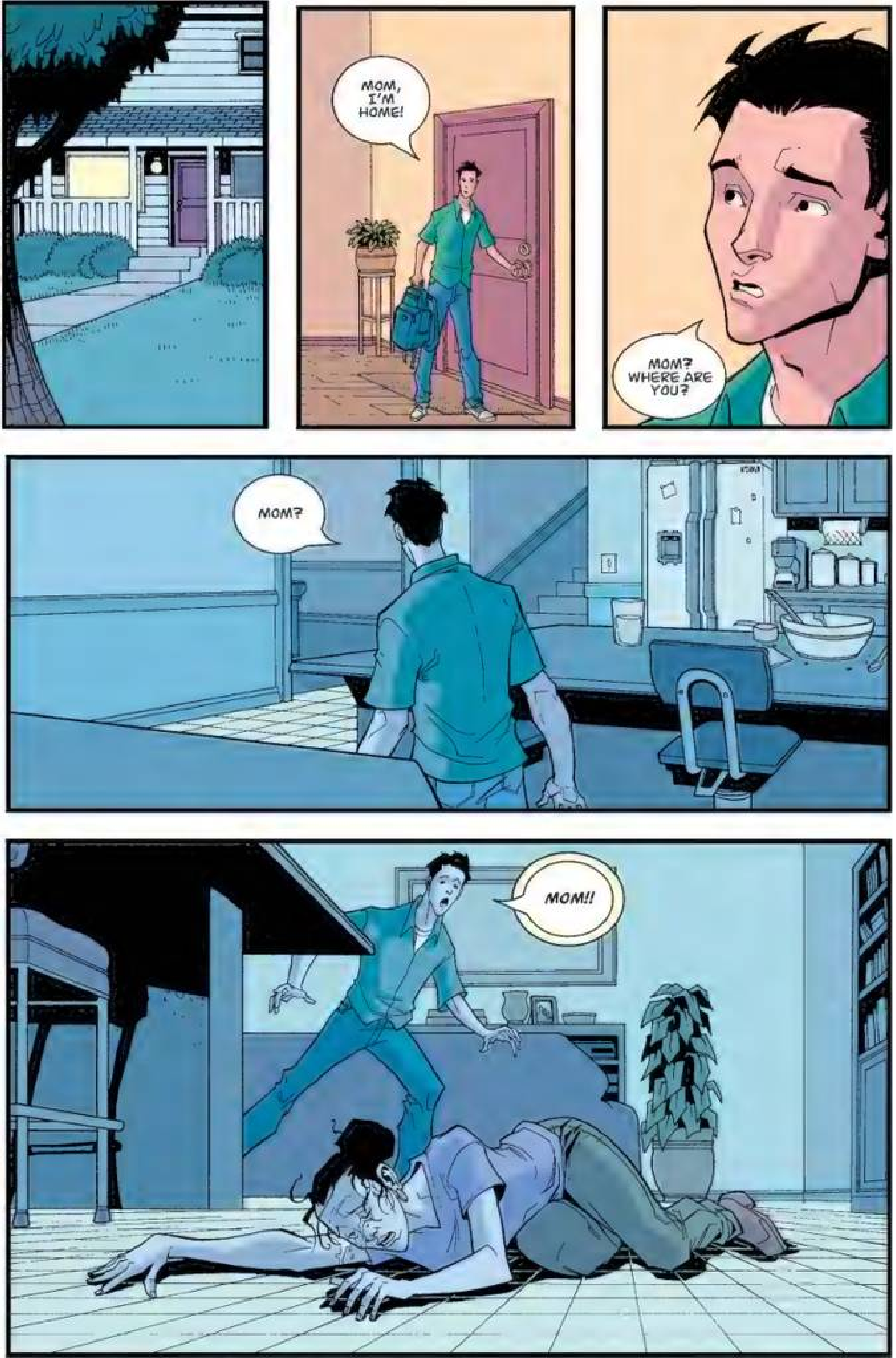

BM
OH, MAN... HERE HE IS.
HEY, GUYS.
NK YOU
I--I DIDN'T KNOW IF YOU'D SHOW, MAN. I THOUGHT YOU'D STILL BE PISSED OFF.
IT'S OKAY WILLIAM. I'M OVER THAT NOW. I PROBABLY SHOULDN'T HAVE GOTTEN AS MAD AS I DID TO BEGIN WITH.
NO WAY, DUDE. I TOTALLY UNDERSTAND WHY YOU GOT SO MAD. I WAS COMPLETELY OUT OF LINE. YOU HAD EVERY RIGHT TO BE PISSED.
THAT MAY BE TRUE... BUT THE THING IS, WE'RE ALL TOO YOUNG FOR ANY OF THIS STUFF TO BE HAPPENING TO US. WE'VE GOT NO EXPERIENCE DEALING WITH THESE SITUATIONS. I CAN'T REALLY BLAME YOU. I DON'T REALLY KNOW HOW I SHOULD BE ACTING EITHER.
THIS IS ALL NEW TO ME.

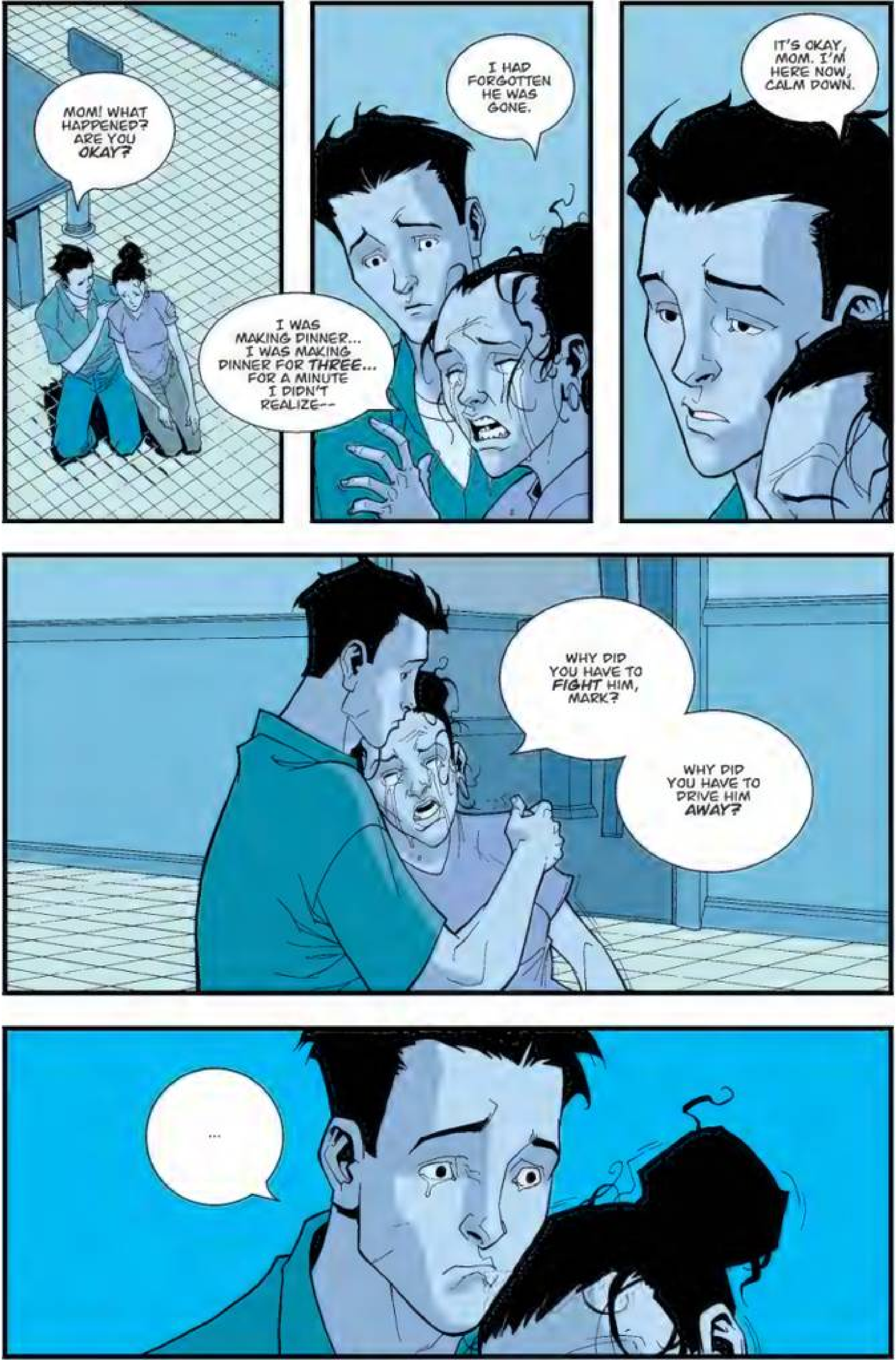

STILL, MAN... I WANT YOU TO KNOW... I'M REALLY SORRY. I DIDN'T MEAN TO BRING IT UP LIKE THAT.
OKAY, MAN... **ENOUGH.** LET'S GET TO THE GOOD STUFF. YOU AND **EVE...** WHAT'S UP WITH **THAT?**
WILD, HUH?
YEAH, TO SAY THE **LEAST.** I WOULDN'T HAVE EXPECTED THAT IN A MILLION YEARS.
OH, COME ON, GUYS! IT'S NOT THAT HARD TO BELIEVE. EVE AND I ARE--
OH, CRAP.
WHAT? WHAT'D I SAY? WHAT'S GOING ON?
I THINK HE MEANS **ME.**

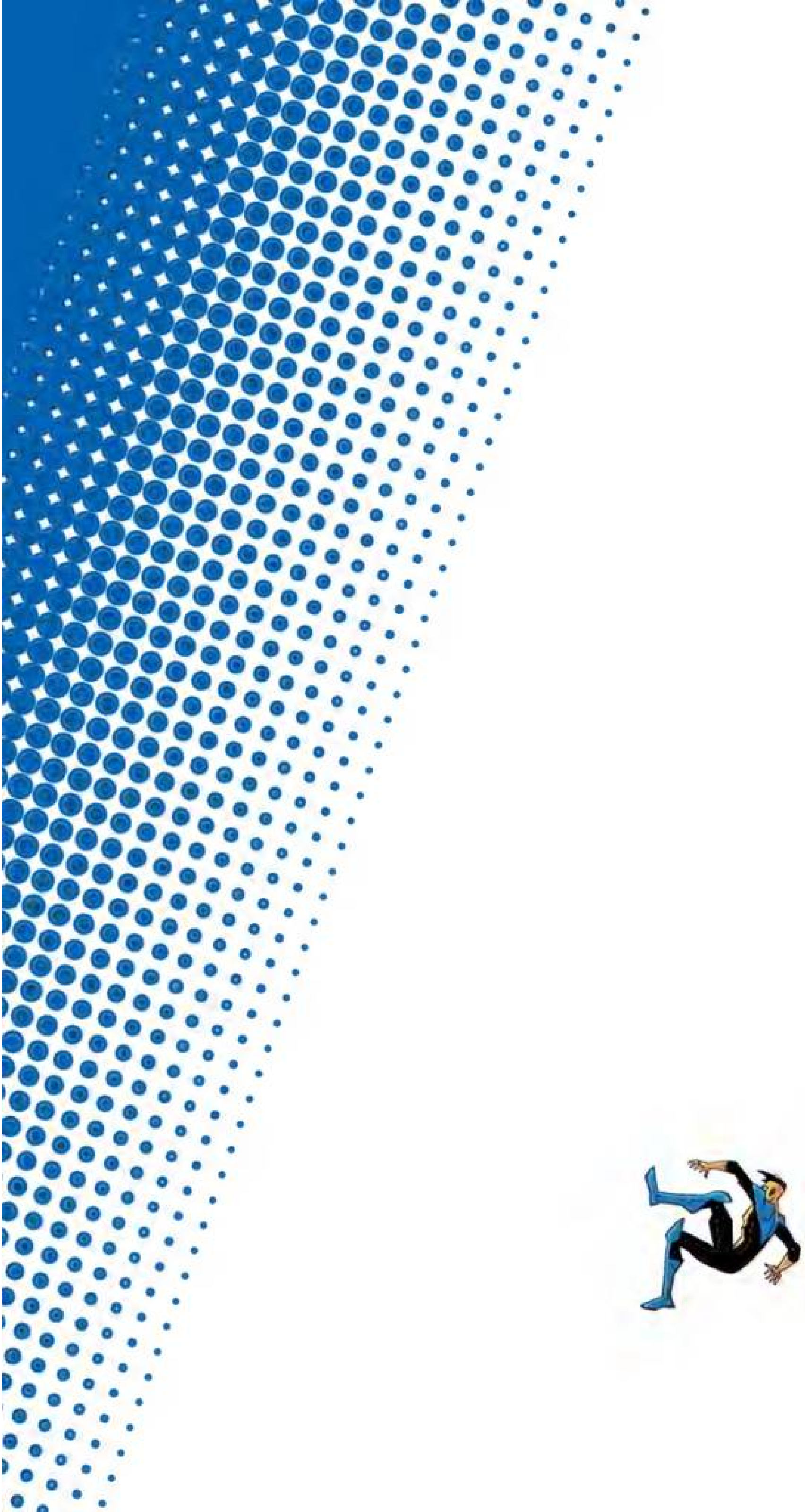

HAVEN'T SEEN YOU IN HERE SINCE YOU *QUIT*, MARK. WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN UP TO? DID YOU EVER GET A NEW JOB?
IF SO, I SEE YOU WERE SMART ENOUGH *NOT* TO PUT ME DOWN AS A REFERENCE.
DAN
PLEASE. CAN WE DO THIS ANOTHER TIME?
WHAT'S THE MATTER, MARK? YOU NOT UP FOR A CONFRONTATION? YOU THINK YOU CAN JUST LEAVE ME HANGING LIKE YOU DID WHEN YOU QUIT AND JUST NEVER HAVE TO FACE ME? THINK AGAIN KID!
LOOK, *JERKFACE*... HE'S *NOT* IN THE *MOOD* FOR THIS. WHY DON'T YOU JUST LEAVE HIM *ALONE?!*
KID I COULD HAVE YOU THROWN OUT FOR RAISING YOUR VOICE TO ME. YOU BETTER--
DID YOU JUST CALL ME "JERKFACE?"
SIGH.


YOU DID WELL IN SAUDI ARABIA TODAY. THE FLAXANS-- I BELIEVE THEY WERE CALLED--DIDN'T CAUSE *MUCH* DAMAGE... AND IT WASN'T *TOO* LONG AN INCIDENT. WE'RE NOT *IMPRESSED*, BUT YOUR TEAM IS IMPROVING.
I'M GLAD YOU FEEL THAT WAY BUT I DO NOT AGREE WITH YOUR INITIAL ASSESSMENT OF MY TEAM. I THINK WE ARE *MORE* THAN CAPABLE--
NO. YOUR RESPONSE TIME IS NEARLY *HALF* OF WHAT THE ORIGINAL TEAM BOASTED. WE DIDN'T EXPECT YOU TO COMPLETELY FILL THEIR SHOES BUT WE DID NOT EXPECT YOU TO FALL SO SHORT.
WHICH IS WHY WE'RE EXPANDING THE TEAM.
THIS IS *BULLETPROOF*, HE WAS AT THE AUDITIONS YOU HELD EARLIER BUT YOU FELT HE DIDN'T MAKE THE CUT. HE'S AS FAST AS THE RED RUSH AND ALMOST AS INVULNERABLE AS... ER... OMNI-MAN.
BUT NOT NEARLY AS EVIL.
HE CAN ALSO *FLY*... SOMETHING YOUR TEAM SORELY NEEDS. I THINK HE'LL MAKE A FINE ADDITION.
"FINE" BEING THE OPERATIVE WORD!
THAT COUPLED WITH YOUR PLACEMENT IN THE ORIGINAL GUARDIANS' BASE WITH THE ADDED RESOURCES IT BRINGS SHOULD IMPROVE THE OVERALL DYNAMIC OF THIS TEAM.
HOW *DID* WE SECURE THIS BASE? I WAS UNDER THE IMPRESSION THAT THE REPRESENTATIVES OF DARKWING AND WAR WOMAN WOULD NOT ALLOW US TO USE IT.
FOR *THAT* YOU CAN THANK YOUR NEW CONSULTANT.

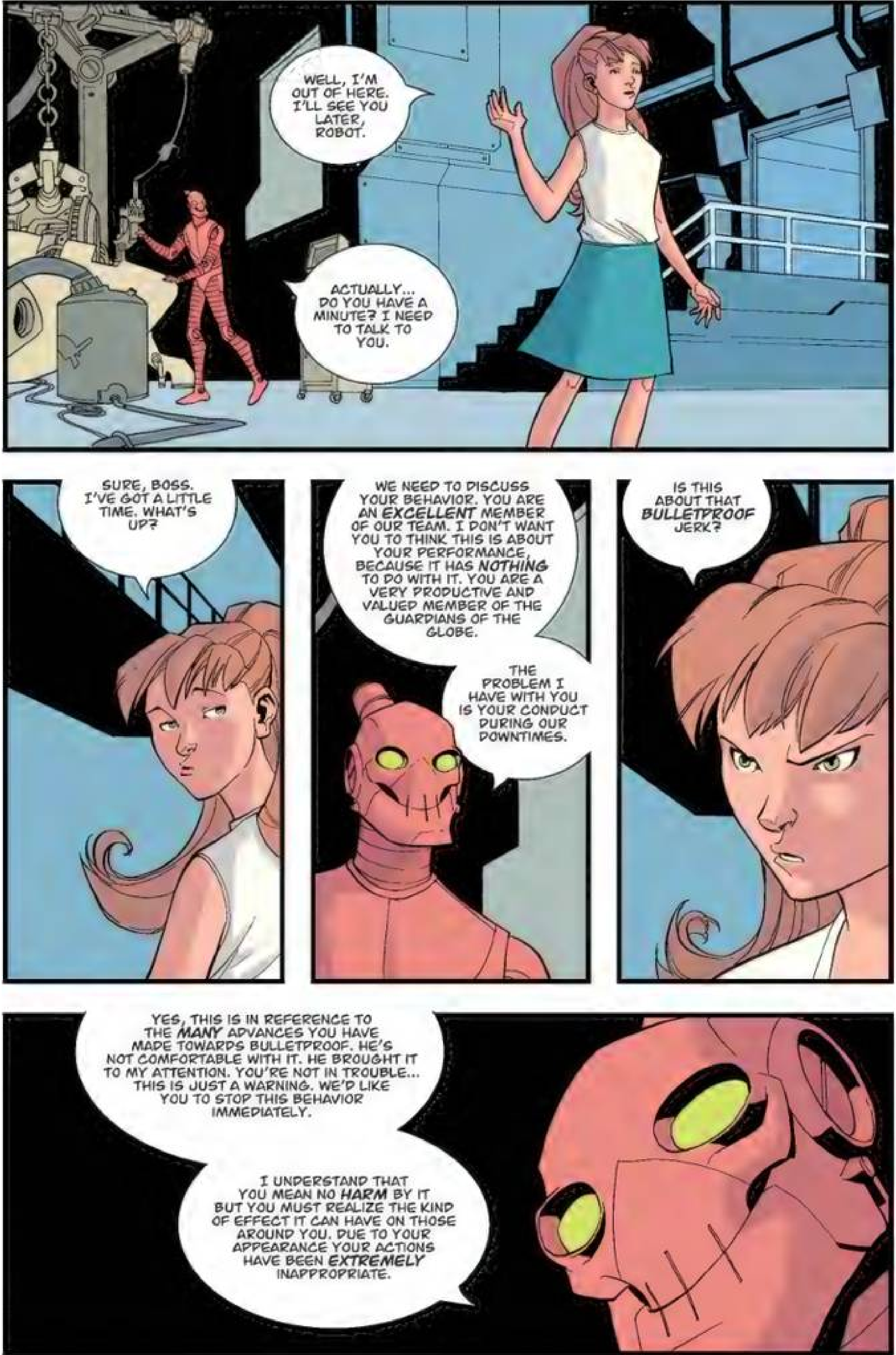

HE HAD A SMALL INVOLVEMENT WITH THE *PREVIOUS* OWNERS, AND HE CAN BE VERY *PERSUASIVE.*
CONSULTANT?
AM I BEING DEMOTED?
NOT *YET*... BUT THE DAY'S STILL YOUNG.
HE'S BEING BROUGHT IN AS A **CONSULTANT.** YOU CAN'T BOSS HIM AROUND AND HE CAN'T BOSS YOU AROUND. YOU ARE EQUALS, BUT YOU ARE IN CHARGE OF THE TEAM. HE'S JUST HERE TO OFFER ADVICE, AND ASSIST YOU IN EVERY WAY HE CAN. YOU CAN TAKE HIS ADVICE OR IGNORE IT... BUT I SUGGEST YOU TAKE IT.
I'LL LEAVE YOU GIRLS TO GET ACQUAINTED.
C'MON, DONALD.
YOU WANT ME TO GIVE YOU A LIFT BACK?
NO WAY. ARE YOU KIDDING ME?
ONE TO TELEPORT.
BUT SIR. WE SHOULD ONLY USE THE TELEPORTER IN CASES OF *EXTREME* EMERGENCY. YOU REALIZE THE COST DON'T YOU? YOU'VE ALREADY USED IT *SIX TIMES* THIS WEEK.
I KNOW, DONALD. I KNOW.
I THINK I'M ADDICTED.

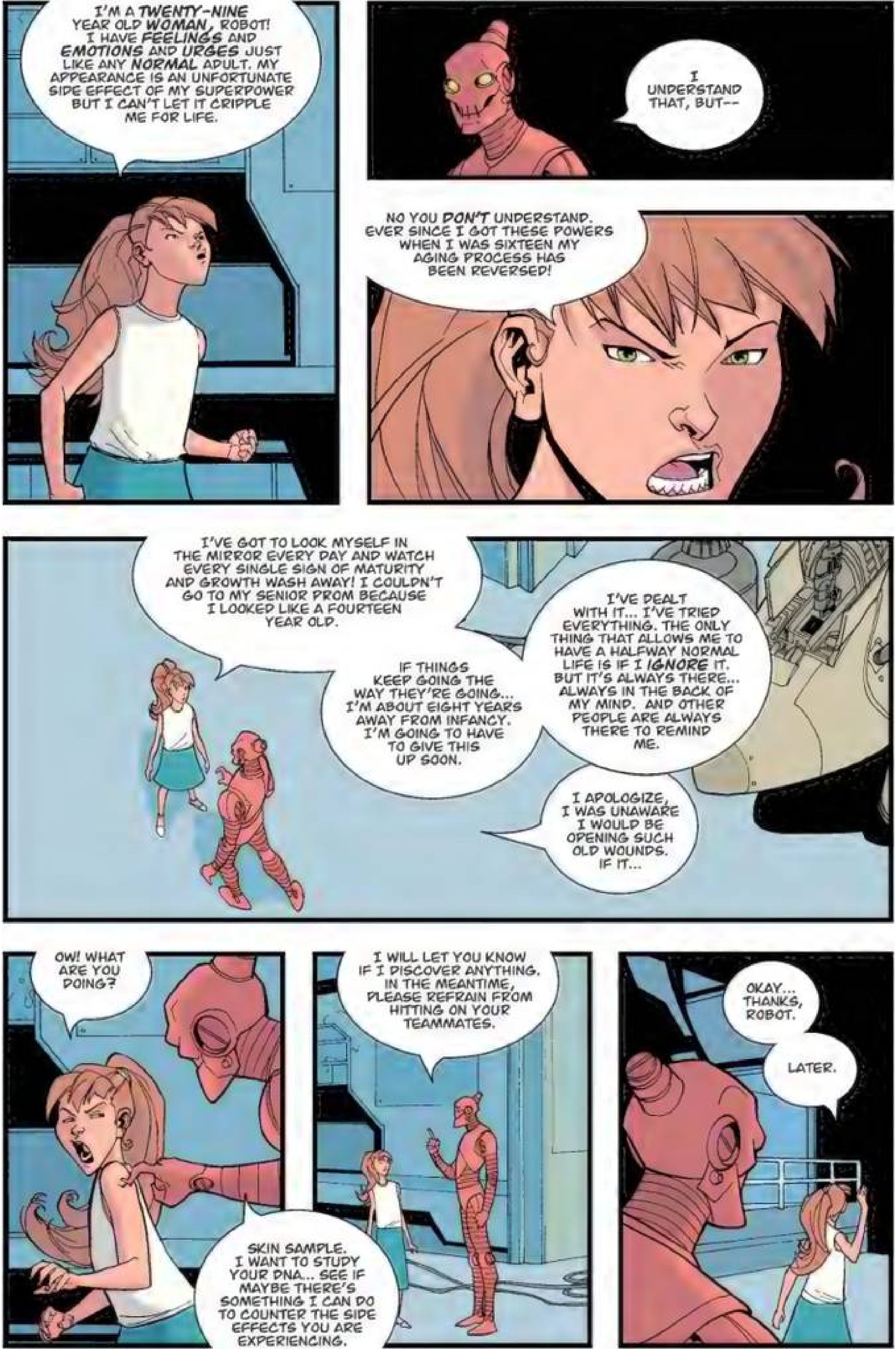

MOM, I'M HOME!
MOM? WHERE ARE YOU?
MOM?
MOM!!

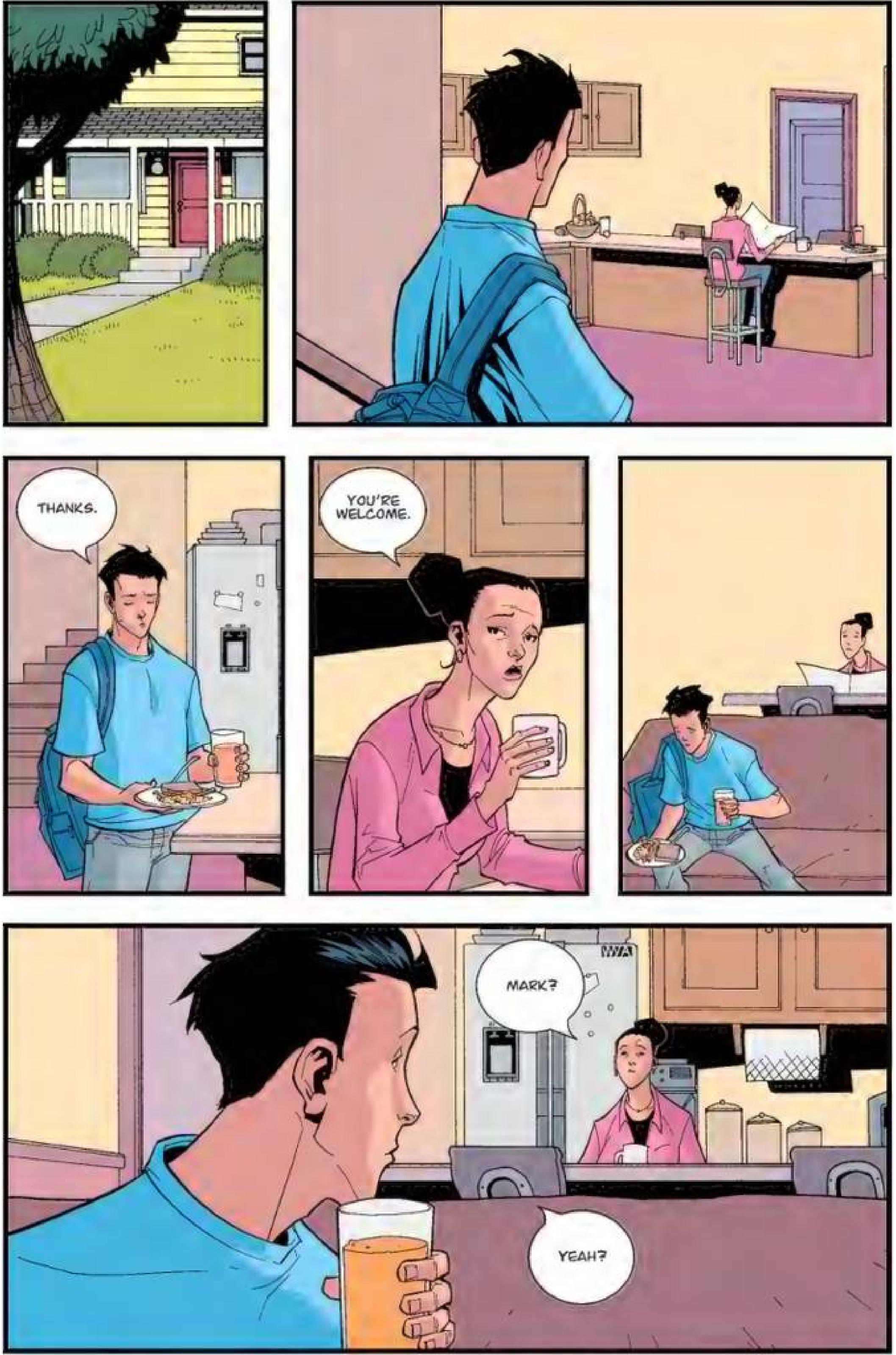

MOM! WHAT HAPPENED? ARE YOU *OKAY?*
I WAS MAKING DINNER... I WAS MAKING DINNER FOR *THREE*... FOR A MINUTE I DIDN'T REALIZE--
I HAD FORGOTTEN HE WAS GONE.
IT'S OKAY, MOM. I'M HERE NOW, CALM DOWN.
WHY DID YOU HAVE TO *FIGHT* HIM, MARK?
WHY DID YOU HAVE TO DRIVE HIM *AWAY?*
...

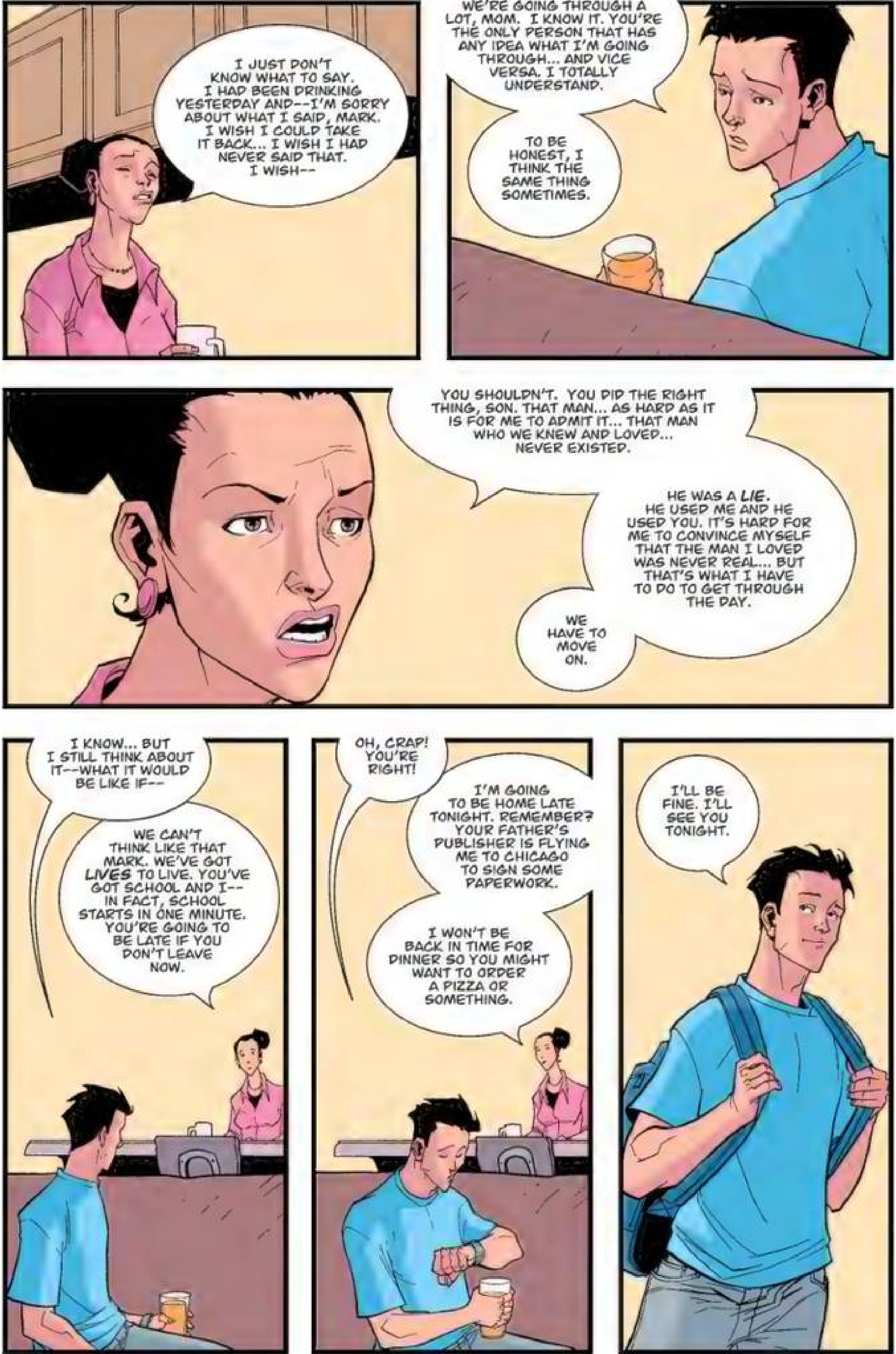


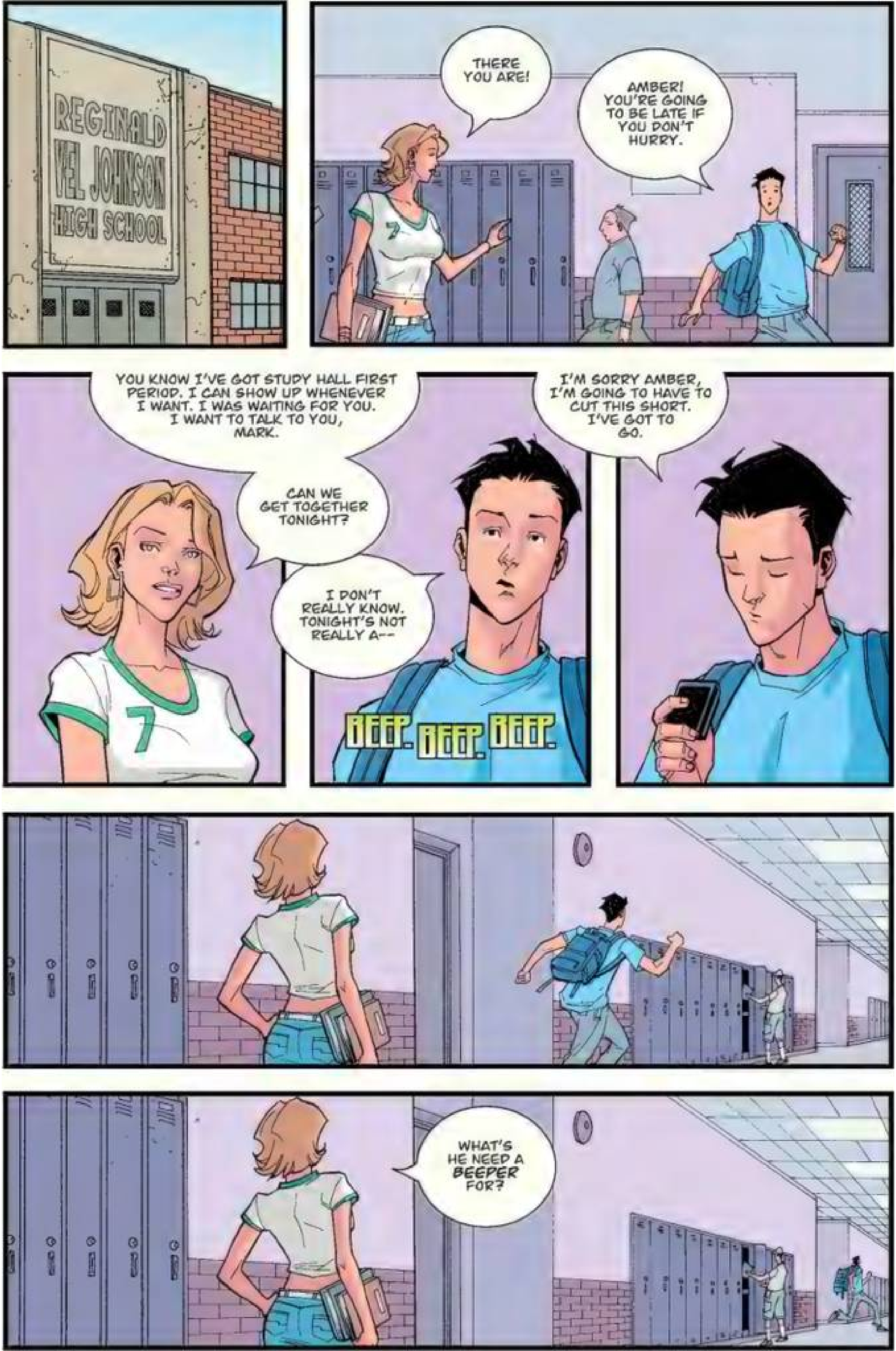
ISSUE FIFTEEN

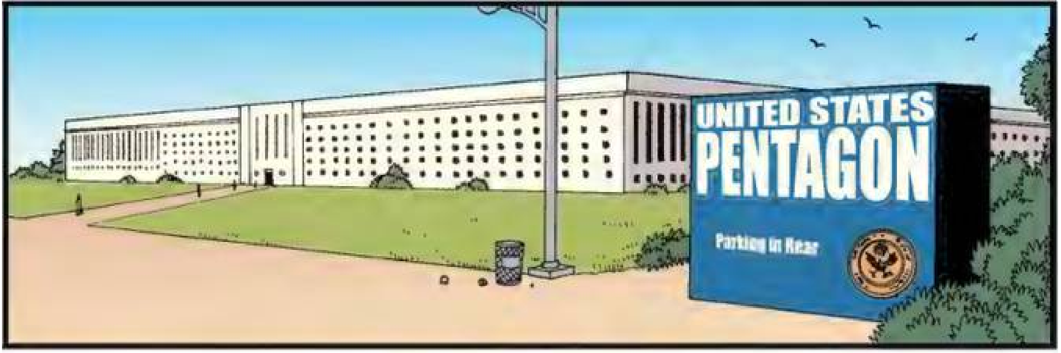

WELL, I'M OUT OF HERE. I'LL SEE YOU LATER, ROBOT.
ACTUALLY... DO YOU HAVE A MINUTE? I NEED TO TALK TO YOU.
SURE, BOSS. I'VE GOT A LITTLE TIME. WHAT'S UP?
WE NEED TO DISCUSS YOUR BEHAVIOR. YOU ARE AN EXCELLENT MEMBER OF OUR TEAM. I DON'T WANT YOU TO THINK THIS IS ABOUT YOUR PERFORMANCE, BECAUSE IT HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH IT. YOU ARE A VERY PRODUCTIVE AND VALUED MEMBER OF THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE.
THE PROBLEM I HAVE WITH YOU IS YOUR CONDUCT DURING OUR DOWNTIMES.
IS THIS ABOUT THAT BULLETPROOF JERK?
YES, THIS IS IN REFERENCE TO THE MANY ADVANCES YOU HAVE MADE TOWARDS BULLETPROOF. HE'S NOT COMFORTABLE WITH IT. HE BROUGHT IT TO MY ATTENTION. YOU'RE NOT IN TROUBLE... THIS IS JUST A WARNING. WE'D LIKE YOU TO STOP THIS BEHAVIOR IMMEDIATELY.
I UNDERSTAND THAT YOU MEAN NO HARM BY IT BUT YOU MUST REALIZE THE KIND OF EFFECT IT CAN HAVE ON THOSE AROUND YOU. DUE TO YOUR APPEARANCE YOUR ACTIONS HAVE BEEN EXTREMELY INAPPROPRIATE.

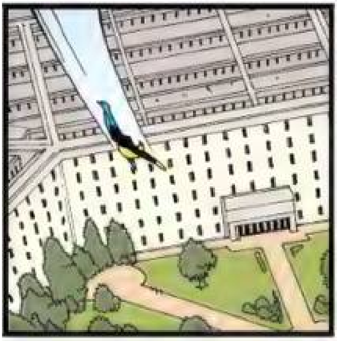

I'M A **TWENTY-NINE** YEAR OLD **WOMAN**, ROBOT! I HAVE **FEELINGS** AND **EMOTIONS** AND **URGES** JUST LIKE ANY **NORMAL** ADULT. MY APPEARANCE IS AN UNFORTUNATE SIDE EFFECT OF MY SUPERPOWER BUT I CAN'T LET IT CRIPPLE ME FOR LIFE.
I UNDERSTAND THAT, BUT--
NO YOU **DON'T** UNDERSTAND. EVER SINCE I GOT THESE POWERS WHEN I WAS SIXTEEN MY AGING PROCESS HAS BEEN REVERSED!
I'VE GOT TO LOOK MYSELF IN THE MIRROR EVERY DAY AND WATCH EVERY SINGLE SIGN OF MATURITY AND GROWTH WASH AWAY! I COULDN'T GO TO MY SENIOR PROM BECAUSE I LOOKED LIKE A FOURTEEN YEAR OLD.
IF THINGS KEEP GOING THE WAY THEY'RE GOING... I'M ABOUT EIGHT YEARS AWAY FROM INFANCY. I'M GOING TO HAVE TO GIVE THIS UP SOON.
I'VE DEALT WITH IT... I'VE TRIED EVERYTHING. THE ONLY THING THAT ALLOWS ME TO HAVE A HALFWAY NORMAL LIFE IS IF I **IGNORE** IT. BUT IT'S ALWAYS THERE... ALWAYS IN THE BACK OF MY MIND. AND OTHER PEOPLE ARE ALWAYS THERE TO REMIND ME.
I APOLOGIZE, I WAS UNAWARE I WOULD BE OPENING SUCH OLD WOUNDS. IF IT...
OW! WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
SKIN SAMPLE. I WANT TO STUDY YOUR DNA... SEE IF MAYBE THERE'S SOMETHING I CAN DO TO COUNTER THE SIDE EFFECTS YOU ARE EXPERIENCING.
I WILL LET YOU KNOW IF I DISCOVER ANYTHING. IN THE MEANTIME, PLEASE REFRAIN FROM HITTING ON YOUR TEAMMATES.
OKAY... THANKS, ROBOT.
LATER.

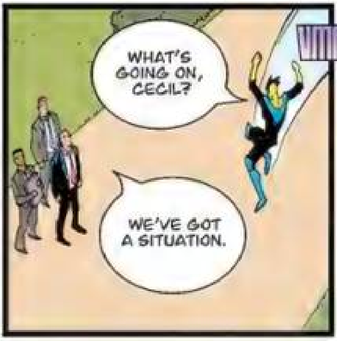

THANKS.
YOU'RE WELCOME.
MARK?
YEAH?

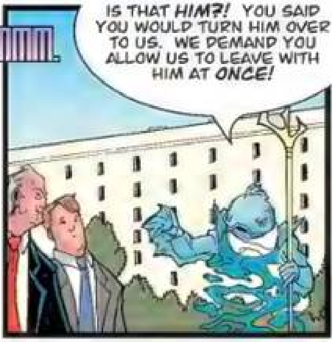

I JUST DON'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY. I HAD BEEN DRINKING YESTERDAY AND--I'M SORRY ABOUT WHAT I SAID, MARK. I WISH I COULD TAKE IT BACK... I WISH I HAD NEVER SAID THAT. I WISH--
WE'RE GOING THROUGH A LOT, MOM. I KNOW IT. YOU'RE THE ONLY PERSON THAT HAS ANY IDEA WHAT I'M GOING THROUGH... AND VICE VERSA. I TOTALLY UNDERSTAND.
TO BE HONEST, I THINK THE SAME THING SOMETIMES.
YOU SHOULDN'T. YOU DID THE RIGHT THING, SON. THAT MAN... AS HARD AS IT IS FOR ME TO ADMIT IT... THAT MAN WHO WE KNEW AND LOVED... NEVER EXISTED.
HE WAS A LIE. HE USED ME AND HE USED YOU. IT'S HARD FOR ME TO CONVINCE MYSELF THAT THE MAN I LOVED WAS NEVER REAL... BUT THAT'S WHAT I HAVE TO DO TO GET THROUGH THE DAY.
WE HAVE TO MOVE ON.
I KNOW... BUT I STILL THINK ABOUT IT--WHAT IT WOULD BE LIKE IF--
WE CAN'T THINK LIKE THAT MARK. WE'VE GOT LIVES TO LIVE. YOU'VE GOT SCHOOL AND I-- IN FACT, SCHOOL STARTS IN ONE MINUTE. YOU'RE GOING TO BE LATE IF YOU DON'T LEAVE NOW.
OH, CRAP! YOU'RE RIGHT!
I'M GOING TO BE HOME LATE TONIGHT. REMEMBER? YOUR FATHER'S PUBLISHER IS FLYING ME TO CHICAGO TO SIGN SOME PAPERWORK.
I WON'T BE BACK IN TIME FOR DINNER SO YOU MIGHT WANT TO ORDER A PIZZA OR SOMETHING.
I'LL BE FINE. I'LL SEE YOU TONIGHT.

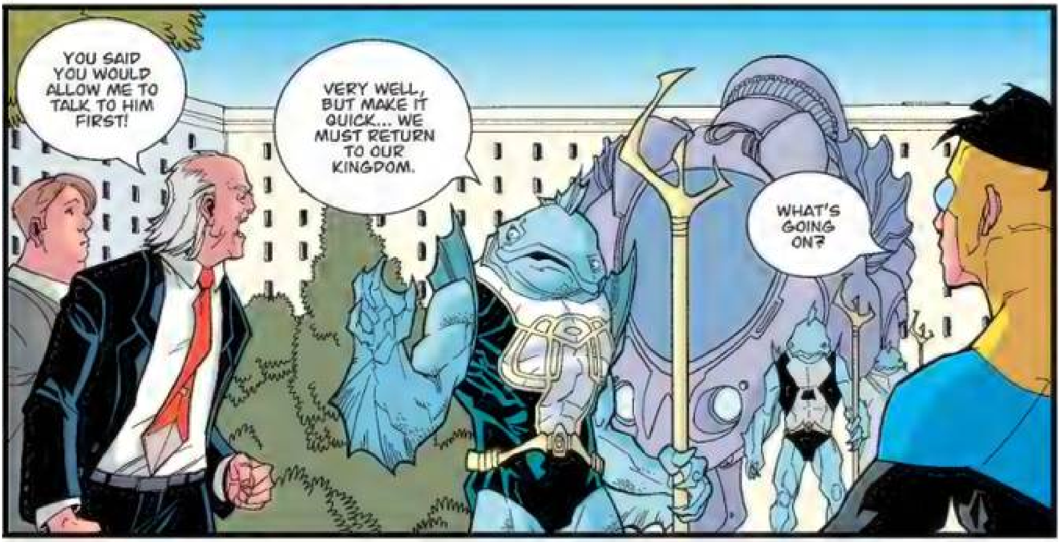

REGINALD VEL JOHNSON HIGH SCHOOL
THERE YOU ARE!
AMBER! YOU'RE GOING TO BE LATE IF YOU DON'T HURRY.
YOU KNOW I'VE GOT STUDY HALL FIRST PERIOD. I CAN SHOW UP WHENEVER I WANT. I WAS WAITING FOR YOU. I WANT TO TALK TO YOU, MARK.
CAN WE GET TOGETHER TONIGHT?
I DON'T REALLY KNOW. TONIGHT'S NOT REALLY A--
BEEP. BEEP. BEEP.
I'M SORRY AMBER, I'M GOING TO HAVE TO CUT THIS SHORT. I'VE GOT TO GO.
WHAT'S HE NEED A BEEPER FOR?

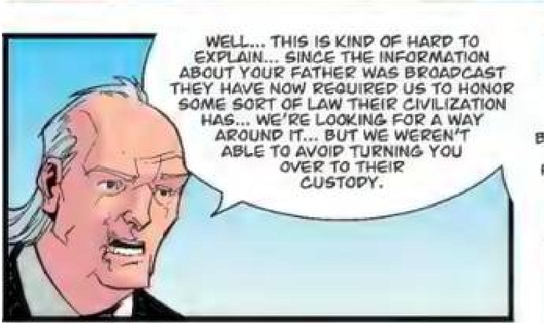

UNITED STATES PENTAGON
Parking in Rear

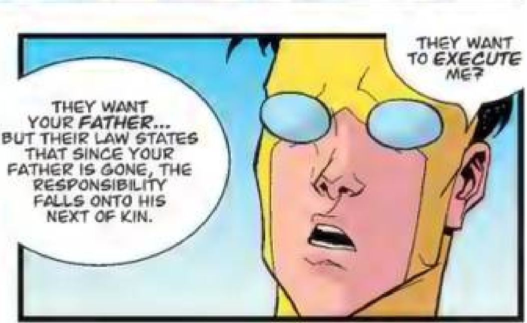


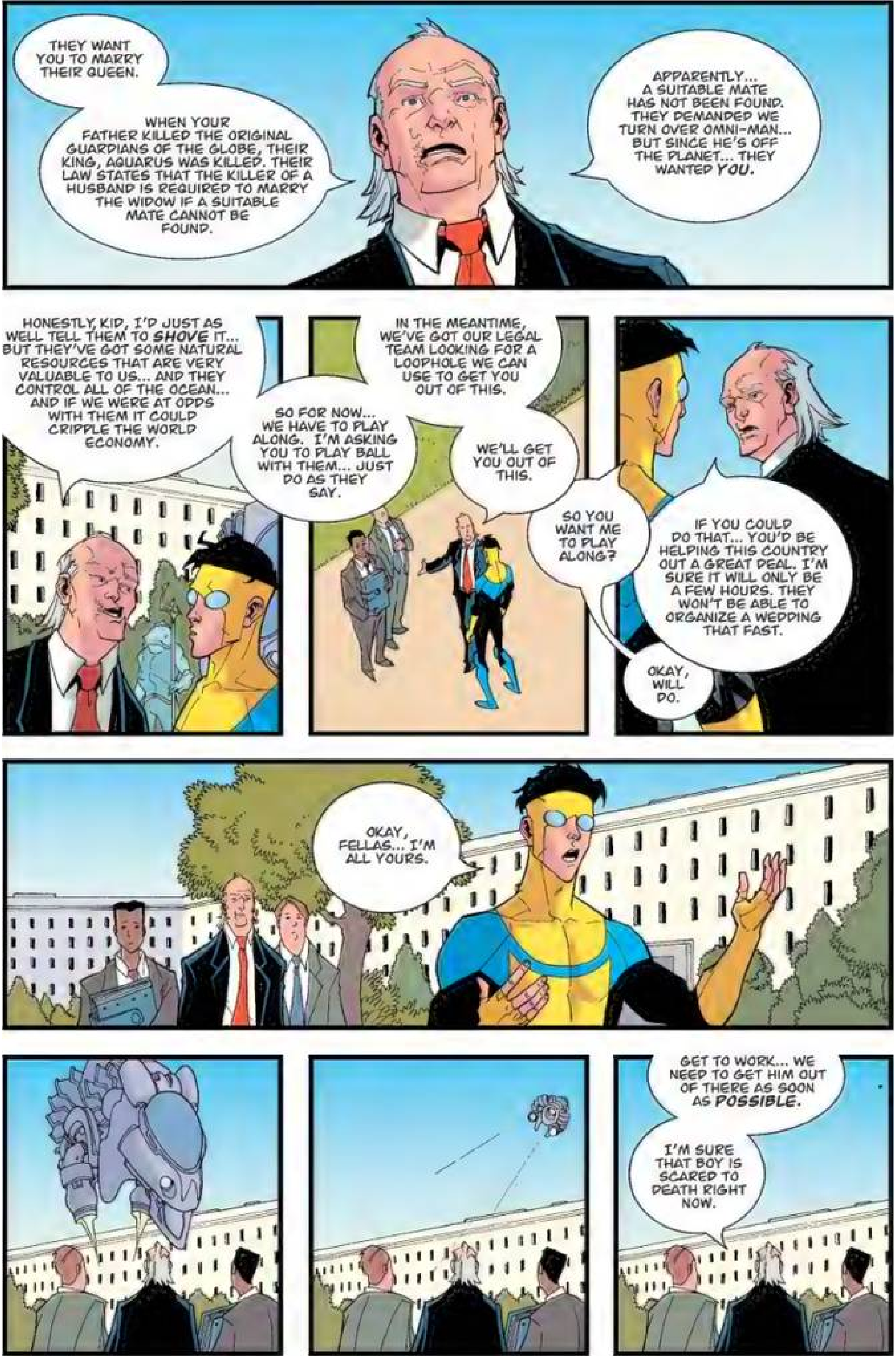

WHAT'S GOING ON, CECIL?
WE'VE GOT A SITUATION.

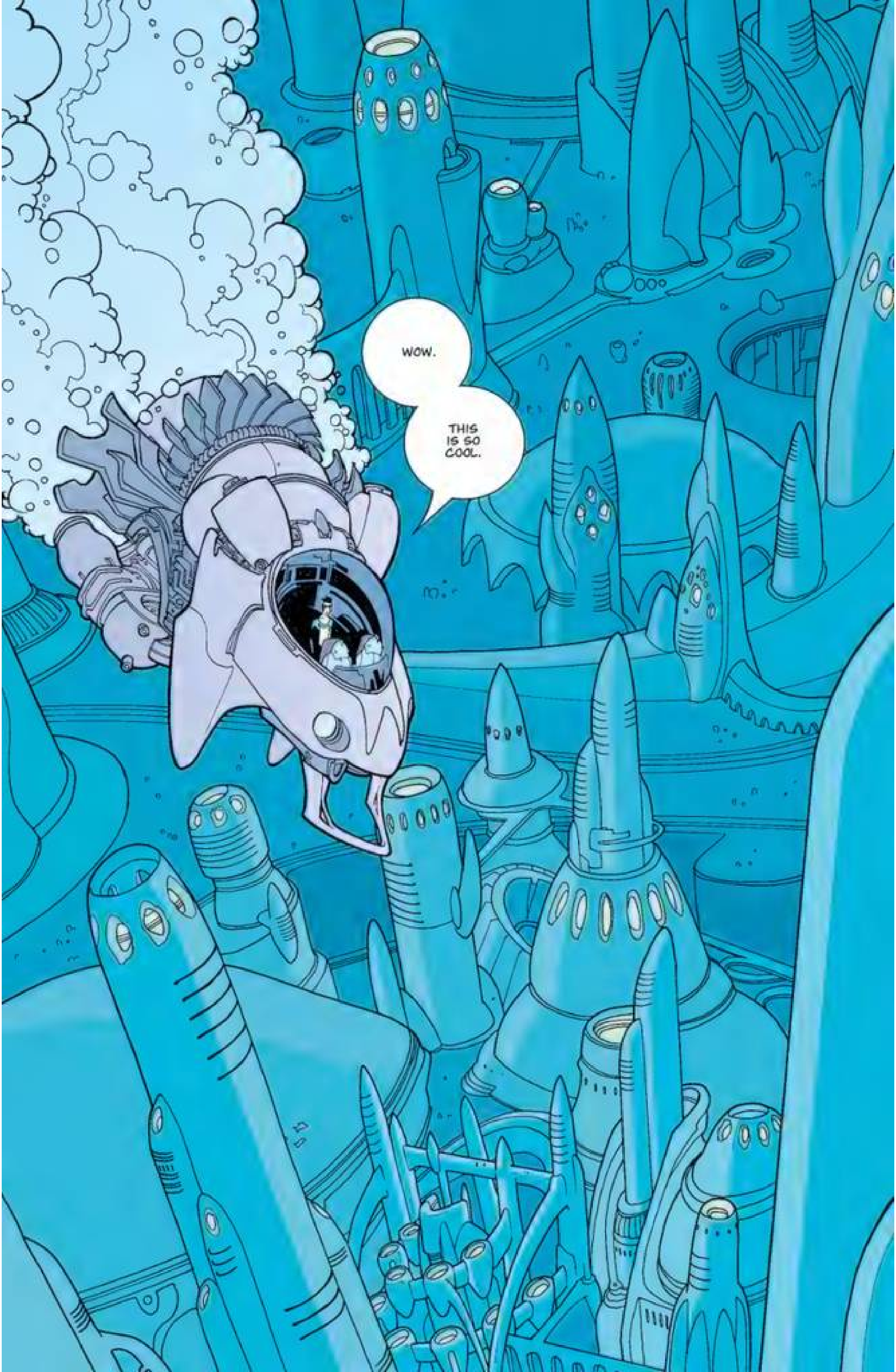

VMMMMM
IS THAT *HIM?!* YOU SAID YOU WOULD TURN HIM OVER TO US. WE DEMAND YOU ALLOW US TO LEAVE WITH HIM AT *ONCE!*

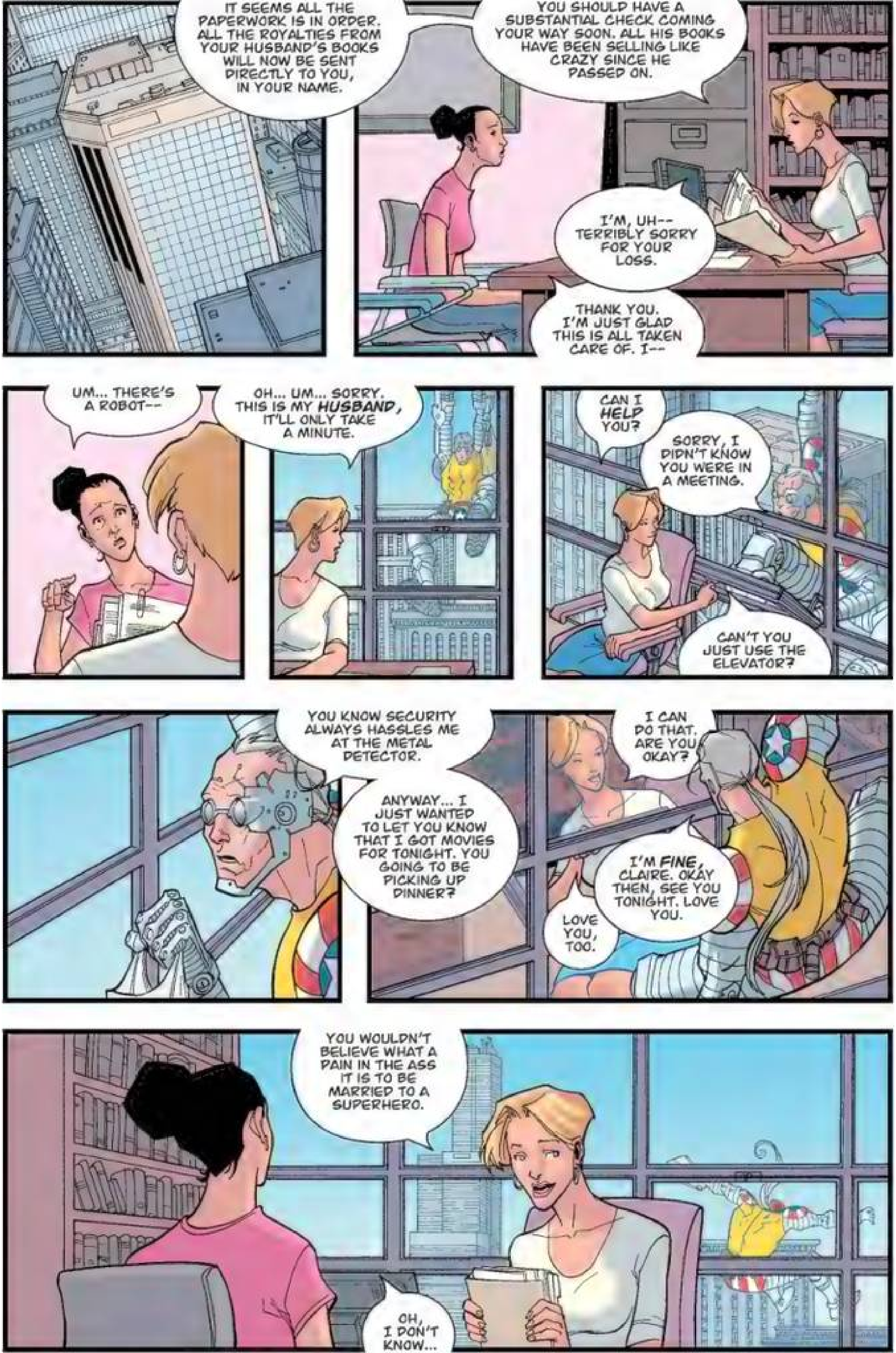

YOU SAID YOU WOULD ALLOW ME TO TALK TO HIM FIRST!
VERY WELL, BUT MAKE IT QUICK... WE MUST RETURN TO OUR KINGDOM.
WHAT'S GOING ON?

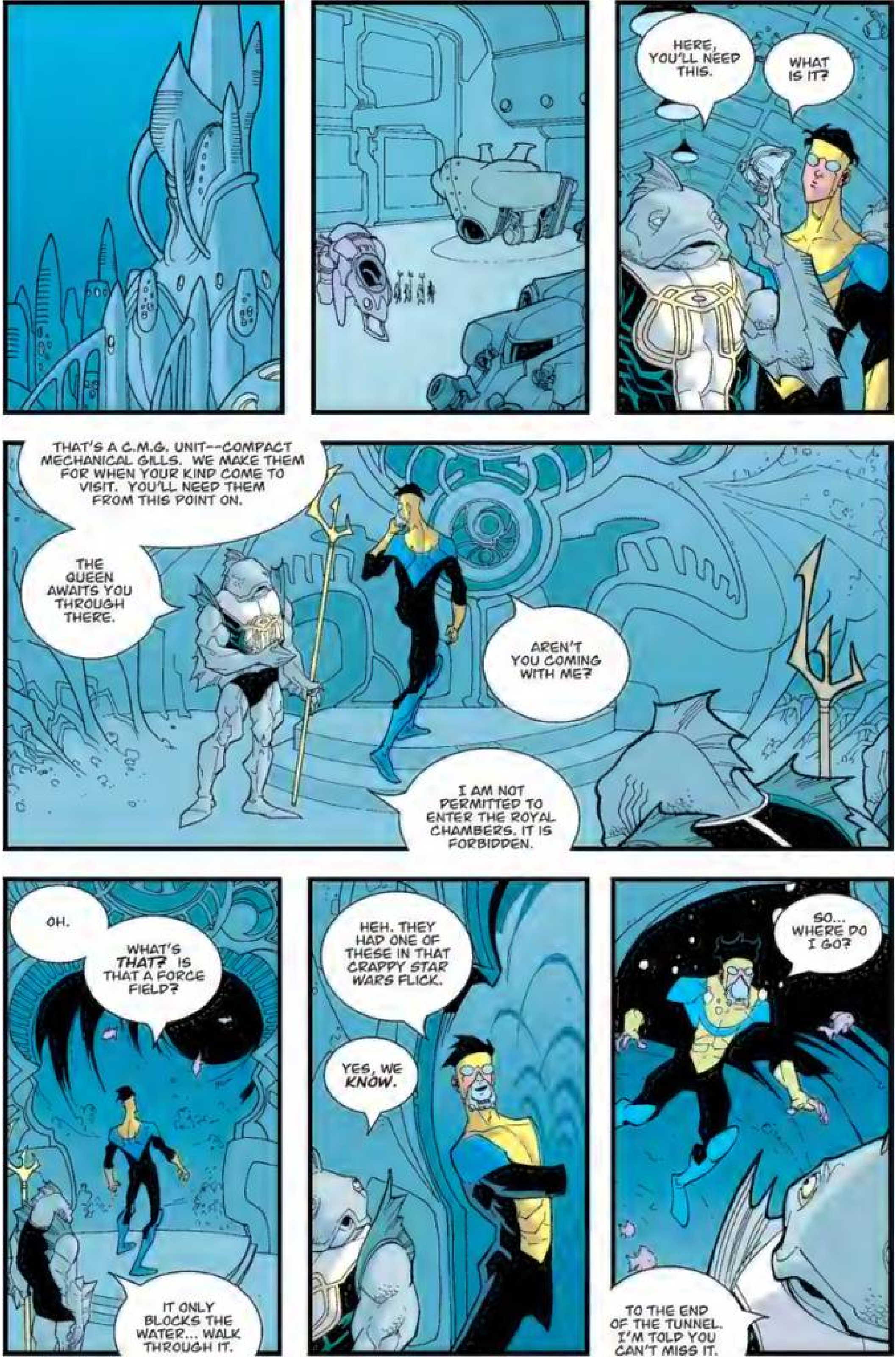

WELL... THIS IS KIND OF HARD TO EXPLAIN... SINCE THE INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR FATHER WAS BROADCAST THEY HAVE NOW REQUIRED US TO HONOR SOME SORT OF LAW THEIR CIVILIZATION HAS... WE'RE LOOKING FOR A WAY AROUND IT... BUT WE WEREN'T ABLE TO AVOID TURNING YOU OVER TO THEIR CUSTODY.

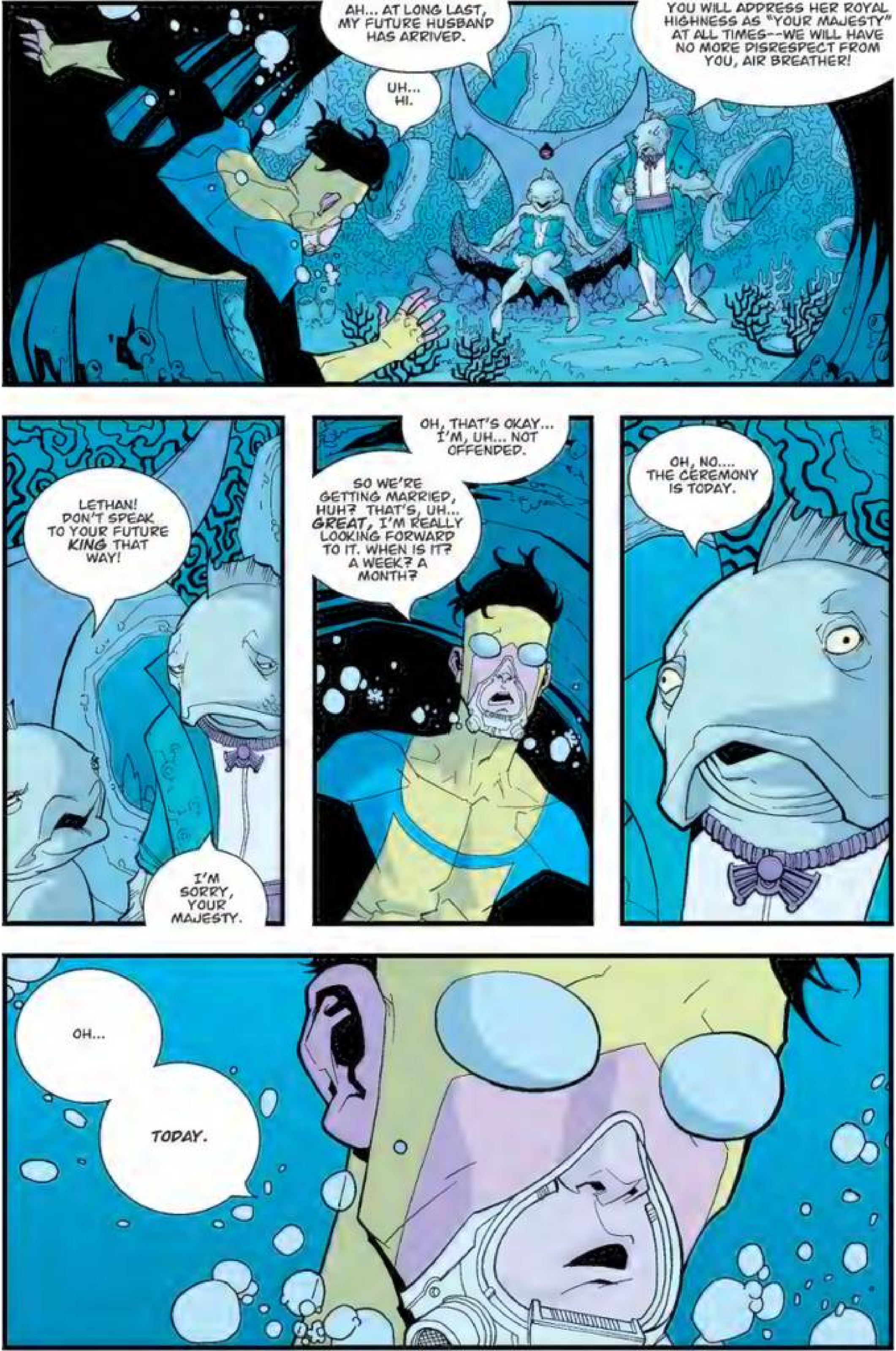

THEY WANT YOUR *FATHER*... BUT THEIR LAW STATES THAT SINCE YOUR FATHER IS GONE, THE RESPONSIBILITY FALLS ONTO HIS NEXT OF KIN.
THEY WANT TO *EXECUTE* ME?

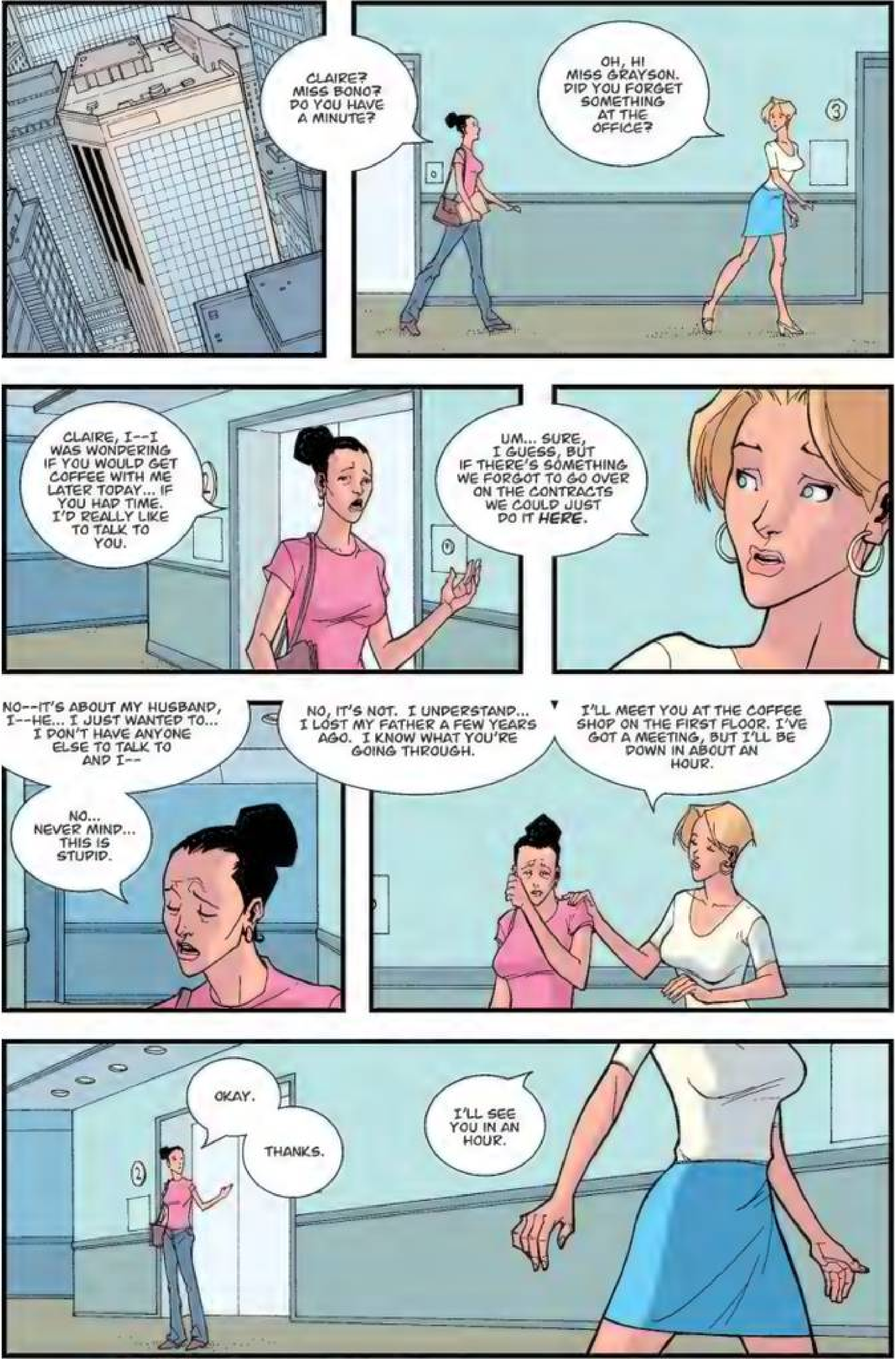

THEY WANT YOU TO MARRY THEIR QUEEN.
WHEN YOUR FATHER KILLED THE ORIGINAL GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE, THEIR KING, AQUARUS WAS KILLED. THEIR LAW STATES THAT THE KILLER OF A HUSBAND IS REQUIRED TO MARRY THE WIDOW IF A SUITABLE MATE CANNOT BE FOUND.
APPARENTLY... A SUITABLE MATE HAS NOT BEEN FOUND. THEY DEMANDED WE TURN OVER OMNI-MAN... BUT SINCE HE'S OFF THE PLANET... THEY WANTED *YOU.*
HONESTLY, KID, I'D JUST AS WELL TELL THEM TO *SHOVE* IT... BUT THEY'VE GOT SOME NATURAL RESOURCES THAT ARE VERY VALUABLE TO US... AND THEY CONTROL ALL OF THE OCEAN... AND IF WE WERE AT ODDS WITH THEM IT COULD CRIPPLE THE WORLD ECONOMY.
SO FOR NOW... WE HAVE TO PLAY ALONG. I'M ASKING YOU TO PLAY BALL WITH THEM... JUST DO AS THEY SAY.
IN THE MEANTIME, WE'VE GOT OUR LEGAL TEAM LOOKING FOR A LOOPHOLE WE CAN USE TO GET YOU OUT OF THIS.
WE'LL GET YOU OUT OF THIS.
SO YOU WANT ME TO PLAY ALONG?
IF YOU COULD DO THAT... YOU'D BE HELPING THIS COUNTRY OUT A GREAT DEAL. I'M SURE IT WILL ONLY BE A FEW HOURS. THEY WON'T BE ABLE TO ORGANIZE A WEDDING THAT FAST.
OKAY, WILL DO.
OKAY, FELLAS... I'M ALL YOURS.
GET TO WORK... WE NEED TO GET HIM OUT OF THERE AS SOON AS *POSSIBLE.*
I'M SURE THAT BOY IS SCARED TO DEATH RIGHT NOW.

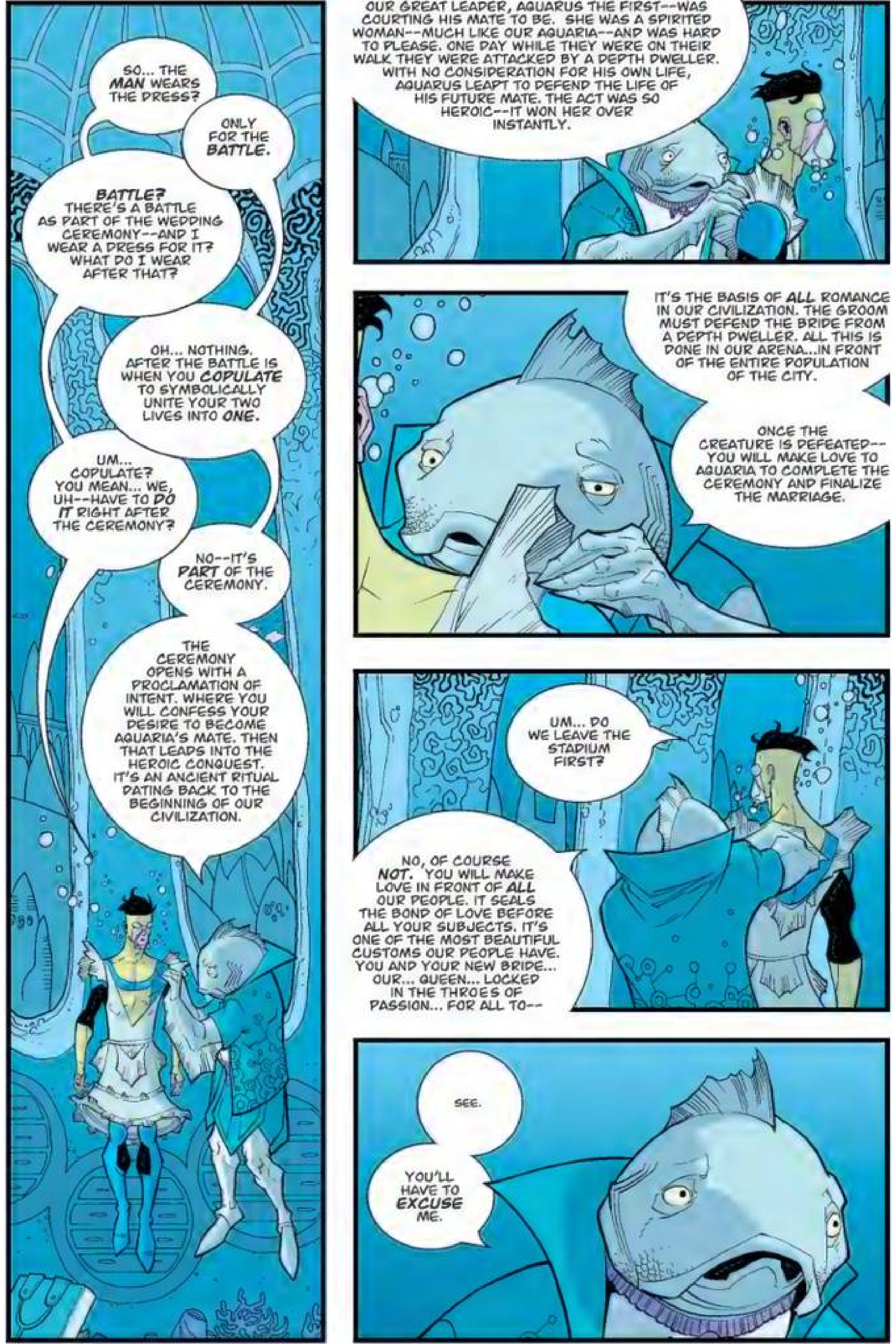

WOW.
THIS IS SO COOL.

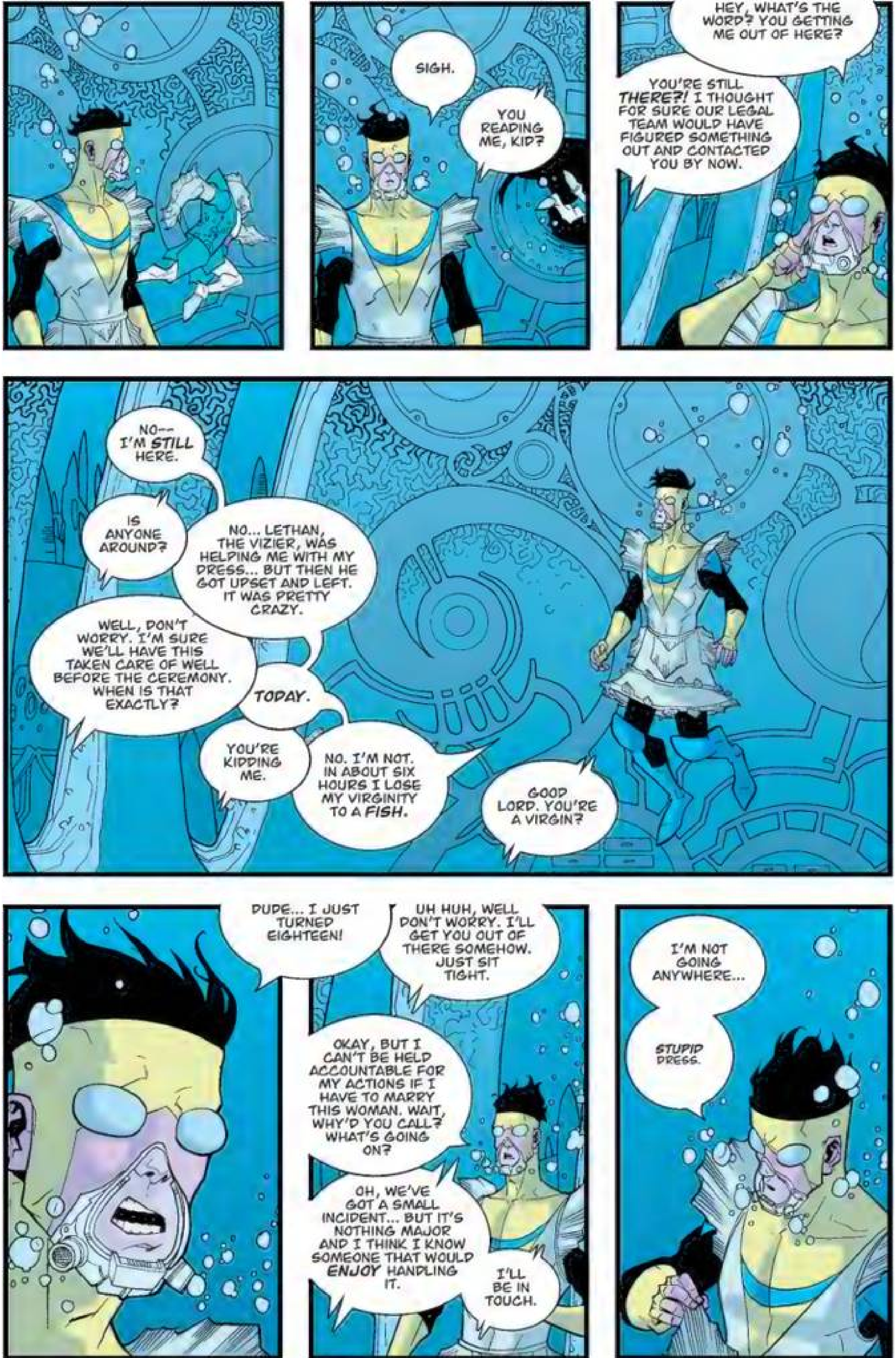

IT SEEMS ALL THE PAPERWORK IS IN ORDER. ALL THE ROYALTIES FROM YOUR HUSBAND'S BOOKS WILL NOW BE SENT DIRECTLY TO YOU, IN YOUR NAME.
YOU SHOULD HAVE A SUBSTANTIAL CHECK COMING YOUR WAY SOON. ALL HIS BOOKS HAVE BEEN SELLING LIKE CRAZY SINCE HE PASSED ON.
I'M, UH-- TERRIBLY SORRY FOR YOUR LOSS.
THANK YOU. I'M JUST GLAD THIS IS ALL TAKEN CARE OF. I--
UM... THERE'S A ROBOT--
OH... UM... SORRY. THIS IS MY *HUSBAND*, IT'LL ONLY TAKE A MINUTE.
CAN I *HELP* YOU?
SORRY, I DIDN'T KNOW YOU WERE IN A MEETING.
CAN'T YOU JUST USE THE ELEVATOR?
YOU KNOW SECURITY ALWAYS HASSLES ME AT THE METAL DETECTOR.
ANYWAY... I JUST WANTED TO LET YOU KNOW THAT I GOT MOVIES FOR TONIGHT. YOU GOING TO BE PICKING UP DINNER?
I CAN DO THAT. ARE YOU OKAY?
I'M *FINE*, CLAIRE. OKAY THEN, SEE YOU TONIGHT. LOVE YOU.
LOVE YOU, TOO.
YOU WOULDN'T BELIEVE WHAT A PAIN IN THE ASS IT IS TO BE MARRIED TO A SUPERHERO.
OH, I DON'T KNOW...

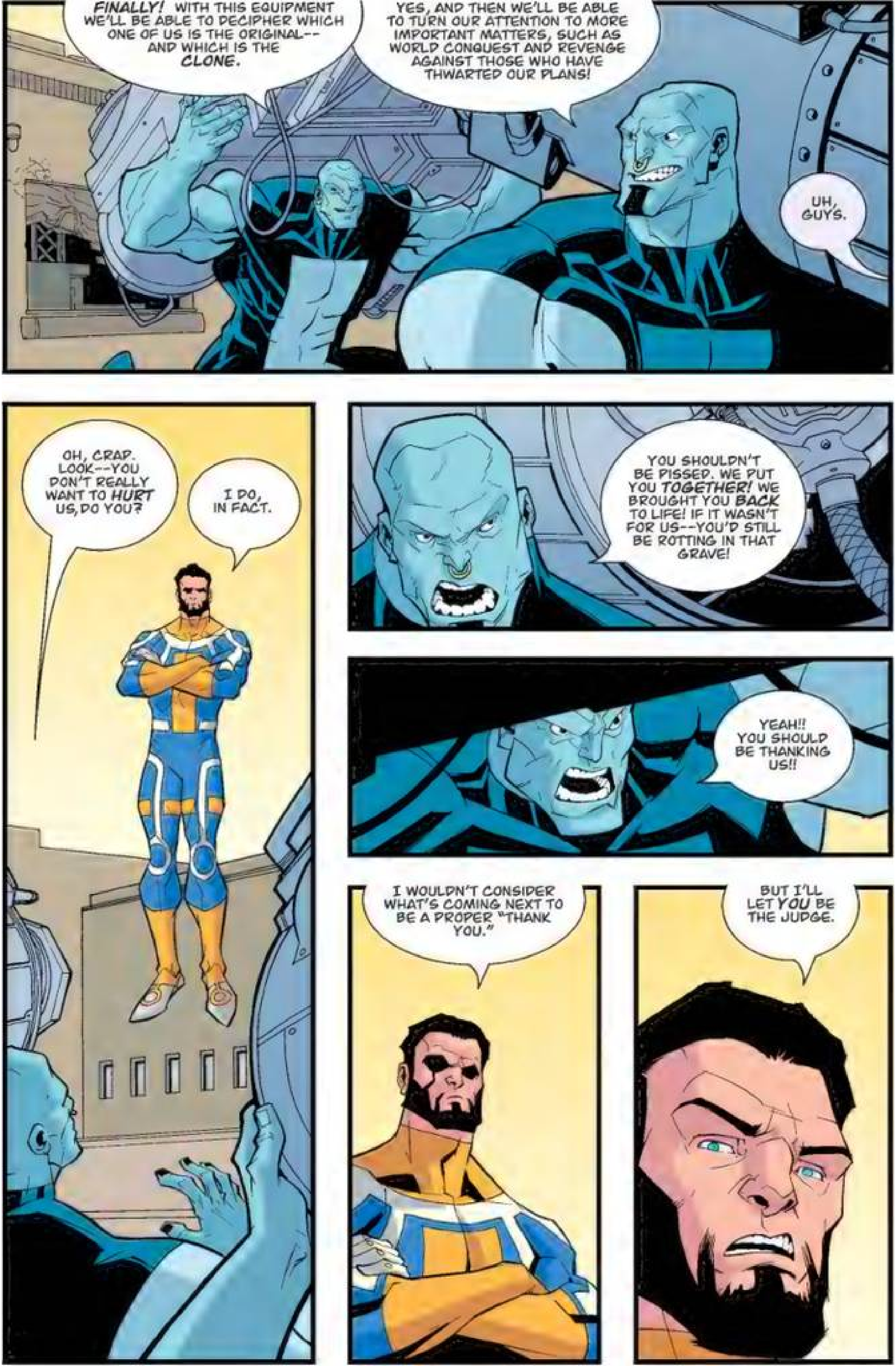

HERE, YOU'LL NEED THIS.
WHAT IS IT?
THAT'S A C.M.G. UNIT--COMPACT MECHANICAL GILLS. WE MAKE THEM FOR WHEN YOUR KIND COME TO VISIT. YOU'LL NEED THEM FROM THIS POINT ON.
THE QUEEN AWAITS YOU THROUGH THERE.
AREN'T YOU COMING WITH ME?
I AM NOT PERMITTED TO ENTER THE ROYAL CHAMBERS. IT IS FORBIDDEN.
OH.
WHAT'S *THAT?* IS THAT A FORCE FIELD?
IT ONLY BLOCKS THE WATER... WALK THROUGH IT.
HEH. THEY HAD ONE OF THESE IN THAT CRAPPY STAR WARS FLICK.
YES, WE *KNOW.*
SO... WHERE DO I GO?
TO THE END OF THE TUNNEL. I'M TOLD YOU CAN'T MISS IT.

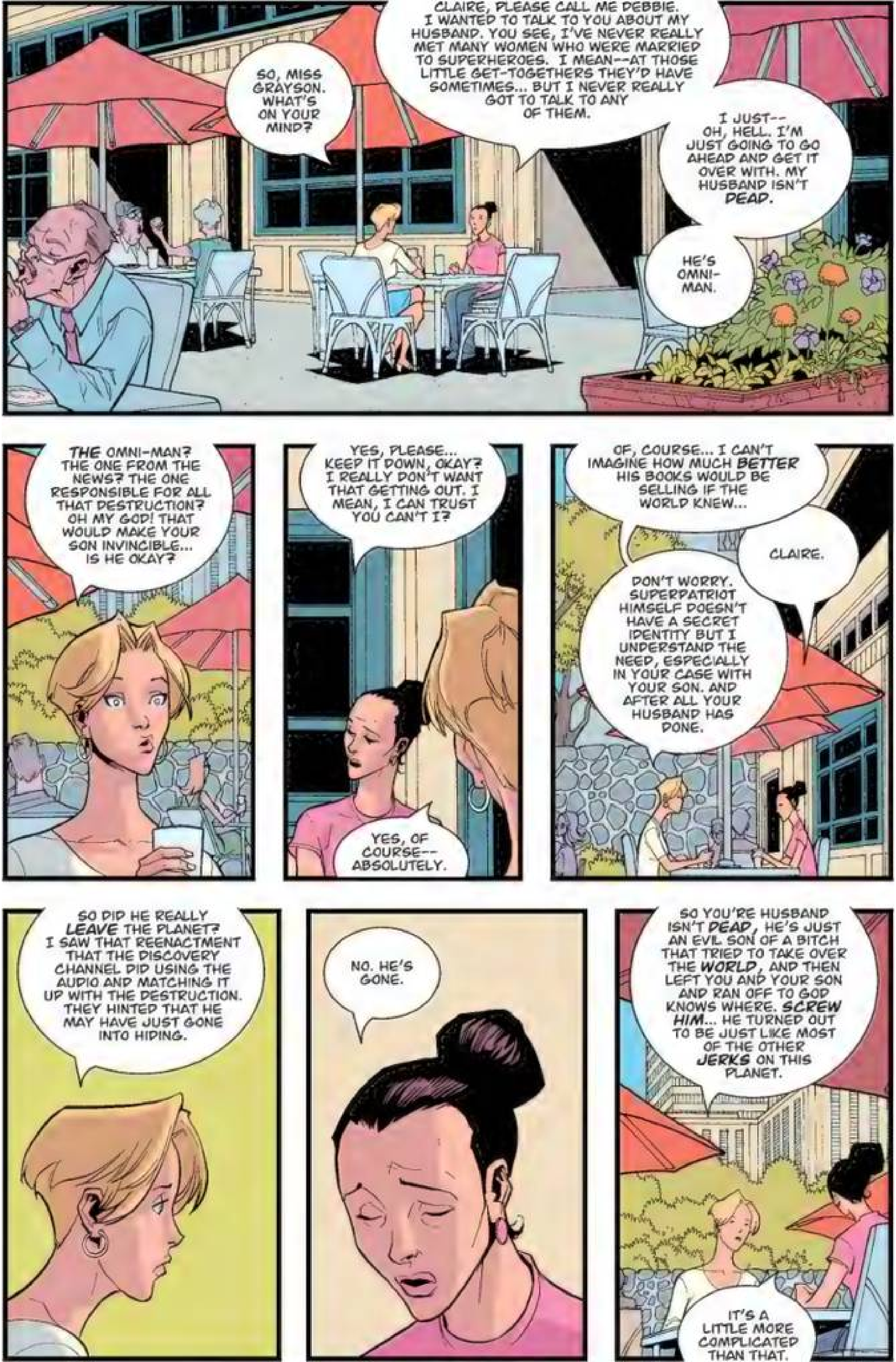

AH... AT LONG LAST, MY FUTURE HUSBAND HAS ARRIVED.
UH... HI.
YOU WILL ADDRESS HER ROYAL HIGHNESS AS "YOUR MAJESTY" AT ALL TIMES--WE WILL HAVE NO MORE DISRESPECT FROM YOU, AIR BREATHER!
LETHAN! DON'T SPEAK TO YOUR FUTURE KING THAT WAY!
I'M SORRY, YOUR MAJESTY.
OH, THAT'S OKAY... I'M, UH... NOT OFFENDED.
SO WE'RE GETTING MARRIED, HUH? THAT'S, UH... GREAT, I'M REALLY LOOKING FORWARD TO IT. WHEN IS IT? A WEEK? A MONTH?
OH, NO.... THE CEREMONY IS TODAY.
OH...
TODAY.

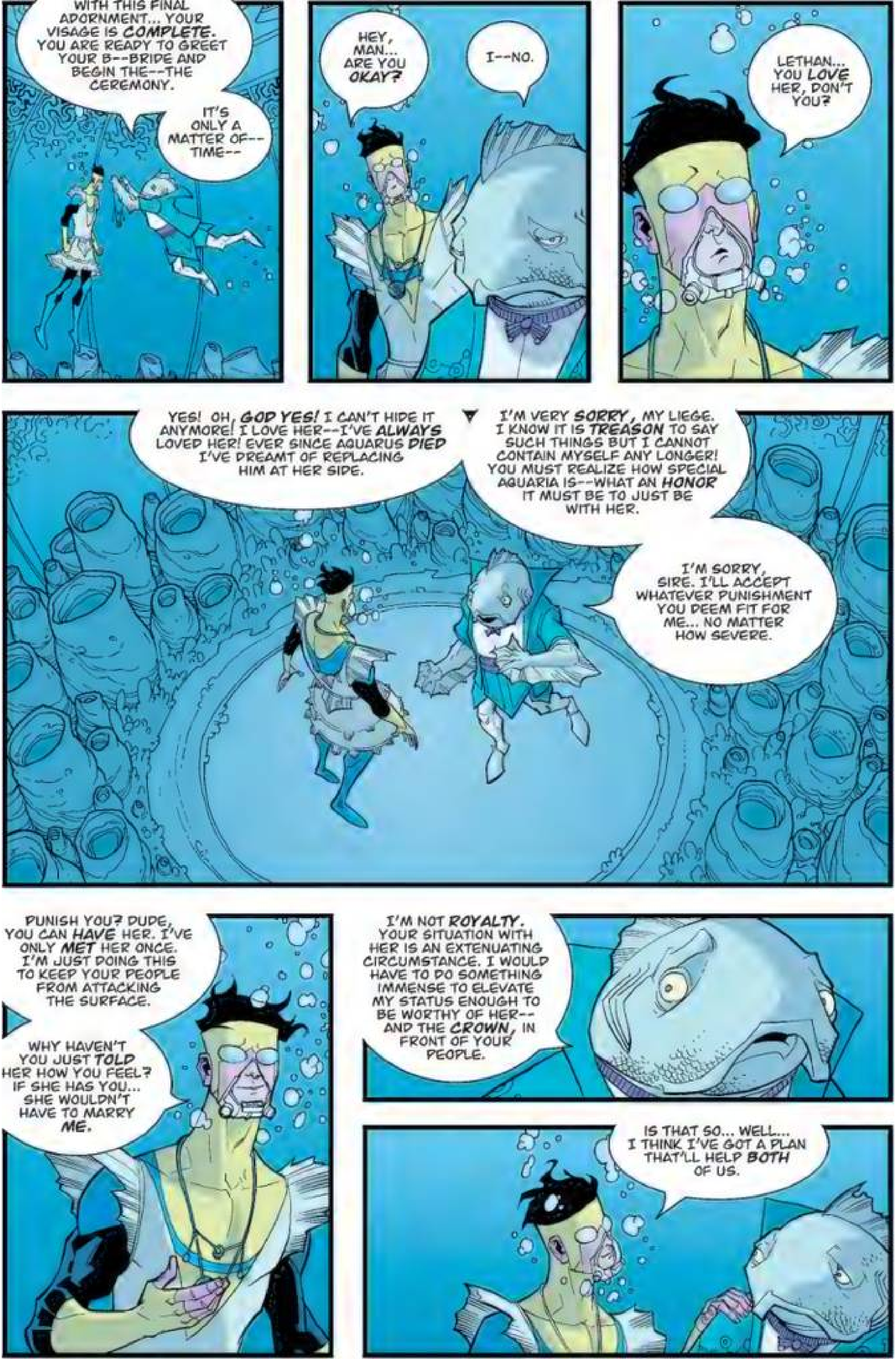

CLAIRE? MISS BONO? DO YOU HAVE A MINUTE?
OH, HI MISS GRAYSON. DID YOU FORGET SOMETHING AT THE OFFICE?
3
CLAIRE, I--I WAS WONDERING IF YOU WOULD GET COFFEE WITH ME LATER TODAY... IF YOU HAD TIME. I'D REALLY LIKE TO TALK TO YOU.
UM... SURE, I GUESS, BUT IF THERE'S SOMETHING WE FORGOT TO GO OVER ON THE CONTRACTS WE COULD JUST DO IT HERE.
NO--IT'S ABOUT MY HUSBAND, I--HE... I JUST WANTED TO... I DON'T HAVE ANYONE ELSE TO TALK TO AND I--
NO... NEVER MIND... THIS IS STUPID.
NO, IT'S NOT. I UNDERSTAND... I LOST MY FATHER A FEW YEARS AGO. I KNOW WHAT YOU'RE GOING THROUGH.
I'LL MEET YOU AT THE COFFEE SHOP ON THE FIRST FLOOR. I'VE GOT A MEETING, BUT I'LL BE DOWN IN ABOUT AN HOUR.
2
OKAY.
THANKS.
I'LL SEE YOU IN AN HOUR.

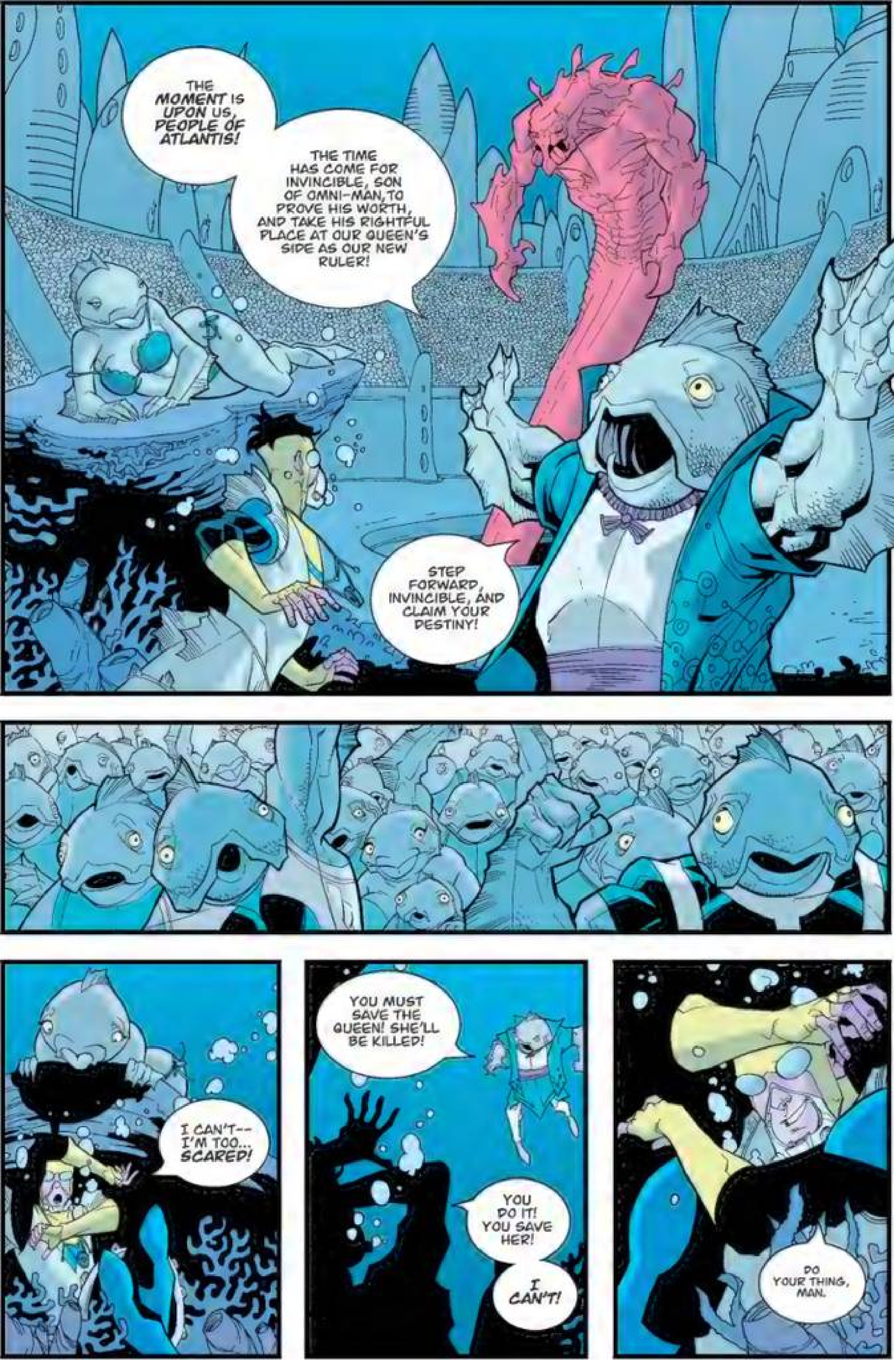

SO... THE MAN WEARS THE DRESS?
ONLY FOR THE BATTLE.
BATTLE? THERE'S A BATTLE AS PART OF THE WEDDING CEREMONY--AND I WEAR A DRESS FOR IT? WHAT DO I WEAR AFTER THAT?
OH... NOTHING. AFTER THE BATTLE IS WHEN YOU COPULATE TO SYMBOLICALLY UNITE YOUR TWO LIVES INTO ONE.
UM... COPULATE? YOU MEAN... WE, UH--HAVE TO DO IT RIGHT AFTER THE CEREMONY?
NO--IT'S PART OF THE CEREMONY.
THE CEREMONY OPENS WITH A PROCLAMATION OF INTENT. WHERE YOU WILL CONFESS YOUR DESIRE TO BECOME AQUARIA'S MATE. THEN THAT LEADS INTO THE HEROIC CONQUEST. IT'S AN ANCIENT RITUAL DATING BACK TO THE BEGINNING OF OUR CIVILIZATION.
OUR GREAT LEADER, AQUARUS THE FIRST--WAS COURTING HIS MATE TO BE. SHE WAS A SPIRITED WOMAN--MUCH LIKE OUR AQUARIA--AND WAS HARD TO PLEASE. ONE DAY WHILE THEY WERE ON THEIR WALK THEY WERE ATTACKED BY A DEPTH DWELLER. WITH NO CONSIDERATION FOR HIS OWN LIFE, AQUARUS LEAPT TO DEFEND THE LIFE OF HIS FUTURE MATE. THE ACT WAS SO HEROIC--IT WON HER OVER INSTANTLY.
IT'S THE BASIS OF ALL ROMANCE IN OUR CIVILIZATION. THE GROOM MUST DEFEND THE BRIDE FROM A DEPTH DWELLER. ALL THIS IS DONE IN OUR ARENA...IN FRONT OF THE ENTIRE POPULATION OF THE CITY.
ONCE THE CREATURE IS DEFEATED--YOU WILL MAKE LOVE TO AQUARIA TO COMPLETE THE CEREMONY AND FINALIZE THE MARRIAGE.
UM... DO WE LEAVE THE STADIUM FIRST?
NO, OF COURSE NOT. YOU WILL MAKE LOVE IN FRONT OF ALL OUR PEOPLE. IT SEALS THE BOND OF LOVE BEFORE ALL YOUR SUBJECTS. IT'S ONE OF THE MOST BEAUTIFUL CUSTOMS OUR PEOPLE HAVE. YOU AND YOUR NEW BRIDE... OUR... QUEEN... LOCKED IN THE THROES OF PASSION... FOR ALL TO--
SEE.
YOU'LL HAVE TO EXCUSE ME.

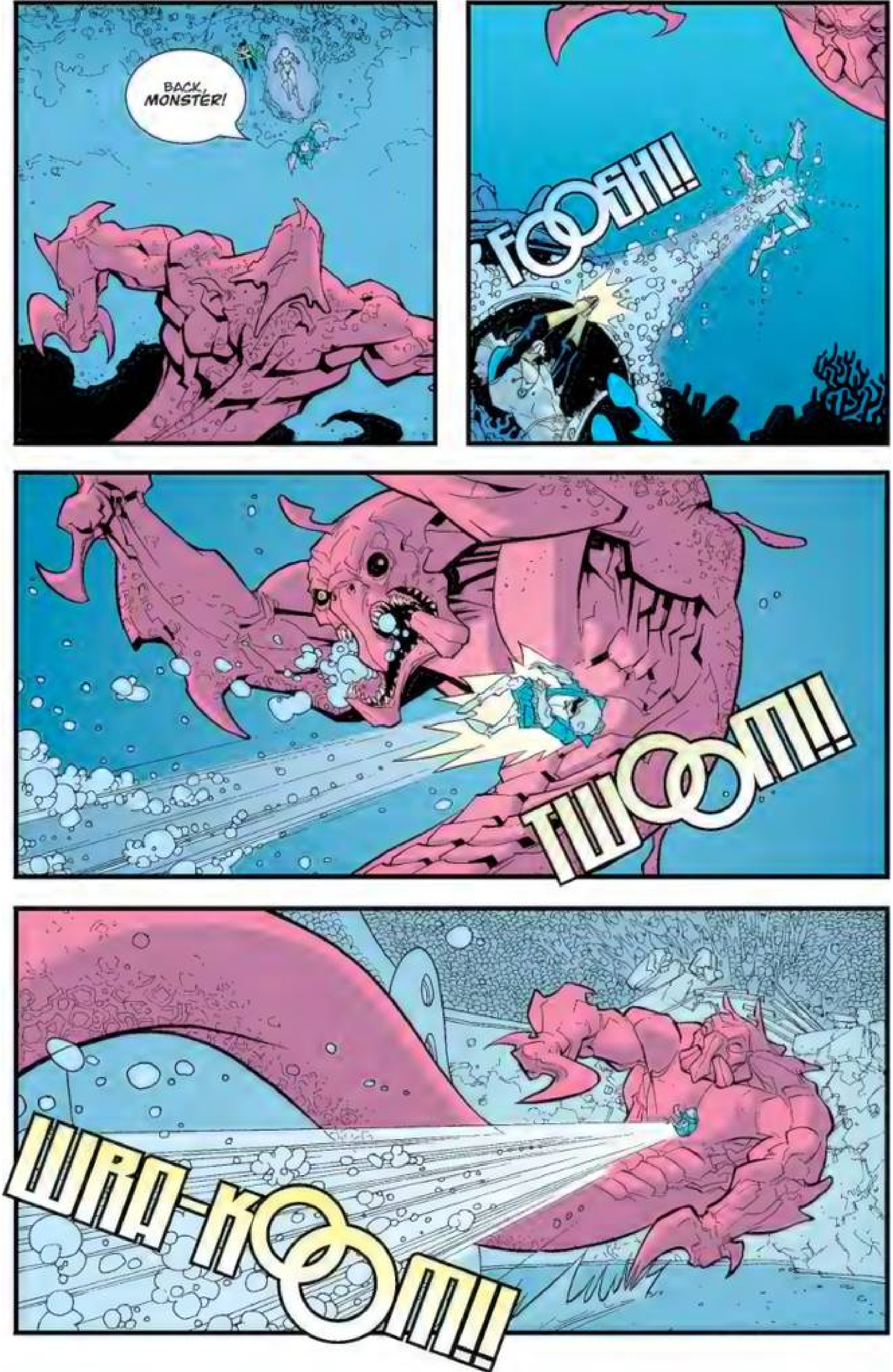

SIGH.
YOU READING ME, KID?
HEY, WHAT'S THE WORD? YOU GETTING ME OUT OF HERE?
YOU'RE STILL THERE?! I THOUGHT FOR SURE OUR LEGAL TEAM WOULD HAVE FIGURED SOMETHING OUT AND CONTACTED YOU BY NOW.
NO-- I'M STILL HERE.
IS ANYONE AROUND?
NO... LETHAN, THE VIZIER, WAS HELPING ME WITH MY DRESS... BUT THEN HE GOT UPSET AND LEFT. IT WAS PRETTY CRAZY.
WELL, DON'T WORRY. I'M SURE WE'LL HAVE THIS TAKEN CARE OF WELL BEFORE THE CEREMONY. WHEN IS THAT EXACTLY?
TODAY.
YOU'RE KIDDING ME.
NO. I'M NOT. IN ABOUT SIX HOURS I LOSE MY VIRGINITY TO A FISH.
GOOD LORD. YOU'RE A VIRGIN?
DUDE... I JUST TURNED EIGHTEEN!
UH HUH, WELL DON'T WORRY. I'LL GET YOU OUT OF THERE SOMEHOW. JUST SIT TIGHT.
OKAY, BUT I CAN'T BE HELD ACCOUNTABLE FOR MY ACTIONS IF I HAVE TO MARRY THIS WOMAN. WAIT, WHY'D YOU CALL? WHAT'S GOING ON?
OH, WE'VE GOT A SMALL INCIDENT... BUT IT'S NOTHING MAJOR AND I THINK I KNOW SOMEONE THAT WOULD ENJOY HANDLING IT.
I'LL BE IN TOUCH.
I'M NOT GOING ANYWHERE...
STUPID DRESS.

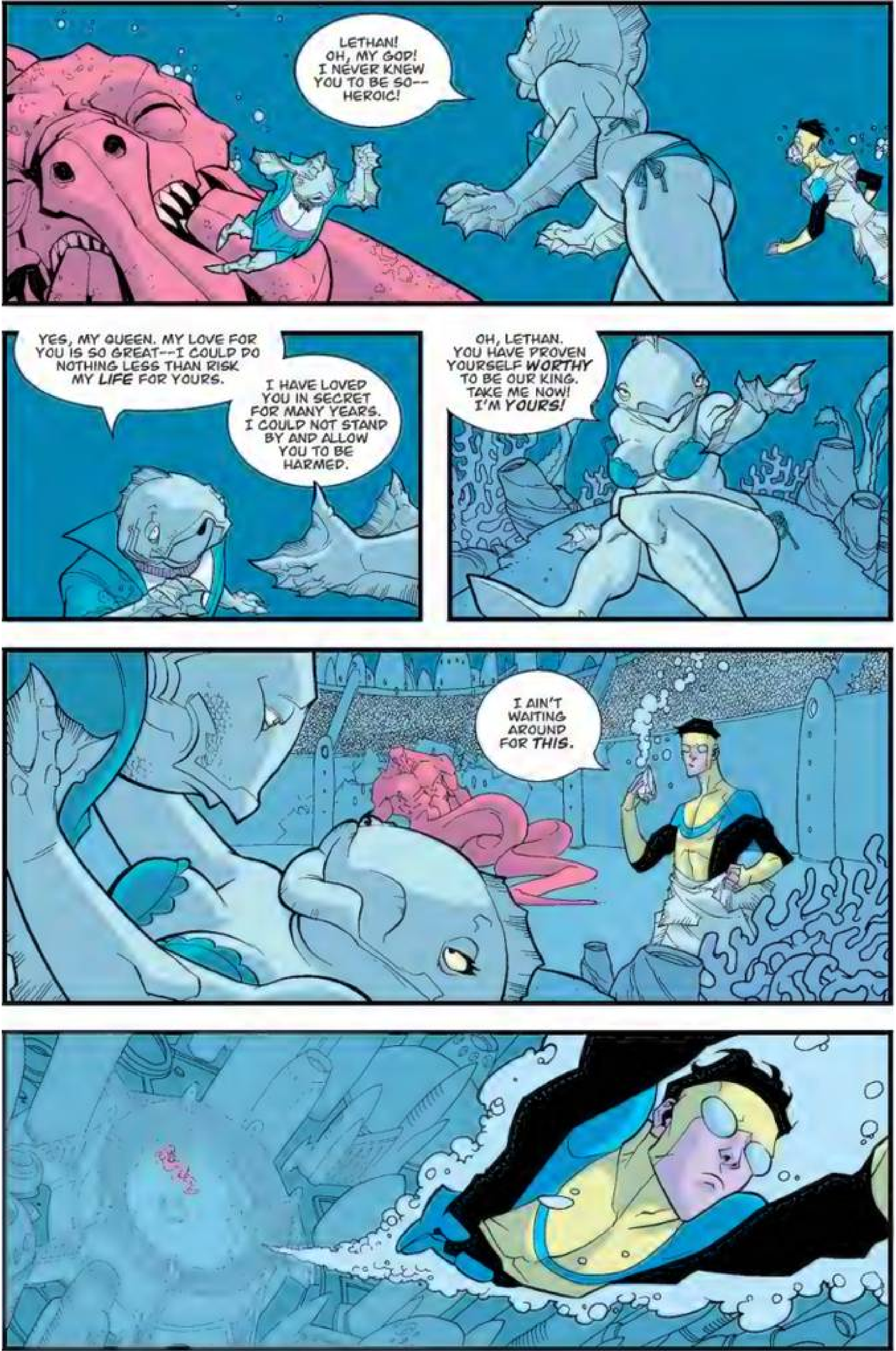

FINALLY! WITH THIS EQUIPMENT WE'LL BE ABLE TO DECIPHER WHICH ONE OF US IS THE ORIGINAL-- AND WHICH IS THE CLONE.
YES, AND THEN WE'LL BE ABLE TO TURN OUR ATTENTION TO MORE IMPORTANT MATTERS, SUCH AS WORLD CONQUEST AND REVENGE AGAINST THOSE WHO HAVE THWARTED OUR PLANS!
UH, GUYS.
OH, CRAP. LOOK--YOU DON'T REALLY WANT TO HURT US, DO YOU?
I DO, IN FACT.
YOU SHOULDN'T BE PISSED. WE PUT YOU TOGETHER! WE BROUGHT YOU BACK TO LIFE! IF IT WASN'T FOR US--YOU'D STILL BE ROTTING IN THAT GRAVE!
YEAH!! YOU SHOULD BE THANKING US!!
I WOULDN'T CONSIDER WHAT'S COMING NEXT TO BE A PROPER "THANK YOU."
BUT I'LL LET YOU BE THE JUDGE.

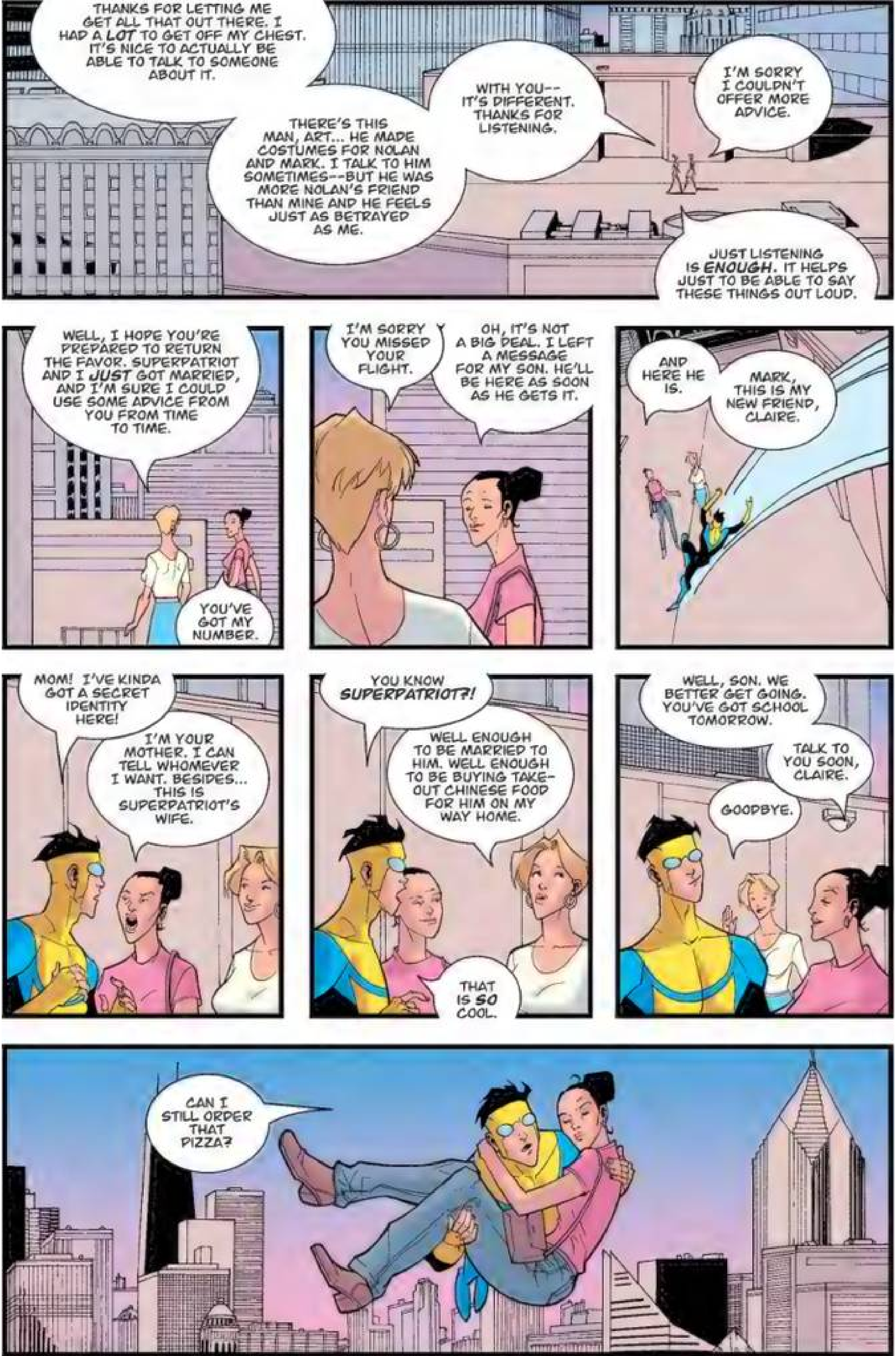

SO, MISS GRAYSON. WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND?
CLAIRE, PLEASE CALL ME DEBBIE. I WANTED TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT MY HUSBAND. YOU SEE, I'VE NEVER REALLY MET MANY WOMEN WHO WERE MARRIED TO SUPERHEROES. I MEAN--AT THOSE LITTLE GET-TOGETHERS THEY'D HAVE SOMETIMES... BUT I NEVER REALLY GOT TO TALK TO ANY OF THEM.
I JUST-- OH, HELL. I'M JUST GOING TO GO AHEAD AND GET IT OVER WITH. MY HUSBAND ISN'T **DEAD**.
HE'S OMNI-MAN.
THE OMNI-MAN? THE ONE FROM THE NEWS? THE ONE RESPONSIBLE FOR ALL THAT DESTRUCTION? OH MY GOD! THAT WOULD MAKE YOUR SON INVINCIBLE... IS HE OKAY?
YES, PLEASE... KEEP IT DOWN, OKAY? I REALLY DON'T WANT THAT GETTING OUT. I MEAN, I CAN TRUST YOU CAN'T I?
YES, OF COURSE-- ABSOLUTELY.
OF, COURSE... I CAN'T IMAGINE HOW MUCH **BETTER** HIS BOOKS WOULD BE SELLING IF THE WORLD KNEW...
CLAIRE.
DON'T WORRY. SUPERPATRIOT HIMSELF DOESN'T HAVE A SECRET IDENTITY BUT I UNDERSTAND THE NEED, ESPECIALLY IN YOUR CASE WITH YOUR SON. AND AFTER ALL YOUR HUSBAND HAS DONE.
SO DID HE REALLY **LEAVE** THE PLANET? I SAW THAT REENACTMENT THAT THE DISCOVERY CHANNEL DID USING THE AUDIO AND MATCHING IT UP WITH THE DESTRUCTION. THEY HINTED THAT HE MAY HAVE JUST GONE INTO HIDING.
NO. HE'S GONE.
SO YOU'RE HUSBAND ISN'T **DEAD**, HE'S JUST AN EVIL SON OF A BITCH THAT TRIED TO TAKE OVER THE **WORLD**, AND THEN LEFT YOU AND YOUR SON AND RAN OFF TO GOD KNOWS WHERE. **SCREW HIM**... HE TURNED OUT TO BE JUST LIKE MOST OF THE OTHER **JERKS** ON THIS PLANET.
IT'S A LITTLE MORE COMPLICATED THAN THAT.


WITH THIS FINAL ADORNMENT... YOUR VISAGE IS COMPLETE. YOU ARE READY TO GREET YOUR B--BRIDE AND BEGIN THE--THE CEREMONY.
IT'S ONLY A MATTER OF--TIME--
HEY, MAN... ARE YOU OKAY?
I--NO.
LETHAN... YOU LOVE HER, DON'T YOU?
YES! OH, GOD YES! I CAN'T HIDE IT ANYMORE! I LOVE HER--I'VE ALWAYS LOVED HER! EVER SINCE AQUARUS DIED I'VE DREAMT OF REPLACING HIM AT HER SIDE.
I'M VERY SORRY, MY LIEGE. I KNOW IT IS TREASON TO SAY SUCH THINGS BUT I CANNOT CONTAIN MYSELF ANY LONGER! YOU MUST REALIZE HOW SPECIAL AQUARIA IS--WHAT AN HONOR IT MUST BE TO JUST BE WITH HER.
I'M SORRY, SIRE. I'LL ACCEPT WHATEVER PUNISHMENT YOU DEEM FIT FOR ME... NO MATTER HOW SEVERE.
PUNISH YOU? DUDE, YOU CAN HAVE HER. I'VE ONLY MET HER ONCE. I'M JUST DOING THIS TO KEEP YOUR PEOPLE FROM ATTACKING THE SURFACE.
WHY HAVEN'T YOU JUST TOLD HER HOW YOU FEEL? IF SHE HAS YOU... SHE WOULDN'T HAVE TO MARRY ME.
I'M NOT ROYALTY. YOUR SITUATION WITH HER IS AN EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCE. I WOULD HAVE TO DO SOMETHING IMMENSE TO ELEVATE MY STATUS ENOUGH TO BE WORTHY OF HER--AND THE CROWN, IN FRONT OF YOUR PEOPLE.
IS THAT SO... WELL... I THINK I'VE GOT A PLAN THAT'LL HELP BOTH OF US.


THE *MOMENT* IS *UPON* US, *PEOPLE OF ATLANTIS!*
THE TIME HAS COME FOR INVINCIBLE, SON OF OMNI-MAN, TO PROVE HIS WORTH, AND TAKE HIS RIGHTFUL PLACE AT OUR QUEEN'S SIDE AS OUR NEW RULER!
STEP FORWARD, INVINCIBLE, AND CLAIM YOUR DESTINY!
I CAN'T-- I'M TOO... *SCARED!*
YOU MUST SAVE THE QUEEN! SHE'LL BE KILLED!
YOU DO IT! YOU SAVE HER!
I CAN'T!
DO YOUR THING, MAN.


BACK, MONSTER!
FOOSH!!
TWOOM!!
WRA-KOOM!!


LETHAN! OH, MY GOD! I NEVER KNEW YOU TO BE SO-- HEROIC!
YES, MY QUEEN. MY LOVE FOR YOU IS SO GREAT--I COULD DO NOTHING LESS THAN RISK MY *LIFE* FOR YOURS.
I HAVE LOVED YOU IN SECRET FOR MANY YEARS. I COULD NOT STAND BY AND ALLOW YOU TO BE HARMED.
OH, LETHAN. YOU HAVE PROVEN YOURSELF *WORTHY* TO BE OUR KING. TAKE ME NOW! I'M *YOURS!*
I AIN'T WAITING AROUND FOR *THIS*.


THANKS FOR LETTING ME GET ALL THAT OUT THERE. I HAD A *LOT* TO GET OFF MY CHEST. IT'S NICE TO ACTUALLY BE ABLE TO TALK TO SOMEONE ABOUT IT.
THERE'S THIS MAN, ART... HE MADE COSTUMES FOR NOLAN AND MARK. I TALK TO HIM SOMETIMES--BUT HE WAS MORE NOLAN'S FRIEND THAN MINE AND HE FEELS JUST AS BETRAYED AS ME.
WITH YOU-- IT'S DIFFERENT. THANKS FOR LISTENING.
I'M SORRY I COULDN'T OFFER MORE ADVICE.
JUST LISTENING IS **ENOUGH.** IT HELPS JUST TO BE ABLE TO SAY THESE THINGS OUT LOUD.
WELL, I HOPE YOU'RE PREPARED TO RETURN THE FAVOR. SUPERPATRIOT AND I *JUST* GOT MARRIED, AND I'M SURE I COULD USE SOME ADVICE FROM YOU FROM TIME TO TIME.
YOU'VE GOT MY NUMBER.
I'M SORRY YOU MISSED YOUR FLIGHT.
OH, IT'S NOT A BIG DEAL. I LEFT A MESSAGE FOR MY SON. HE'LL BE HERE AS SOON AS HE GETS IT.
AND HERE HE IS.
MARK, THIS IS MY NEW FRIEND, CLAIRE.
MOM! I'VE KINDA GOT A SECRET IDENTITY HERE!
I'M YOUR MOTHER. I CAN TELL WHOMEVER I WANT. BESIDES... THIS IS SUPERPATRIOT'S WIFE.
YOU KNOW ***SUPERPATRIOT?!***
WELL ENOUGH TO BE MARRIED TO HIM. WELL ENOUGH TO BE BUYING TAKE-OUT CHINESE FOOD FOR HIM ON MY WAY HOME.
THAT IS *SO* COOL.
WELL, SON. WE BETTER GET GOING. YOU'VE GOT SCHOOL TOMORROW.
TALK TO YOU SOON, CLAIRE.
GOODBYE.
CAN I STILL ORDER THAT PIZZA?

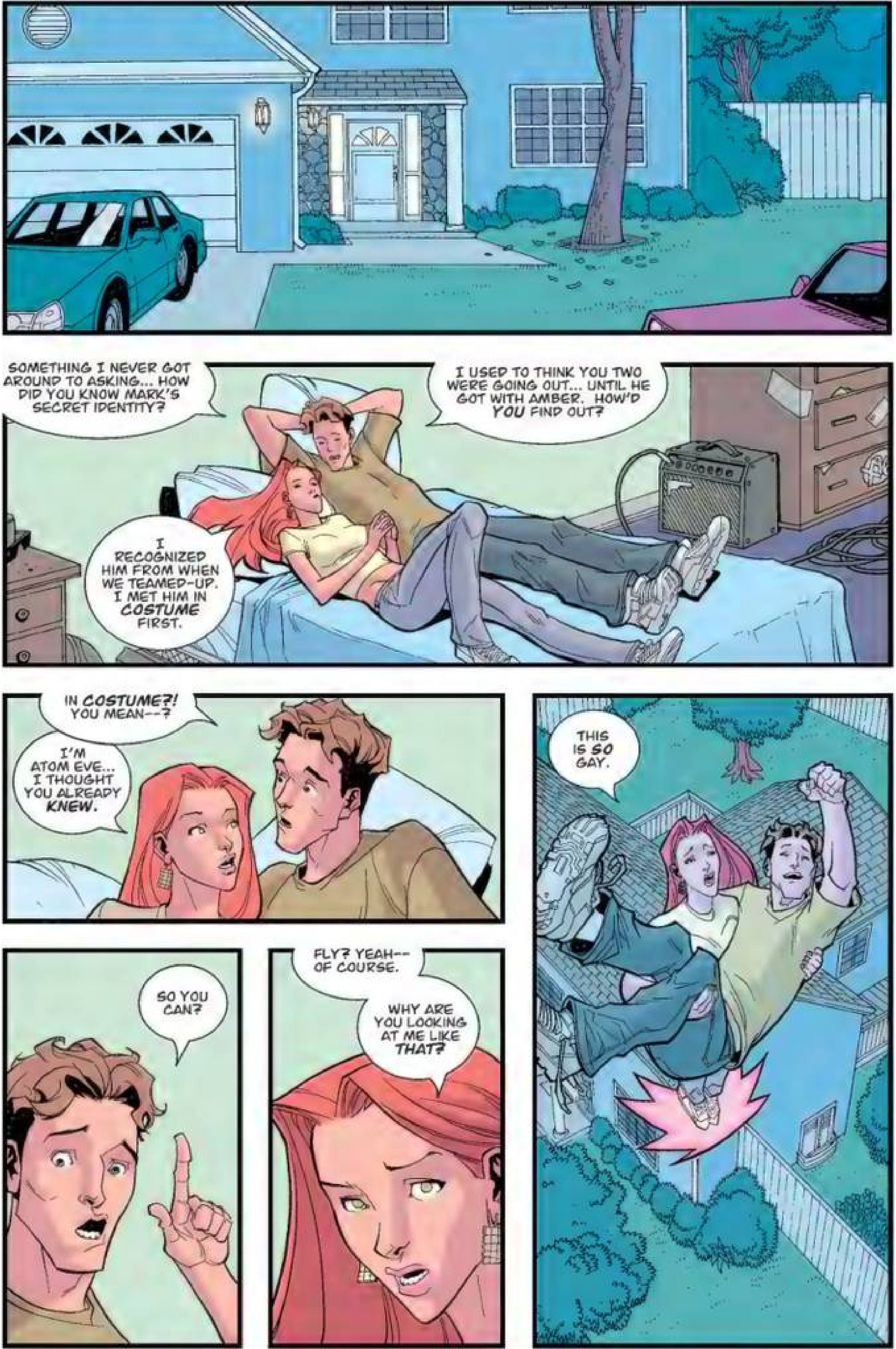
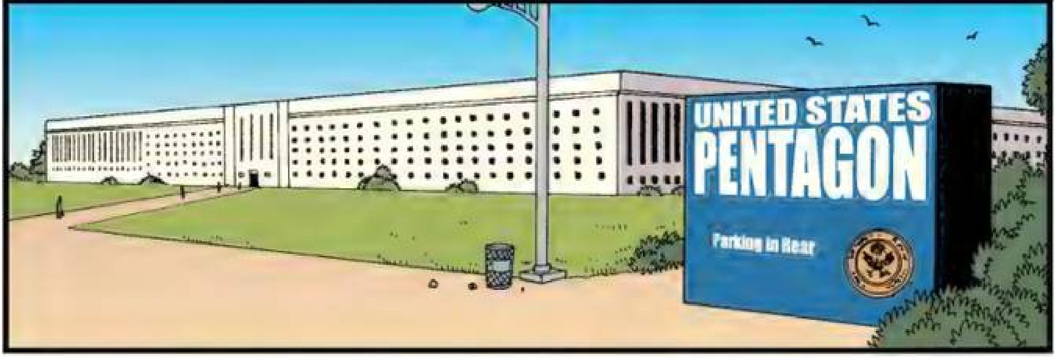

SOMETHING I NEVER GOT AROUND TO ASKING... HOW DID YOU KNOW MARK'S SECRET IDENTITY?
I USED TO THINK YOU TWO WERE GOING OUT... UNTIL HE GOT WITH AMBER. HOW'D *YOU* FIND OUT?
I RECOGNIZED HIM FROM WHEN WE TEAMED-UP. I MET HIM IN *COSTUME* FIRST.
IN *COSTUME?!* YOU MEAN--?
I'M ATOM EVE... I THOUGHT YOU ALREADY *KNEW.*
SO YOU CAN?
FLY? YEAH-- OF COURSE.
WHY ARE YOU LOOKING AT ME LIKE *THAT?*
THIS IS *SO* GAY.

IMAGE COMICS
SUMMER SPECIAL
MCFARLANE
SILVESTRI
BATT


UNITED STATES
PENTAGON
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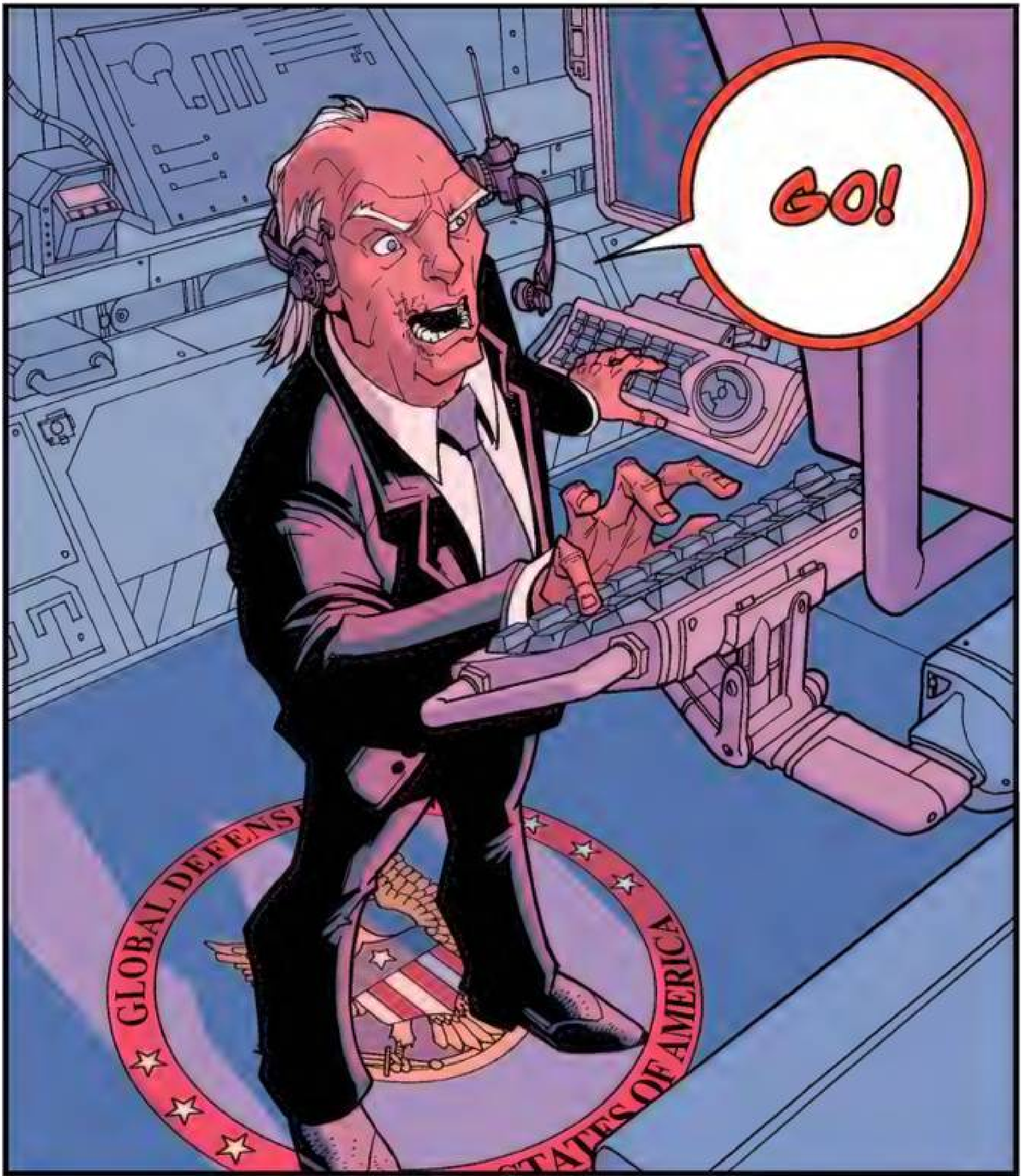
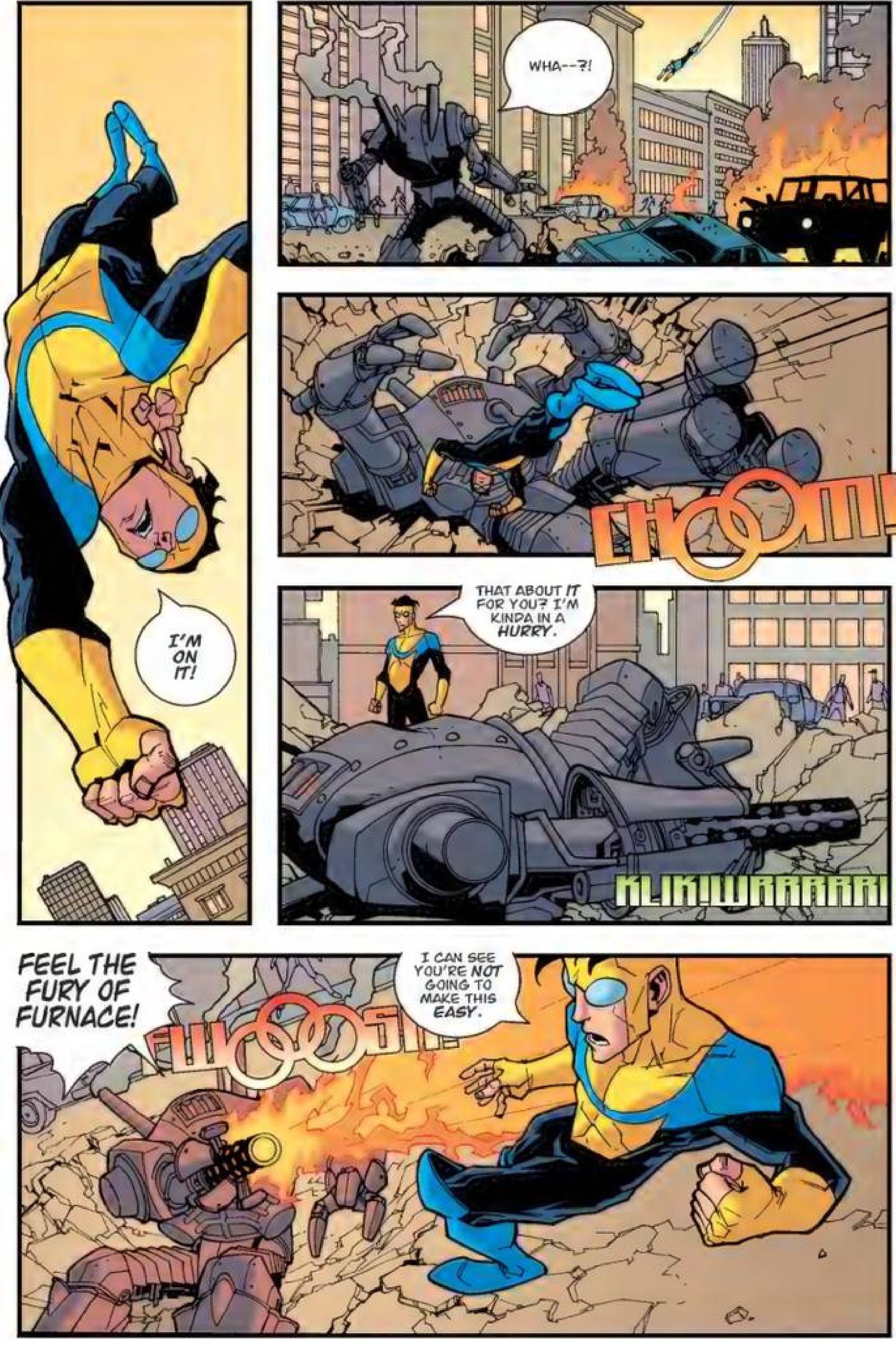
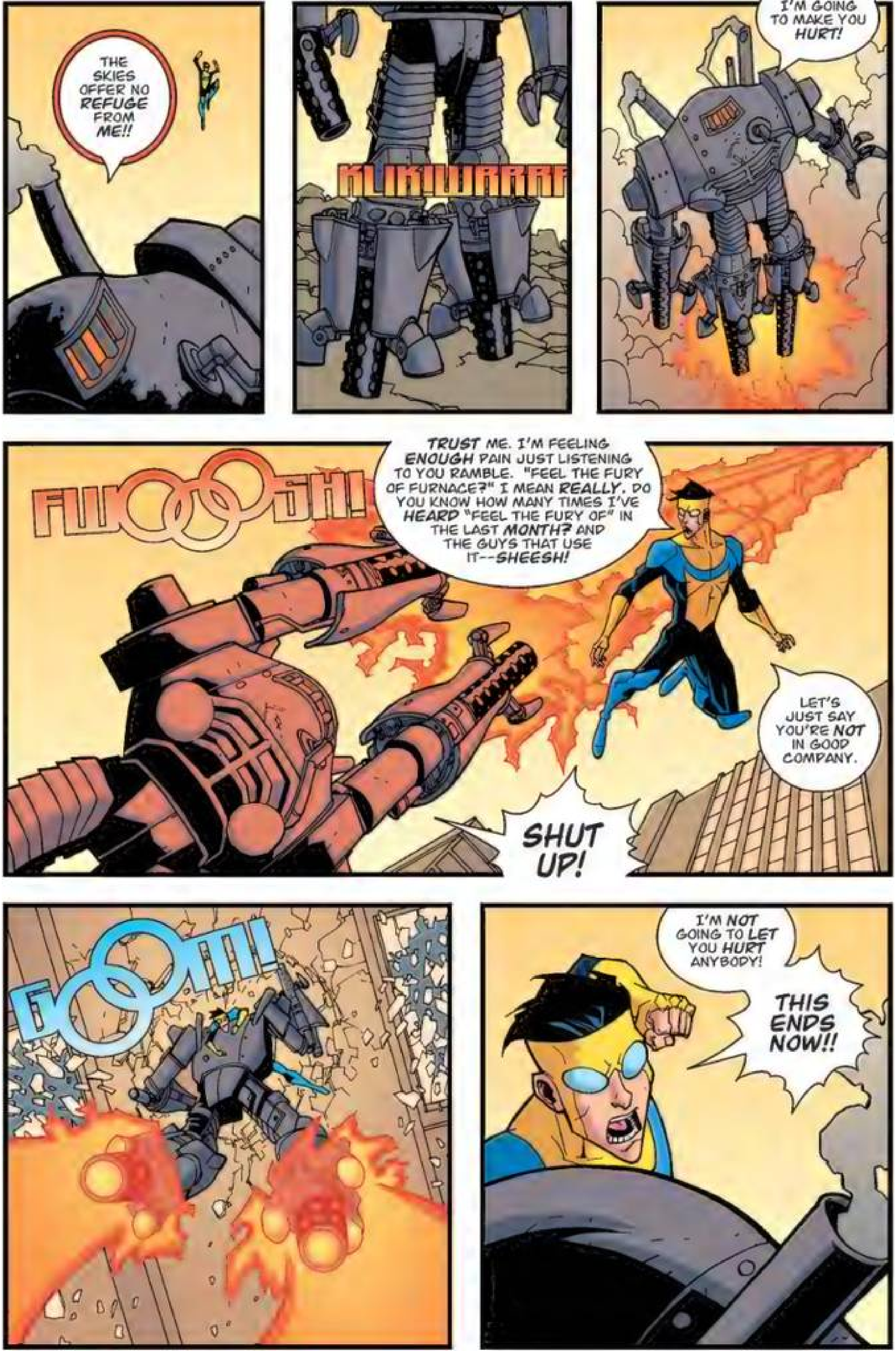
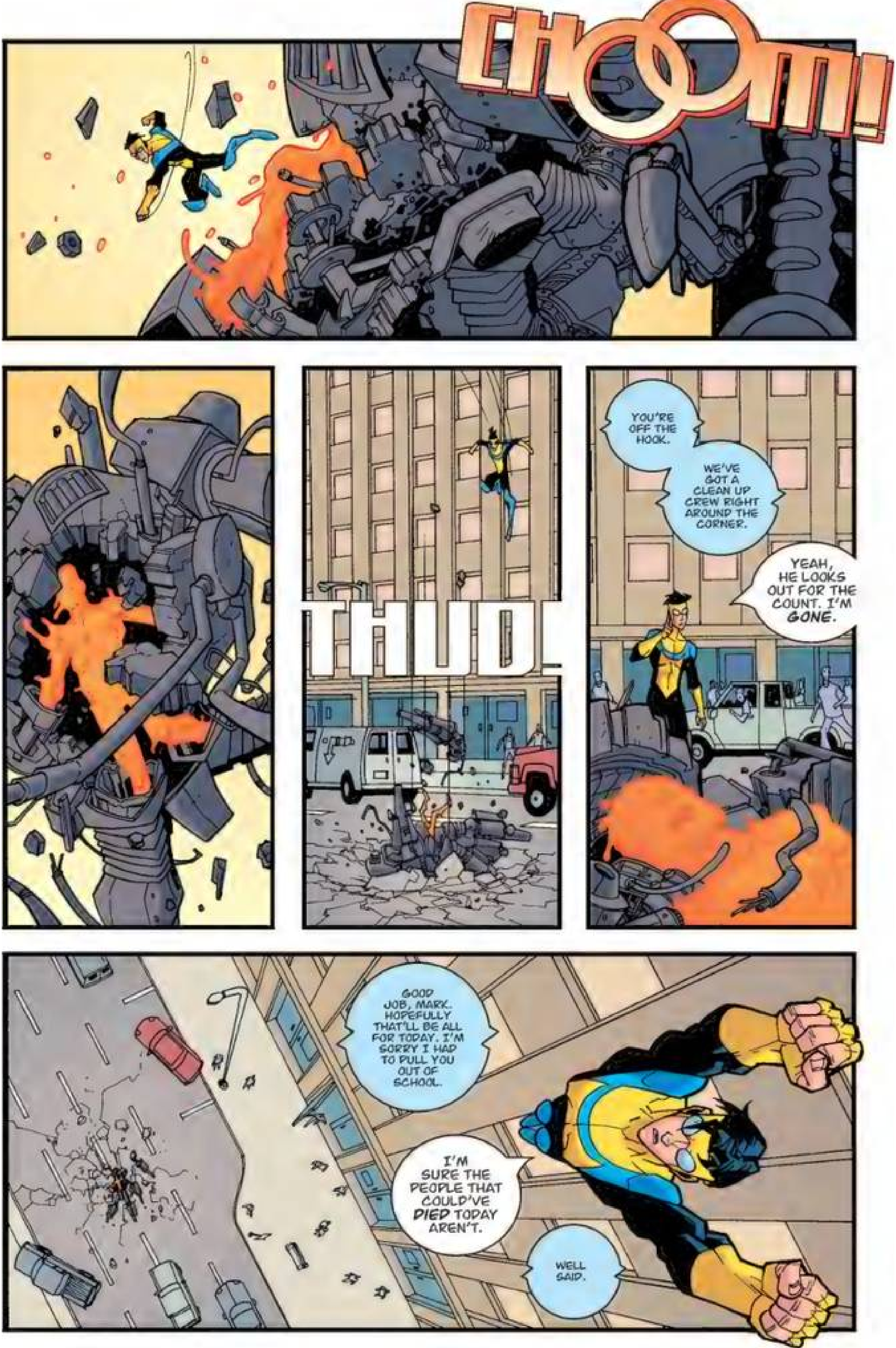
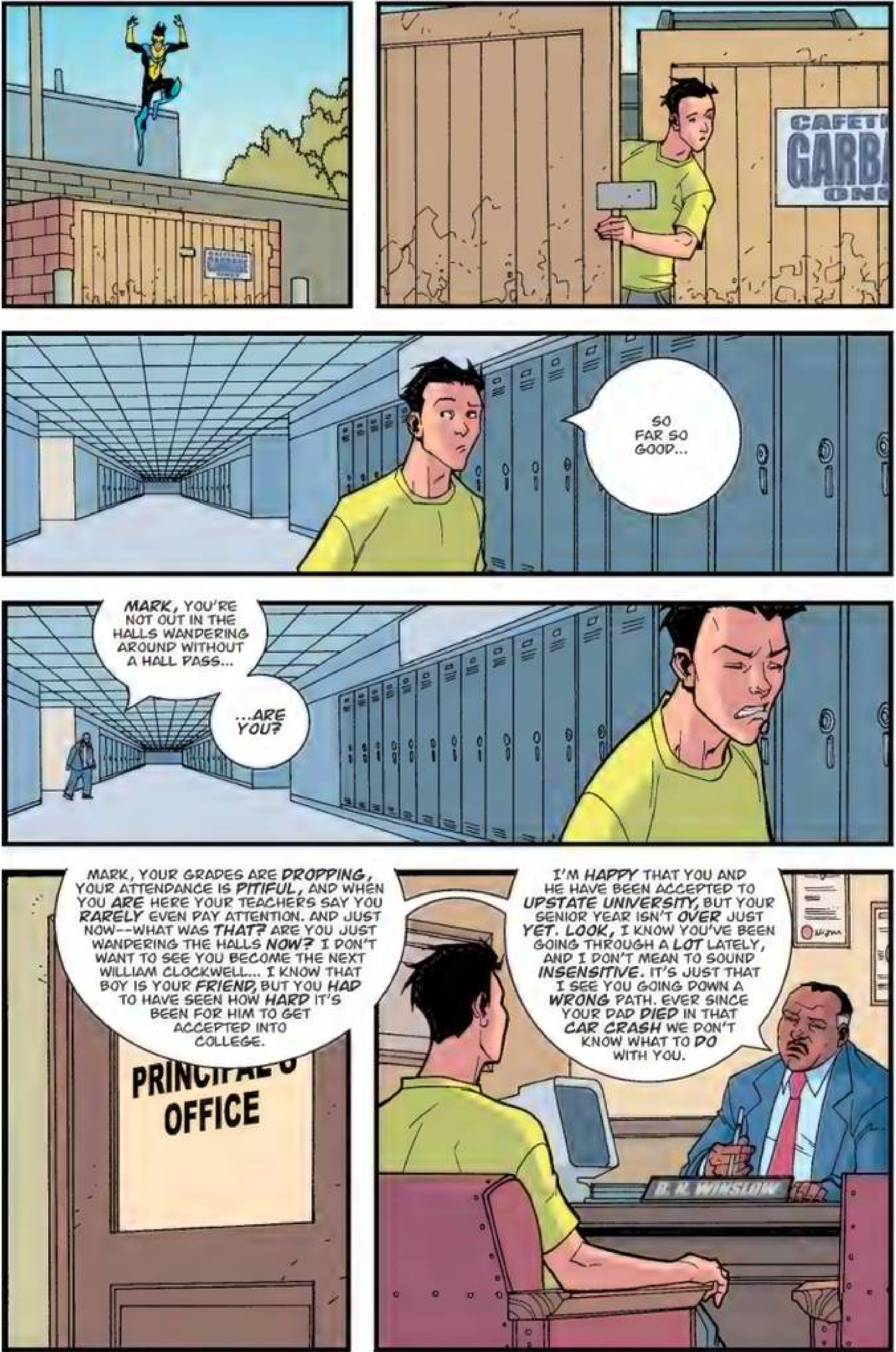
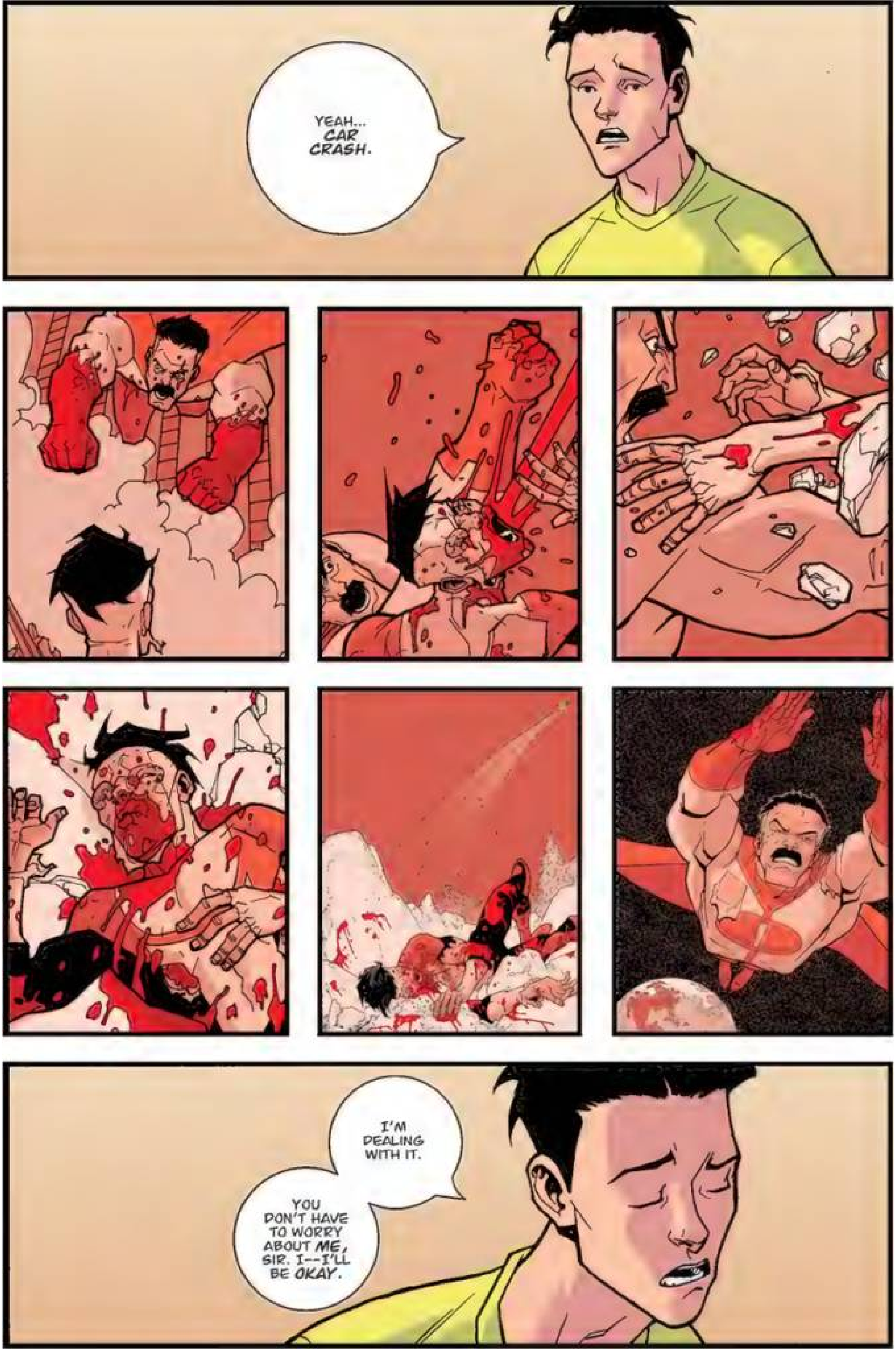

GO!
GLOBAL DEFENS
STATES OF AMERICA

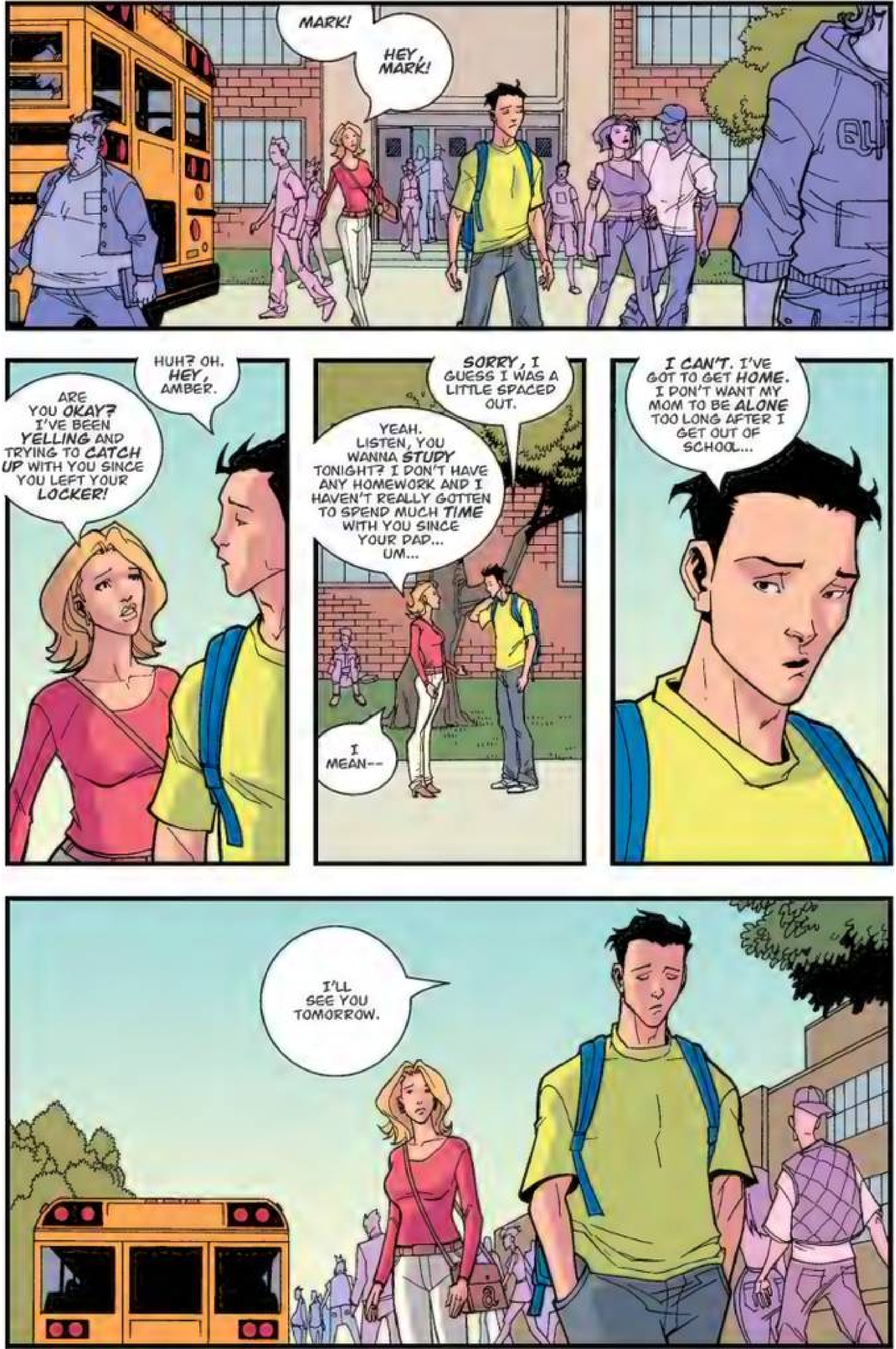

I'M ON IT!
WHA--?!
CHOOM!
THAT ABOUT *IT* FOR YOU? I'M KINDA IN A *HURRY*.
KLIK!WRRRRR
FEEL THE FURY OF FURNACE!
FWOOSH!
I CAN SEE YOU'RE *NOT* GOING TO MAKE THIS *EASY*.

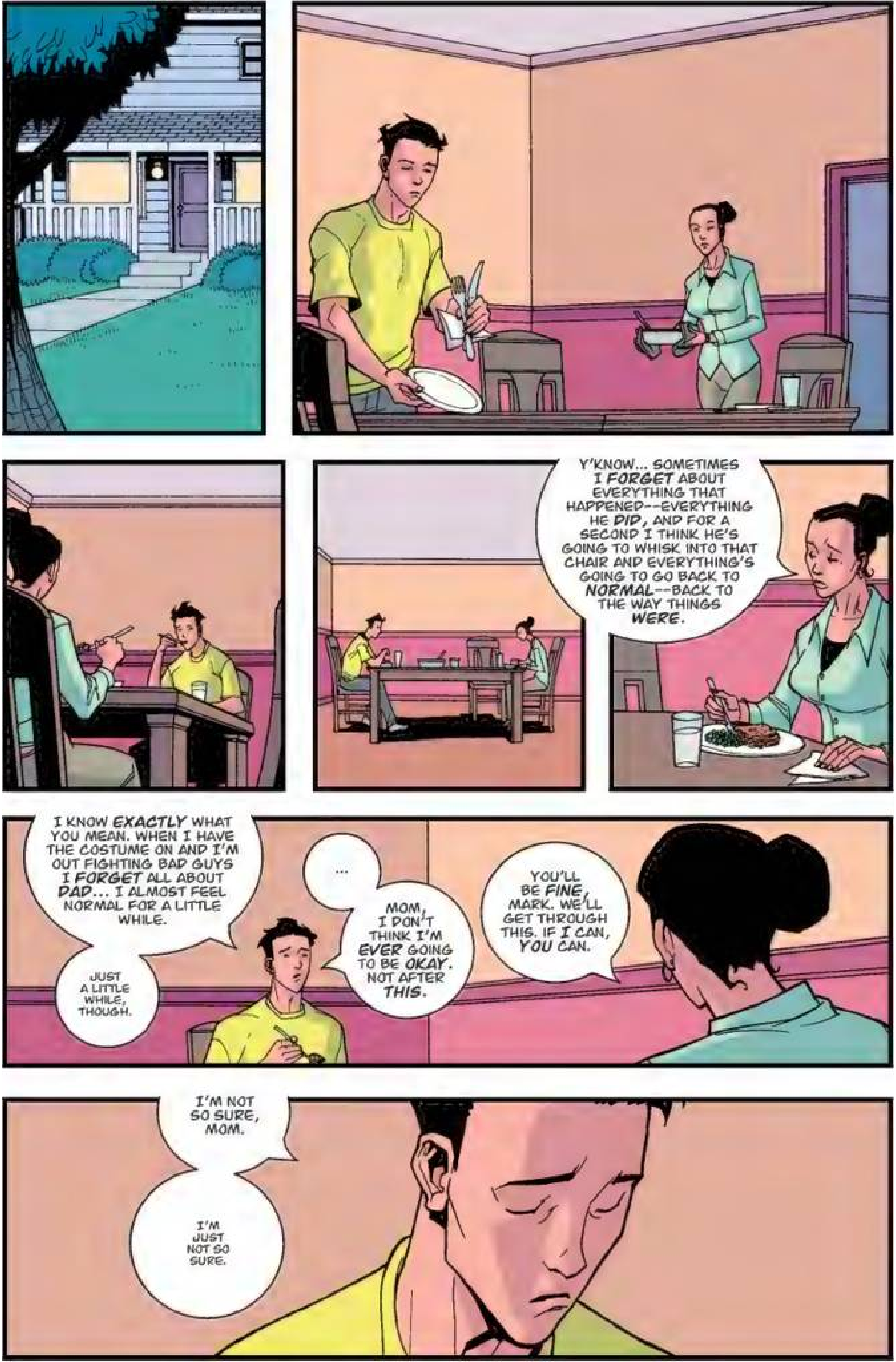

THE SKIES OFFER NO *REFUGE* FROM *ME!!*
KLIK!WRRRR
I'M GOING TO MAKE YOU *HURT!*
FWOOOSH!
TRUST ME. I'M FEELING *ENOUGH* PAIN JUST LISTENING TO YOU RAMBLE. "FEEL THE FURY OF FURNACE?" I MEAN *REALLY.* DO YOU KNOW HOW MANY TIMES I'VE *HEARD* "FEEL THE FURY OF" IN THE LAST *MONTH?* AND THE GUYS THAT USE IT--*SHEESH!*
LET'S JUST SAY YOU'RE *NOT* IN GOOD COMPANY.
SHUT UP!
BOOM!
I'M *NOT* GOING TO *LET* YOU *HURT* ANYBODY!
THIS ENDS NOW!!

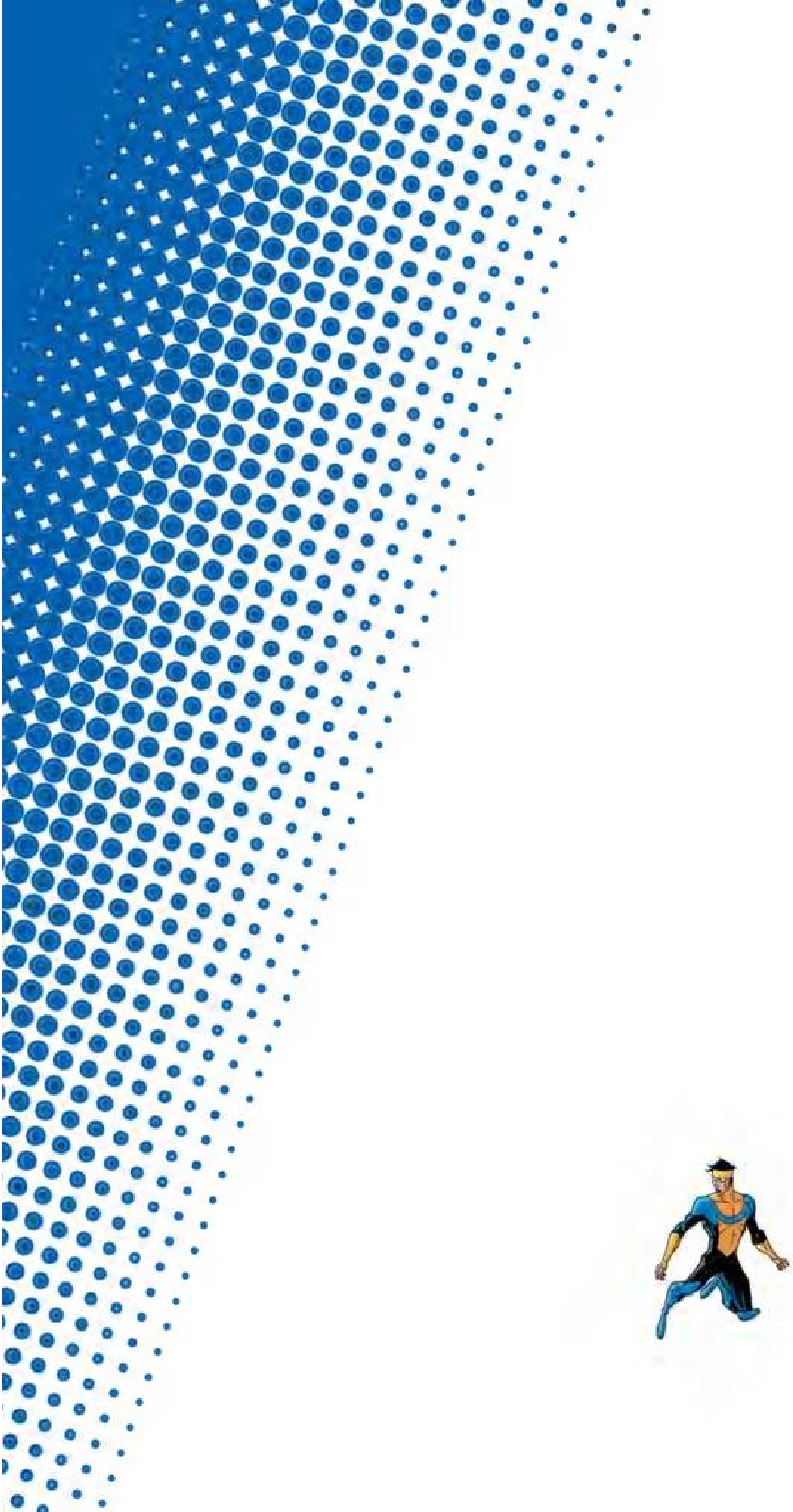

CHOOM!
THUD
YOU'RE OFF THE HOOK.
WE'VE GOT A CLEAN UP CREW RIGHT AROUND THE CORNER.
YEAH, HE LOOKS OUT FOR THE COUNT. I'M **GONE**.
GOOD JOB, MARK. HOPEFULLY THAT'LL BE ALL FOR TODAY. I'M SORRY I HAD TO PULL YOU OUT OF SCHOOL.
I'M SURE THE PEOPLE THAT COULD'VE **DIED** TODAY AREN'T.
WELL SAID.


CAFETI
GARBA
ONL
SO FAR SO GOOD...
MARK, YOU'RE NOT OUT IN THE HALLS WANDERING AROUND WITHOUT A HALL PASS...
...ARE YOU?
MARK, YOUR GRADES ARE DROPPING, YOUR ATTENDANCE IS PITIFUL, AND WHEN YOU ARE HERE YOUR TEACHERS SAY YOU RARELY EVEN PAY ATTENTION. AND JUST NOW--WHAT WAS THAT? ARE YOU JUST WANDERING THE HALLS NOW? I DON'T WANT TO SEE YOU BECOME THE NEXT WILLIAM CLOCKWELL... I KNOW THAT BOY IS YOUR FRIEND, BUT YOU HAD TO HAVE SEEN HOW HARD IT'S BEEN FOR HIM TO GET ACCEPTED INTO COLLEGE.
PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE
I'M HAPPY THAT YOU AND HE HAVE BEEN ACCEPTED TO UPSTATE UNIVERSITY, BUT YOUR SENIOR YEAR ISN'T OVER JUST YET. LOOK, I KNOW YOU'VE BEEN GOING THROUGH A LOT LATELY, AND I DON'T MEAN TO SOUND INSENSITIVE. IT'S JUST THAT I SEE YOU GOING DOWN A WRONG PATH. EVER SINCE YOUR DAD DIED IN THAT CAR CRASH WE DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO WITH YOU.
B. K. WINSLOW

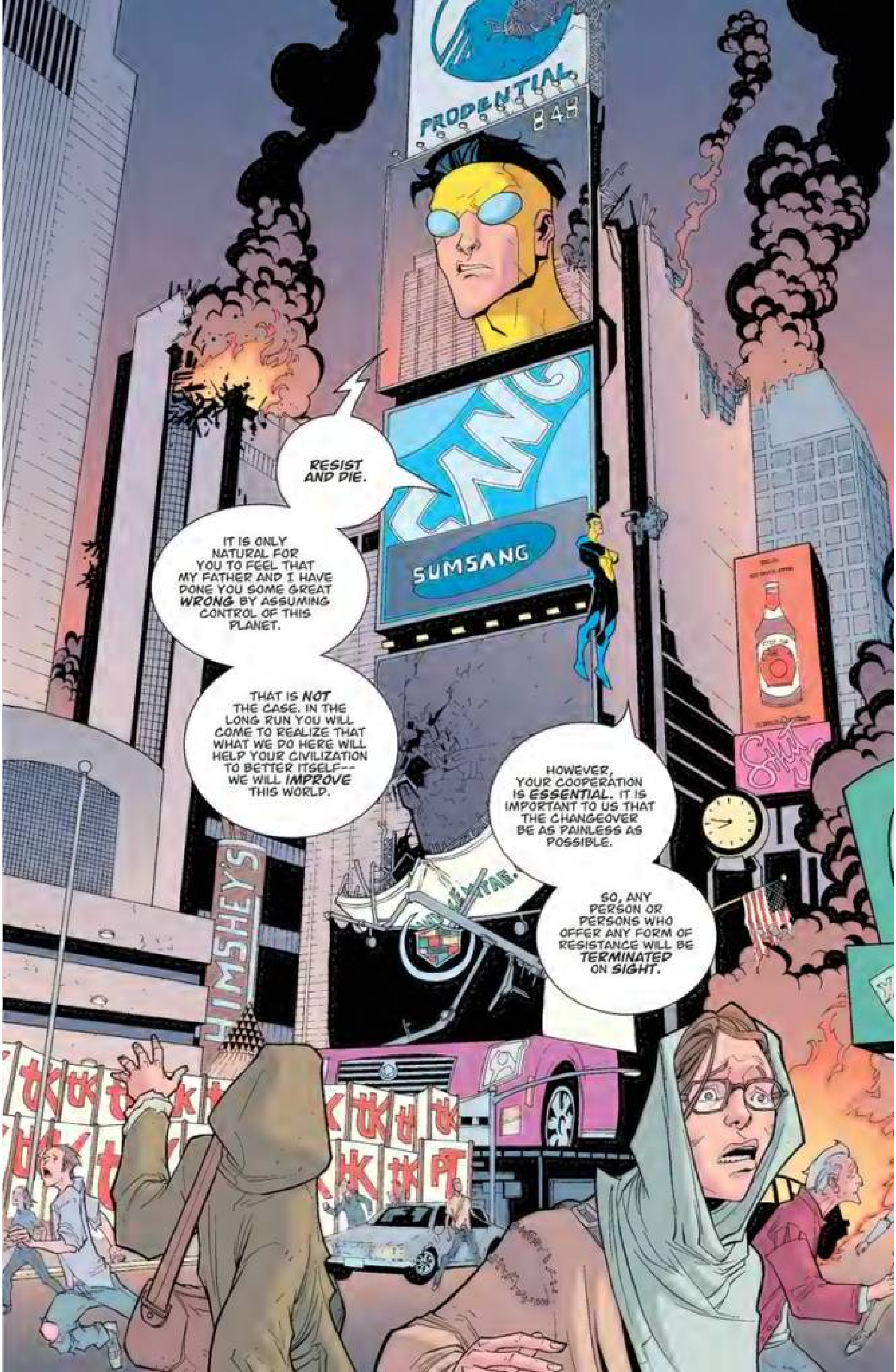

YEAH... CAR CRASH.
I'M DEALING WITH IT.
YOU DON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT ME, SIR. I--I'LL BE OKAY.

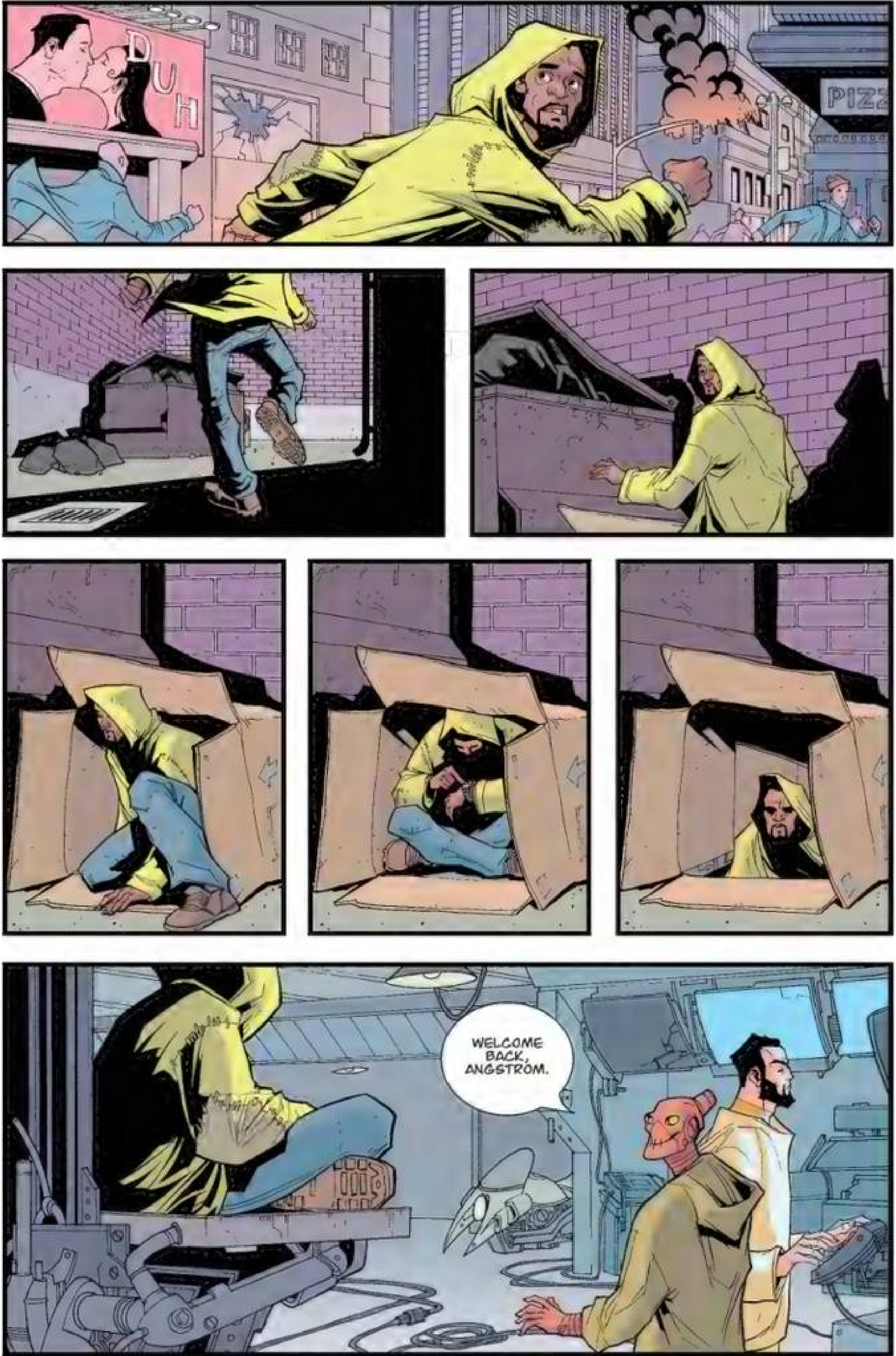

MARK!
HEY, MARK!
ARE YOU OKAY? I'VE BEEN YELLING AND TRYING TO CATCH UP WITH YOU SINCE YOU LEFT YOUR LOCKER!
HUH? OH. HEY, AMBER.
SORRY, I GUESS I WAS A LITTLE SPACED OUT.
YEAH. LISTEN, YOU WANNA STUDY TONIGHT? I DON'T HAVE ANY HOMEWORK AND I HAVEN'T REALLY GOTTEN TO SPEND MUCH TIME WITH YOU SINCE YOUR DAD... UM...
I MEAN--
I CAN'T. I'VE GOT TO GET HOME. I DON'T WANT MY MOM TO BE ALONE TOO LONG AFTER I GET OUT OF SCHOOL...
I'LL SEE YOU TOMORROW.

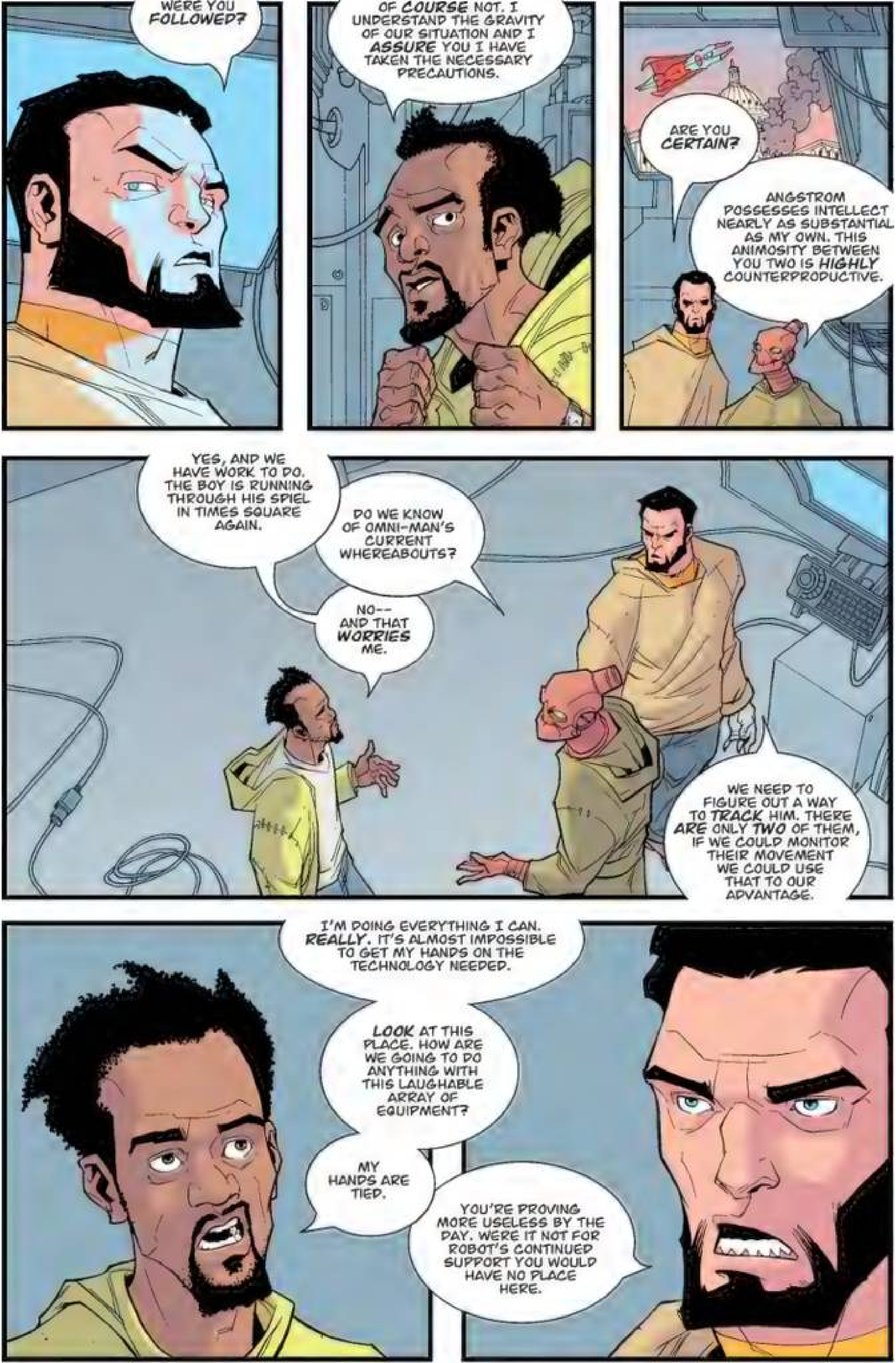

Y'KNOW... SOMETIMES I **FORGET** ABOUT EVERYTHING THAT HAPPENED--EVERYTHING HE **DID**, AND FOR A SECOND I THINK HE'S GOING TO WHISK INTO THAT CHAIR AND EVERYTHING'S GOING TO GO BACK TO **NORMAL**--BACK TO THE WAY THINGS **WERE**.
I KNOW **EXACTLY** WHAT YOU MEAN. WHEN I HAVE THE COSTUME ON AND I'M OUT FIGHTING BAD GUYS **I FORGET** ALL ABOUT **DAD**... I ALMOST FEEL NORMAL FOR A LITTLE WHILE.
JUST A LITTLE WHILE, THOUGH.
...
MOM, I DON'T THINK I'M **EVER** GOING TO BE **OKAY**. NOT AFTER **THIS**.
YOU'LL BE **FINE**, MARK. WE'LL GET THROUGH THIS. IF **I** CAN, **YOU** CAN.
I'M NOT SO SURE, MOM.
I'M JUST NOT SO SURE.

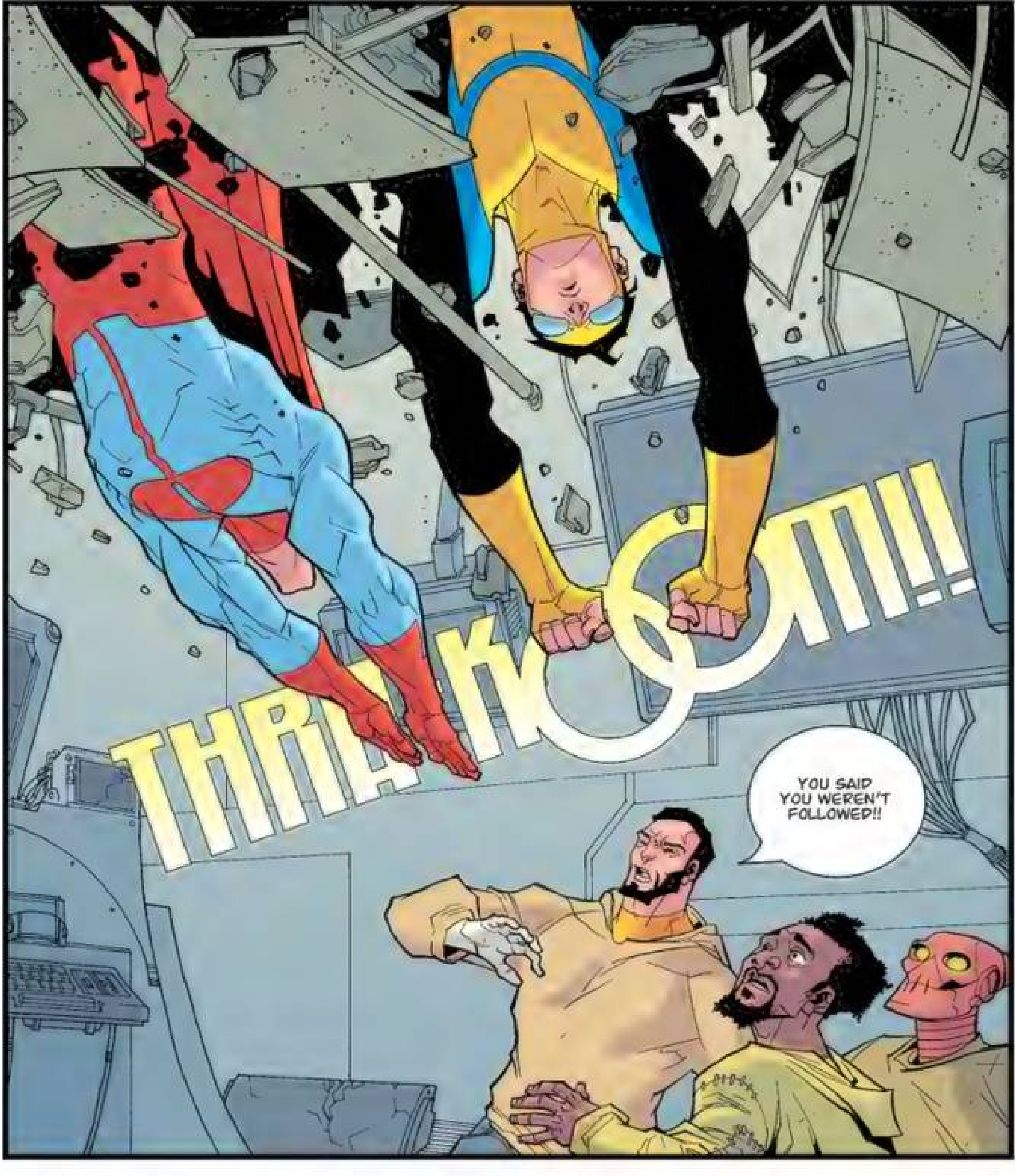


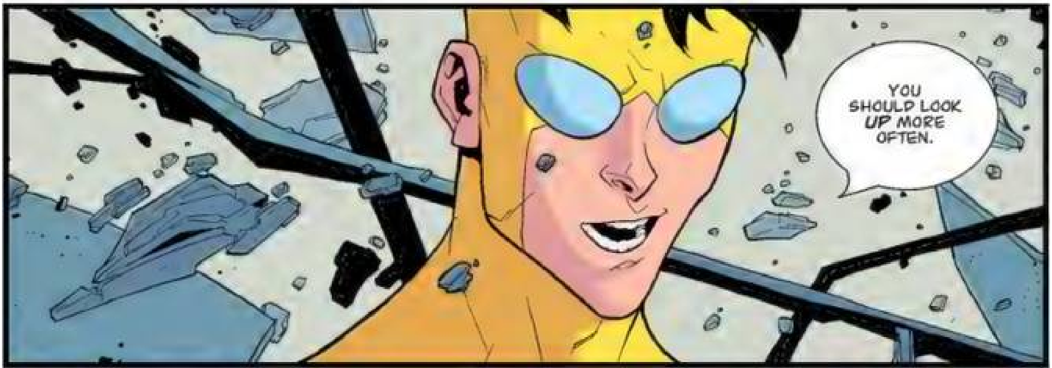
ISSUE SIXTEEN

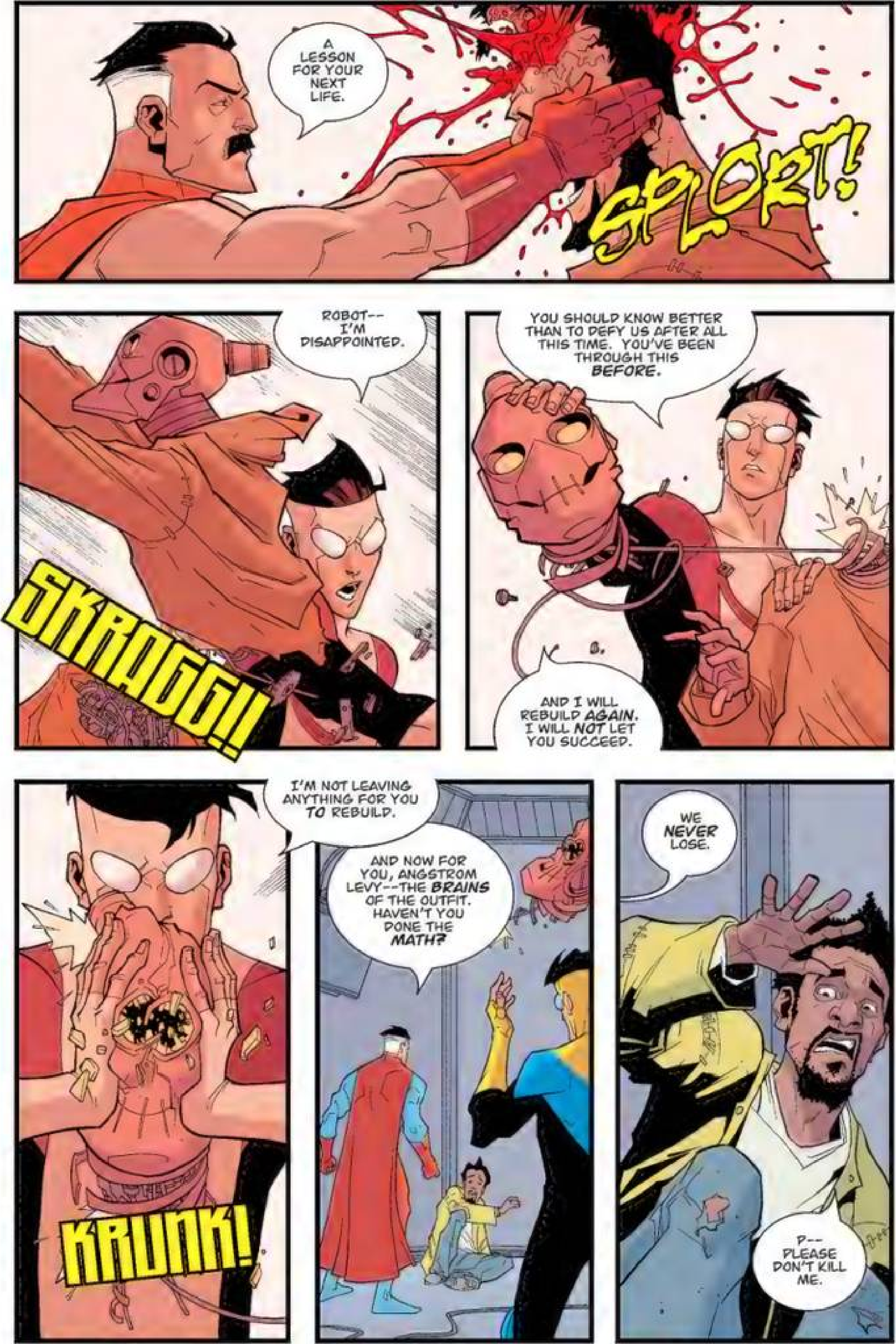

PRODENTIAL
848
RESIST AND DIE.
IT IS ONLY NATURAL FOR YOU TO FEEL THAT MY FATHER AND I HAVE DONE YOU SOME GREAT **WRONG** BY ASSUMING CONTROL OF THIS PLANET.
SUMSANG
THAT IS **NOT** THE CASE. IN THE LONG RUN YOU WILL COME TO REALIZE THAT WHAT WE DO HERE WILL HELP YOUR CIVILIZATION TO BETTER ITSELF-- WE WILL **IMPROVE** THIS WORLD.
HOWEVER, YOUR COOPERATION IS **ESSENTIAL.** IT IS IMPORTANT TO US THAT THE CHANGEOVER BE AS PAINLESS AS POSSIBLE.
SO, ANY PERSON OR PERSONS WHO OFFER ANY FORM OF RESISTANCE WILL BE **TERMINATED** ON **SIGHT.**
HIMSHEY'S

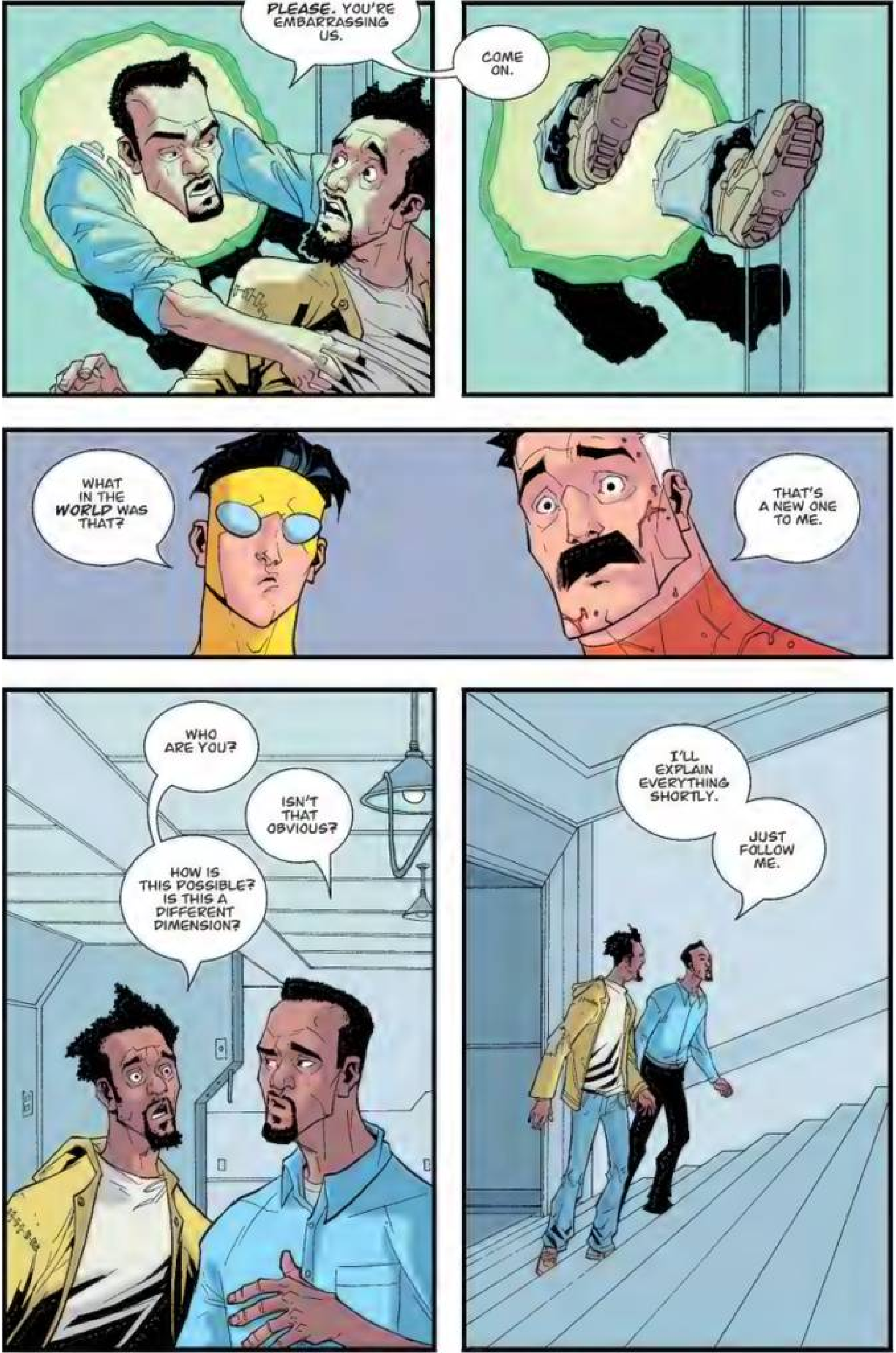

DUH
PIZZ
WELCOME BACK, ANGSTROM.

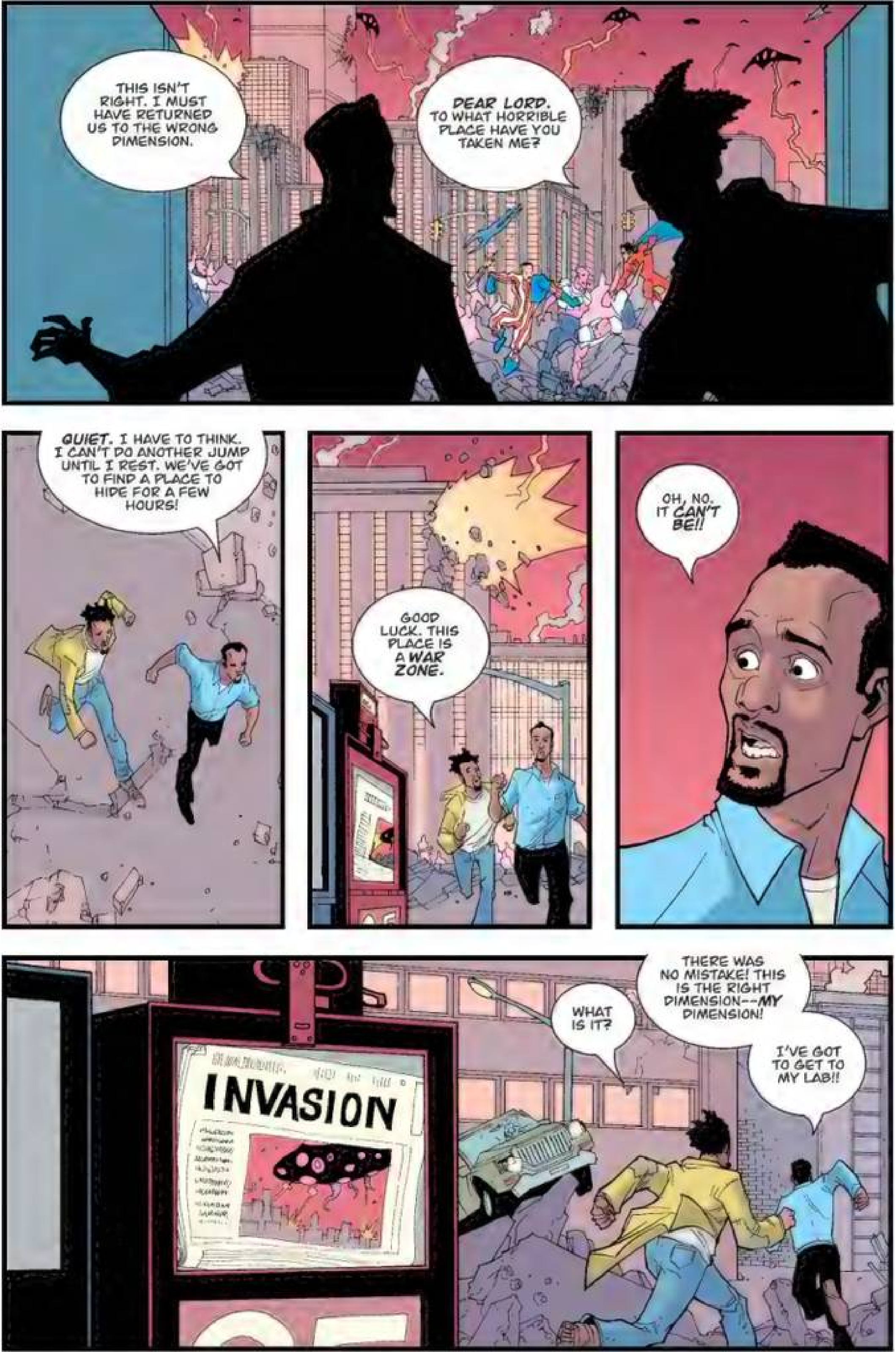

WERE YOU FOLLOWED?
OF COURSE NOT. I UNDERSTAND THE GRAVITY OF OUR SITUATION AND I ASSURE YOU I HAVE TAKEN THE NECESSARY PRECAUTIONS.
ARE YOU CERTAIN?
ANGSTROM POSSESSES INTELLECT NEARLY AS SUBSTANTIAL AS MY OWN. THIS ANIMOSITY BETWEEN YOU TWO IS HIGHLY COUNTERPRODUCTIVE.
YES, AND WE HAVE WORK TO DO. THE BOY IS RUNNING THROUGH HIS SPIEL IN TIMES SQUARE AGAIN.
DO WE KNOW OF OMNI-MAN'S CURRENT WHEREABOUTS?
NO-- AND THAT WORRIES ME.
WE NEED TO FIGURE OUT A WAY TO TRACK HIM. THERE ARE ONLY TWO OF THEM, IF WE COULD MONITOR THEIR MOVEMENT WE COULD USE THAT TO OUR ADVANTAGE.
I'M DOING EVERYTHING I CAN. REALLY. IT'S ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE TO GET MY HANDS ON THE TECHNOLOGY NEEDED.
LOOK AT THIS PLACE. HOW ARE WE GOING TO DO ANYTHING WITH THIS LAUGHABLE ARRAY OF EQUIPMENT?
MY HANDS ARE TIED.
YOU'RE PROVING MORE USELESS BY THE DAY. WERE IT NOT FOR ROBOT'S CONTINUED SUPPORT YOU WOULD HAVE NO PLACE HERE.

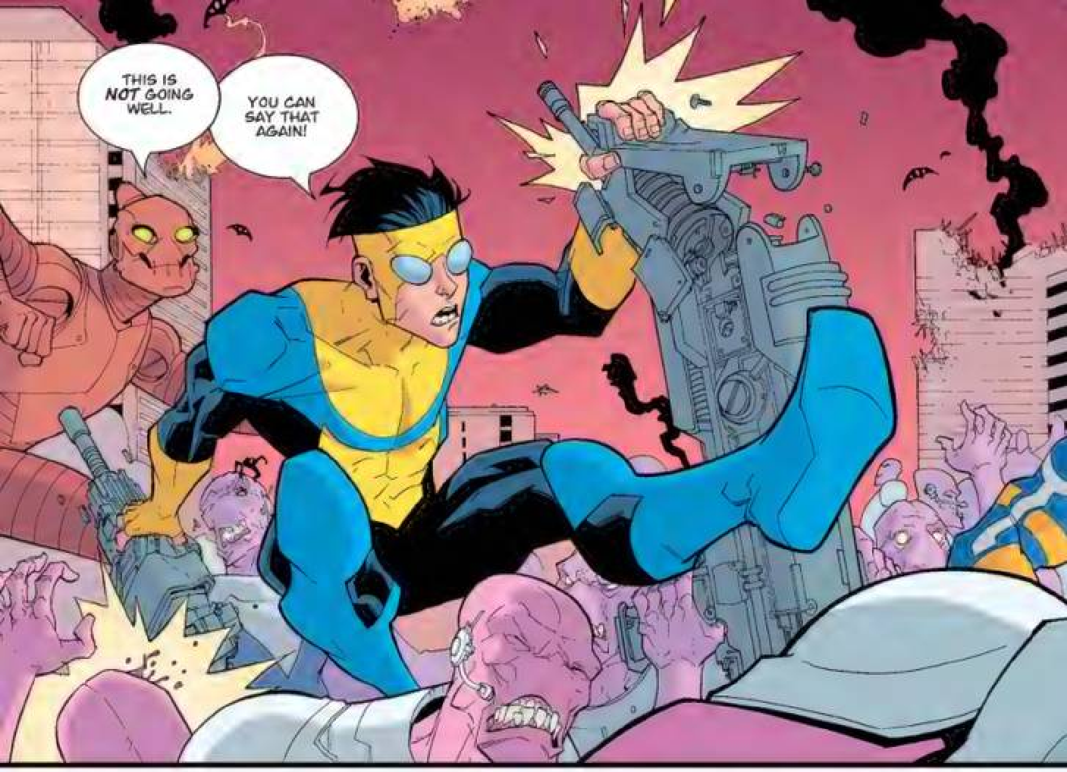

THRAKOOM!!
YOU SAID YOU WEREN'T FOLLOWED!!

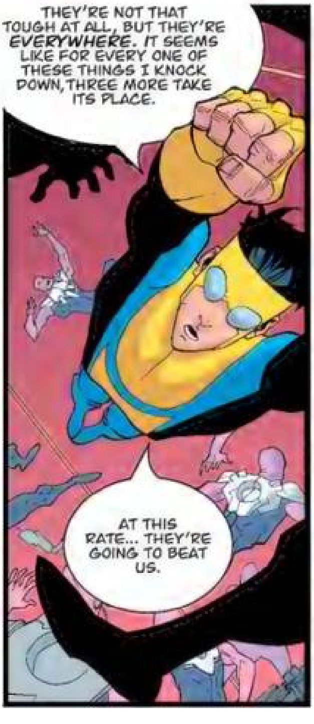

YOU SHOULD LOOK *UP* MORE OFTEN.

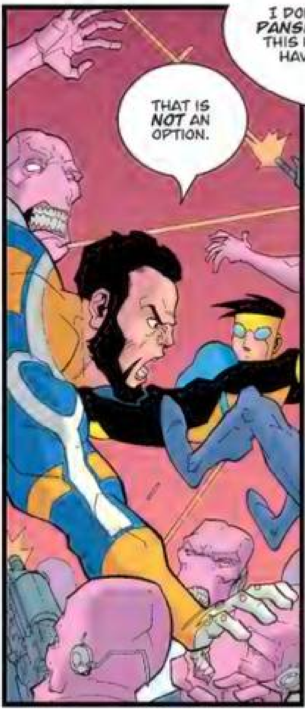

A LESSON FOR YOUR NEXT LIFE.
SPLORT!
ROBOT-- I'M DISAPPOINTED.
SKRAGG!!
YOU SHOULD KNOW BETTER THAN TO DEFY US AFTER ALL THIS TIME. YOU'VE BEEN THROUGH THIS BEFORE.
AND I WILL REBUILD AGAIN. I WILL NOT LET YOU SUCCEED.
I'M NOT LEAVING ANYTHING FOR YOU TO REBUILD.
KRUNK!
AND NOW FOR YOU, ANGSTROM LEVY--THE BRAINS OF THE OUTFIT. HAVEN'T YOU DONE THE MATH?
WE NEVER LOSE.
P-- PLEASE DON'T KILL ME.

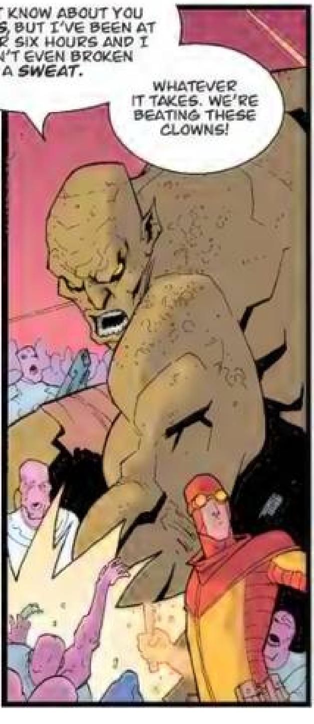

PLEASE. YOU'RE EMBARRASSING US.
COME ON.
WHAT IN THE WORLD WAS THAT?
THAT'S A NEW ONE TO ME.
WHO ARE YOU?
HOW IS THIS POSSIBLE? IS THIS A DIFFERENT DIMENSION?
ISN'T THAT OBVIOUS?
I'LL EXPLAIN EVERYTHING SHORTLY.
JUST FOLLOW ME.

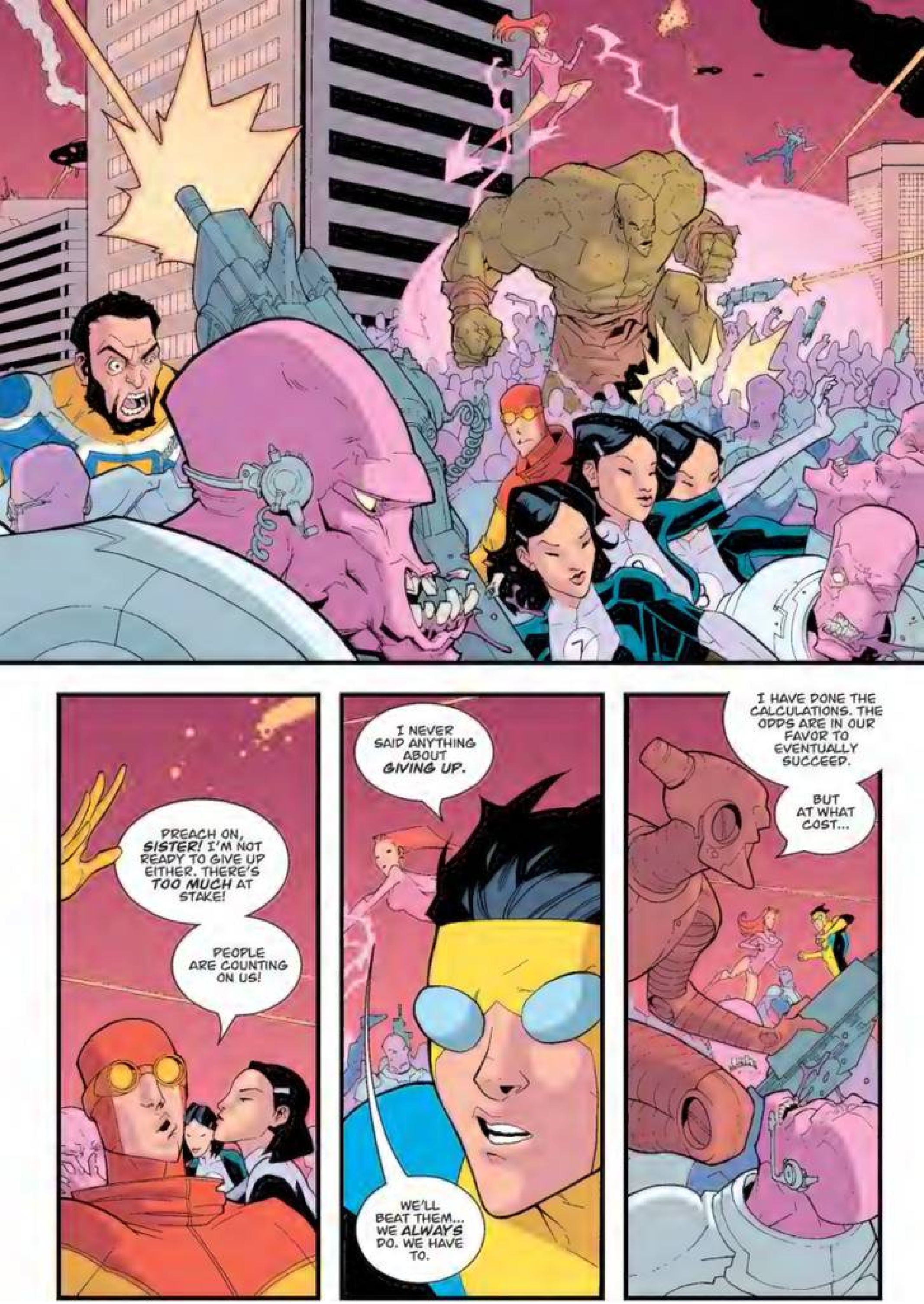

THIS ISN'T RIGHT. I MUST HAVE RETURNED US TO THE WRONG DIMENSION.
DEAR LORD. TO WHAT HORRIBLE PLACE HAVE YOU TAKEN ME?
QUIET. I HAVE TO THINK. I CAN'T DO ANOTHER JUMP UNTIL I REST. WE'VE GOT TO FIND A PLACE TO HIDE FOR A FEW HOURS!
GOOD LUCK. THIS PLACE IS A WAR ZONE.
OH, NO. IT CAN'T BE!!
INVASION
WHAT IS IT?
THERE WAS NO MISTAKE! THIS IS THE RIGHT DIMENSION--MY DIMENSION!
I'VE GOT TO GET TO MY LAB!!

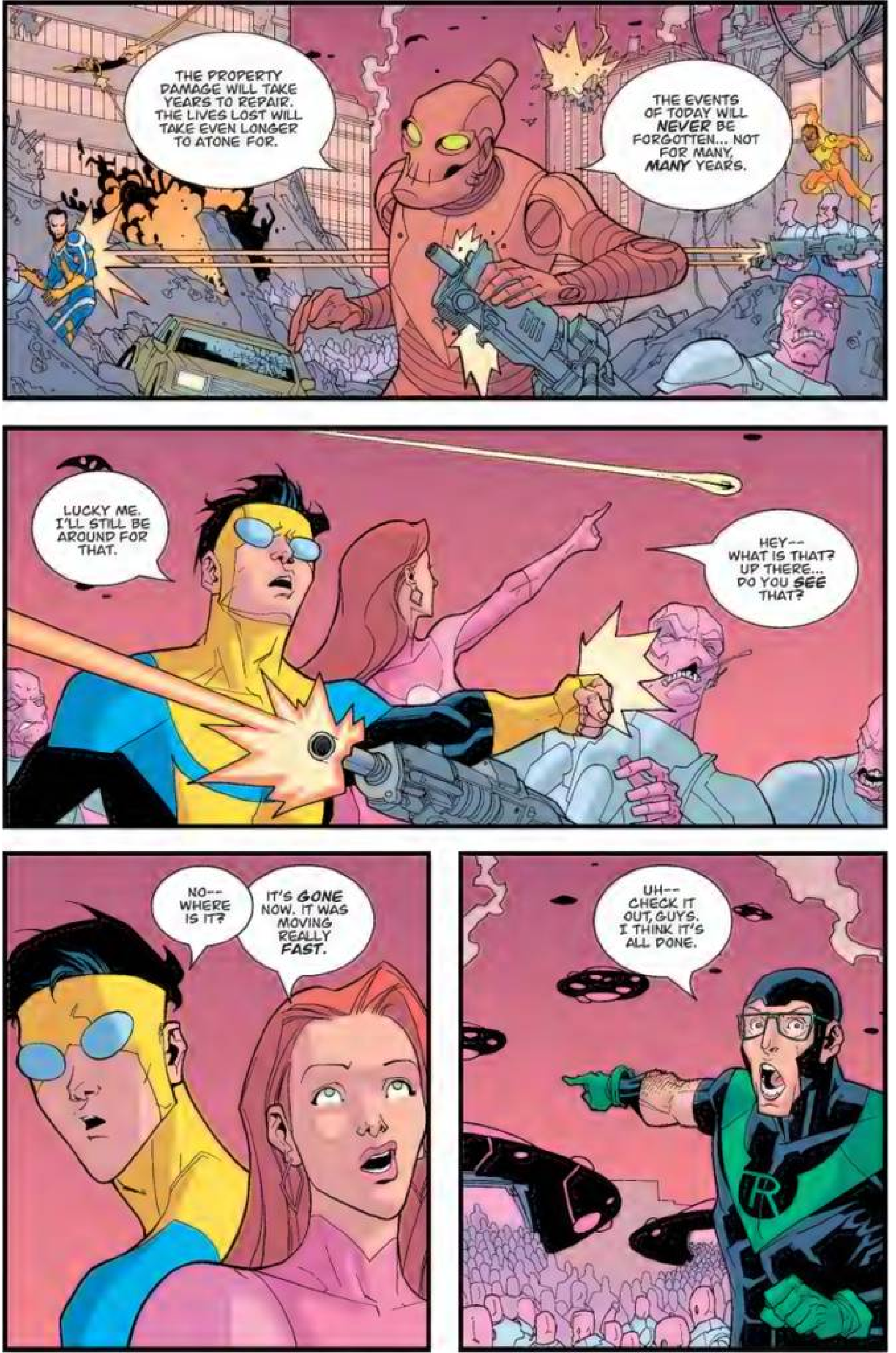

THIS IS *NOT* GOING WELL.
YOU CAN SAY THAT AGAIN!

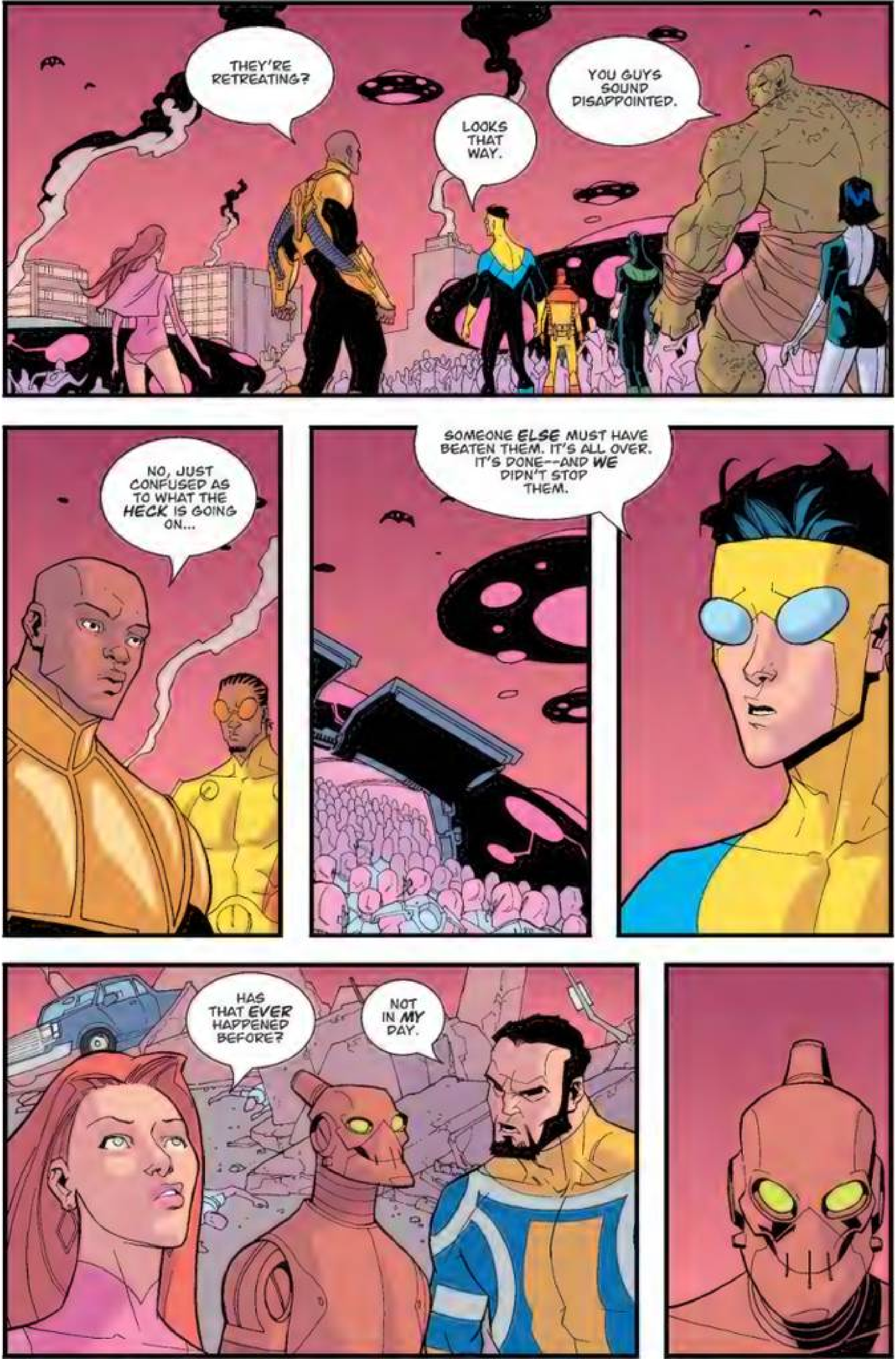

THEY'RE NOT THAT TOUGH AT ALL, BUT THEY'RE *EVERYWHERE*. IT SEEMS LIKE FOR EVERY ONE OF THESE THINGS I KNOCK DOWN, THREE MORE TAKE ITS PLACE.
AT THIS RATE... THEY'RE GOING TO BEAT US.

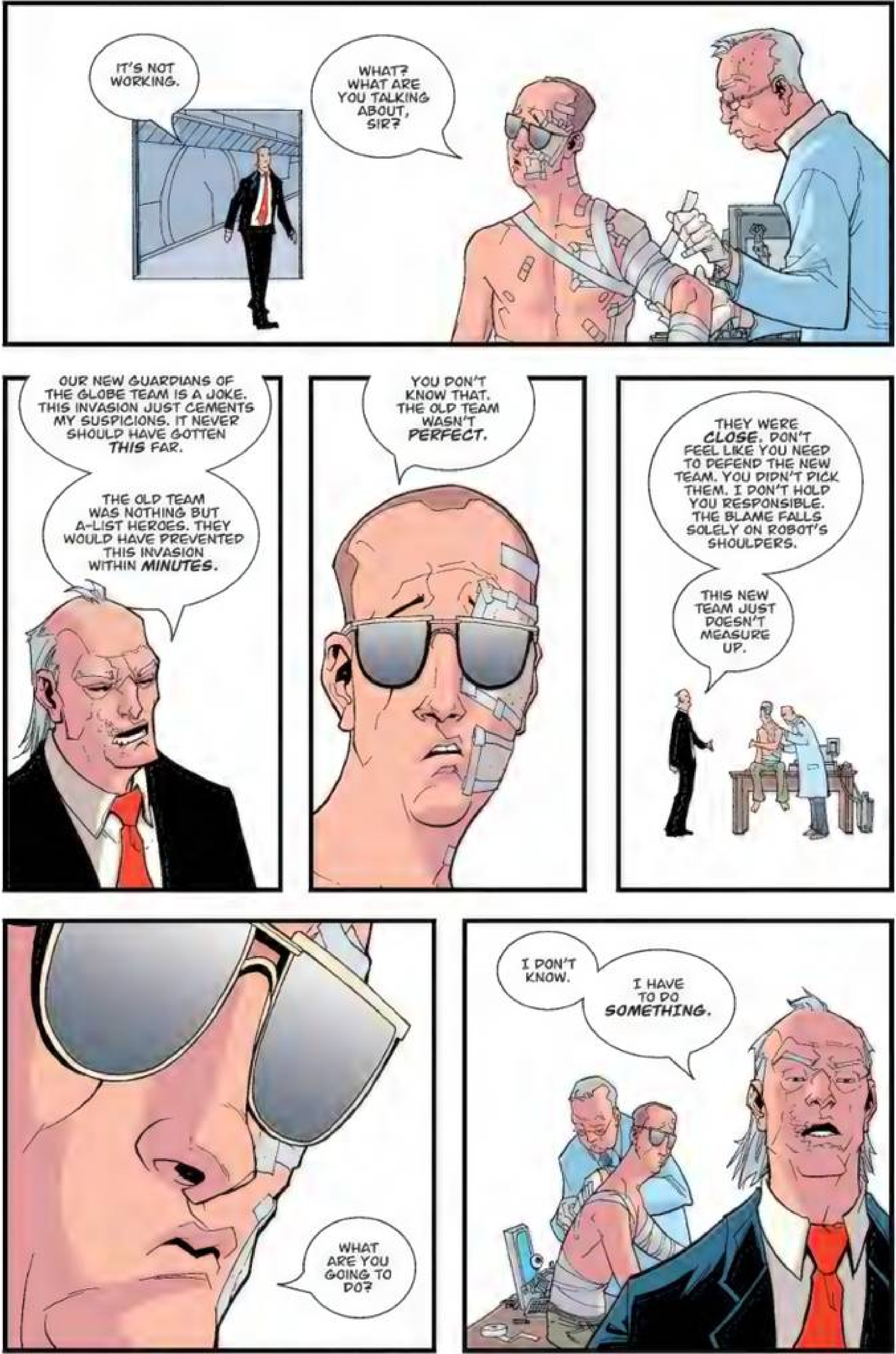

THAT IS *NOT* AN OPTION.

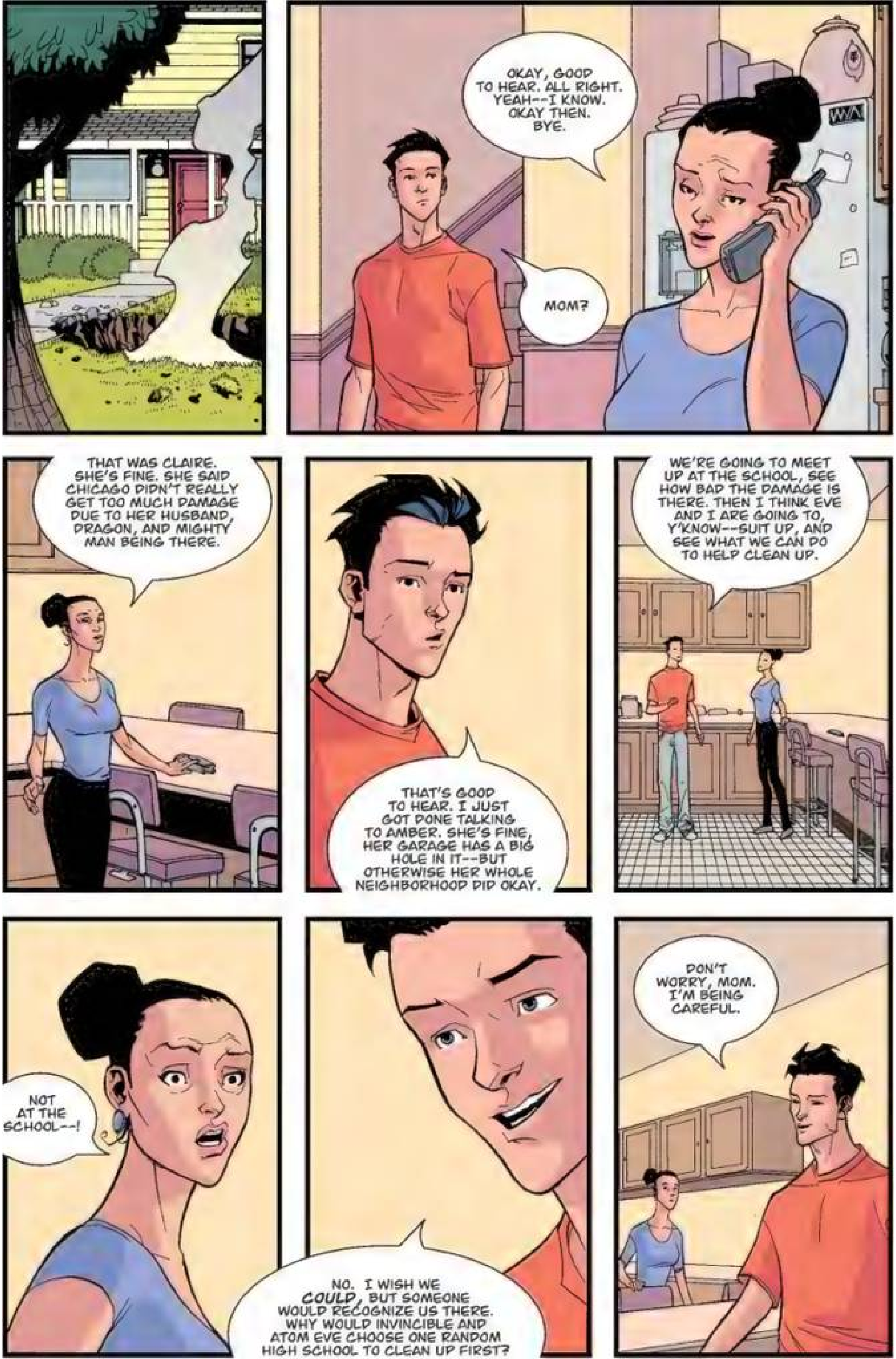

I DON'T KNOW ABOUT YOU *PANSIES*, BUT I'VE BEEN AT THIS FOR SIX HOURS AND I HAVEN'T EVEN BROKEN A *SWEAT*.
WHATEVER IT TAKES. WE'RE BEATING THESE CLOWNS!

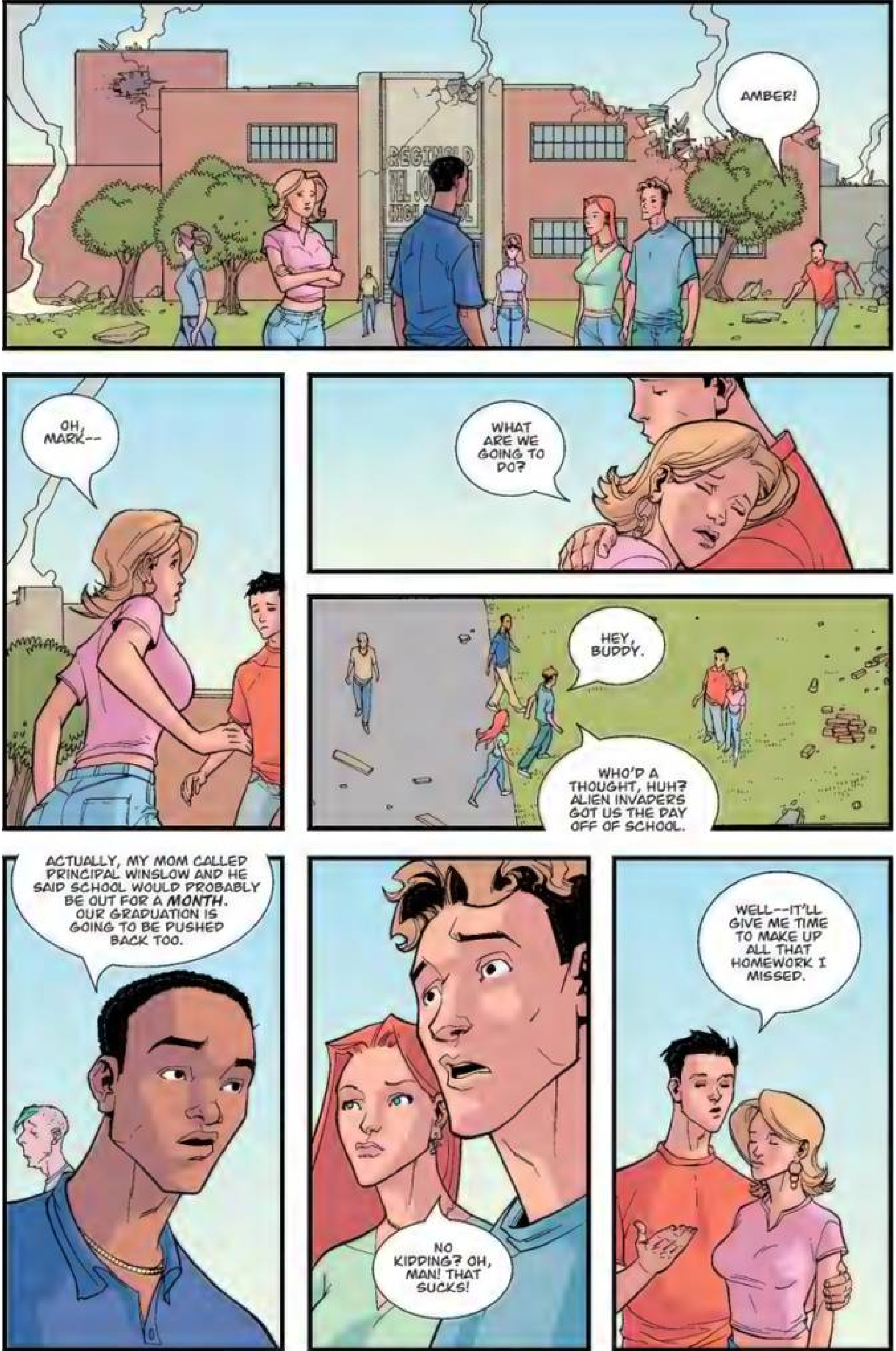

PREACH ON, SISTER! I'M NOT READY TO GIVE UP EITHER. THERE'S TOO MUCH AT STAKE!
PEOPLE ARE COUNTING ON US!
I NEVER SAID ANYTHING ABOUT GIVING UP.
WE'LL BEAT THEM... WE ALWAYS DO. WE HAVE TO.
I HAVE DONE THE CALCULATIONS. THE ODDS ARE IN OUR FAVOR TO EVENTUALLY SUCCEED.
BUT AT WHAT COST...

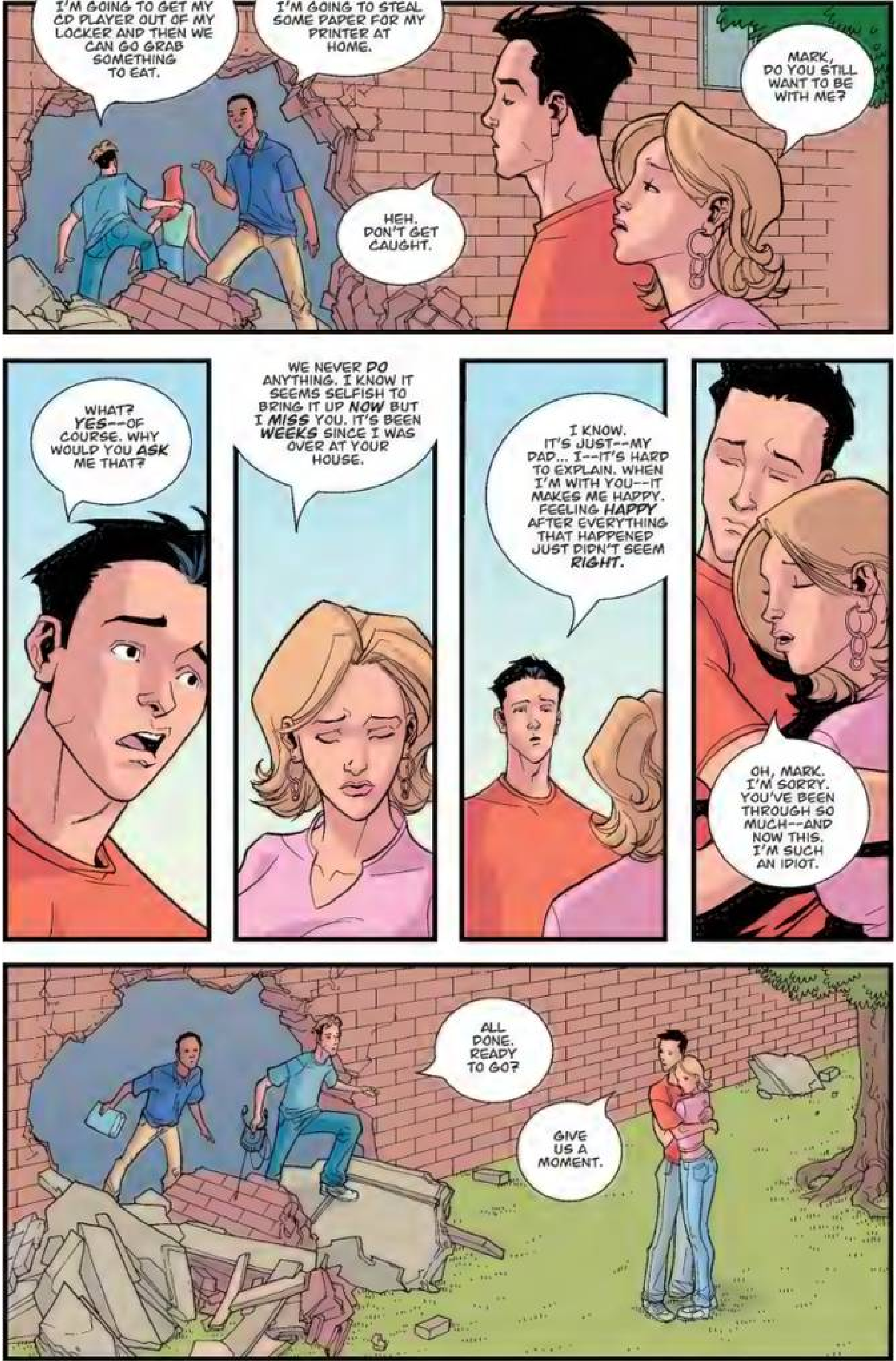

THE PROPERTY DAMAGE WILL TAKE YEARS TO REPAIR. THE LIVES LOST WILL TAKE EVEN LONGER TO ATONE FOR.
THE EVENTS OF TODAY WILL *NEVER* BE FORGOTTEN... NOT FOR MANY, *MANY* YEARS.
LUCKY ME. I'LL STILL BE AROUND FOR THAT.
HEY-- WHAT IS THAT? UP THERE... DO YOU *SEE* THAT?
NO-- WHERE IS IT?
IT'S *GONE* NOW. IT WAS MOVING REALLY *FAST*.
UH-- CHECK IT OUT, GUYS. I THINK IT'S ALL DONE.

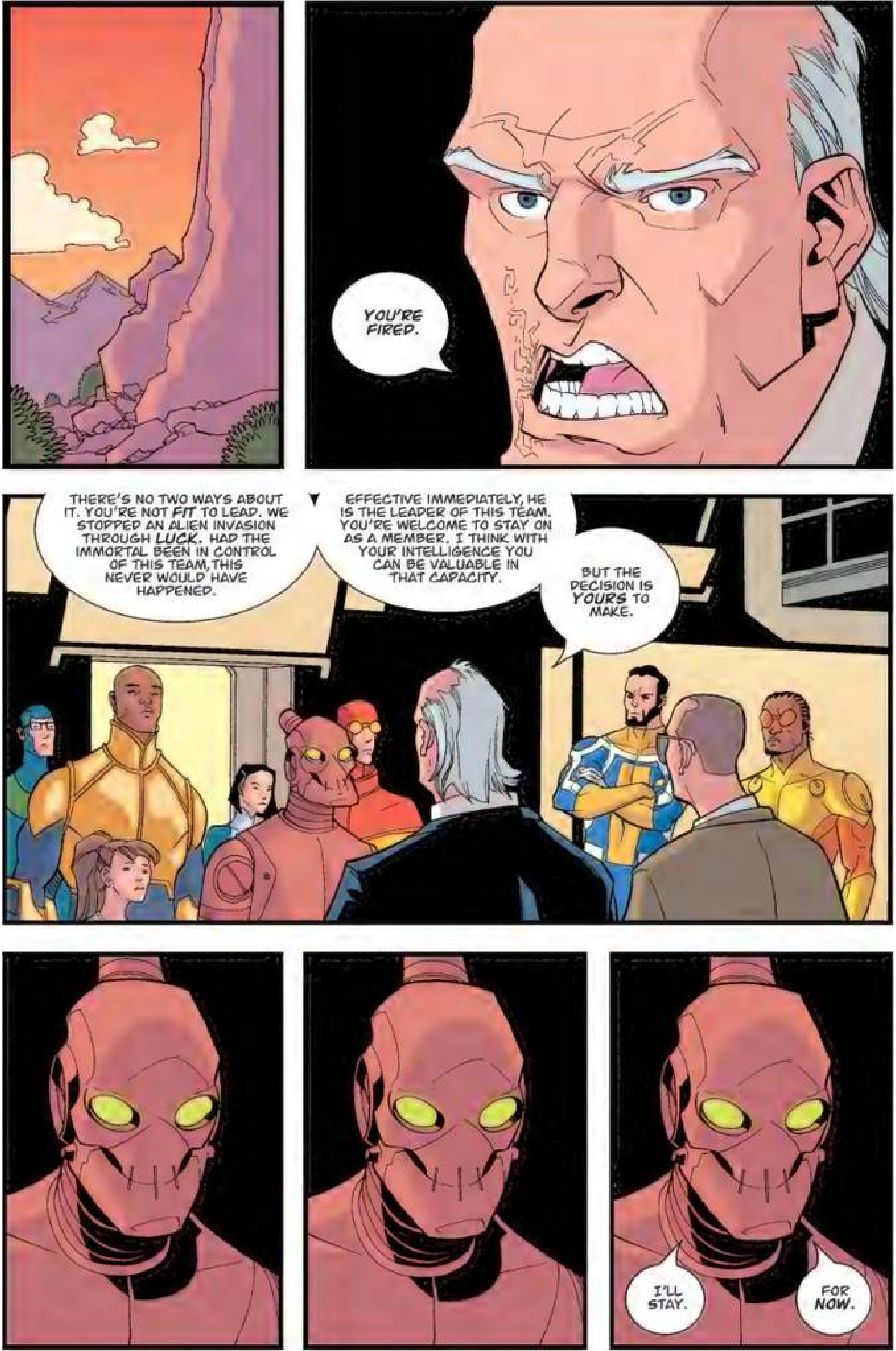

THEY'RE RETREATING?
LOOKS THAT WAY.
YOU GUYS SOUND DISAPPOINTED.
NO, JUST CONFUSED AS TO WHAT THE *HECK* IS GOING ON...
SOMEONE *ELSE* MUST HAVE BEATEN THEM. IT'S ALL OVER. IT'S DONE--AND *WE* DIDN'T STOP THEM.
HAS THAT *EVER* HAPPENED BEFORE?
NOT IN *MY* DAY.

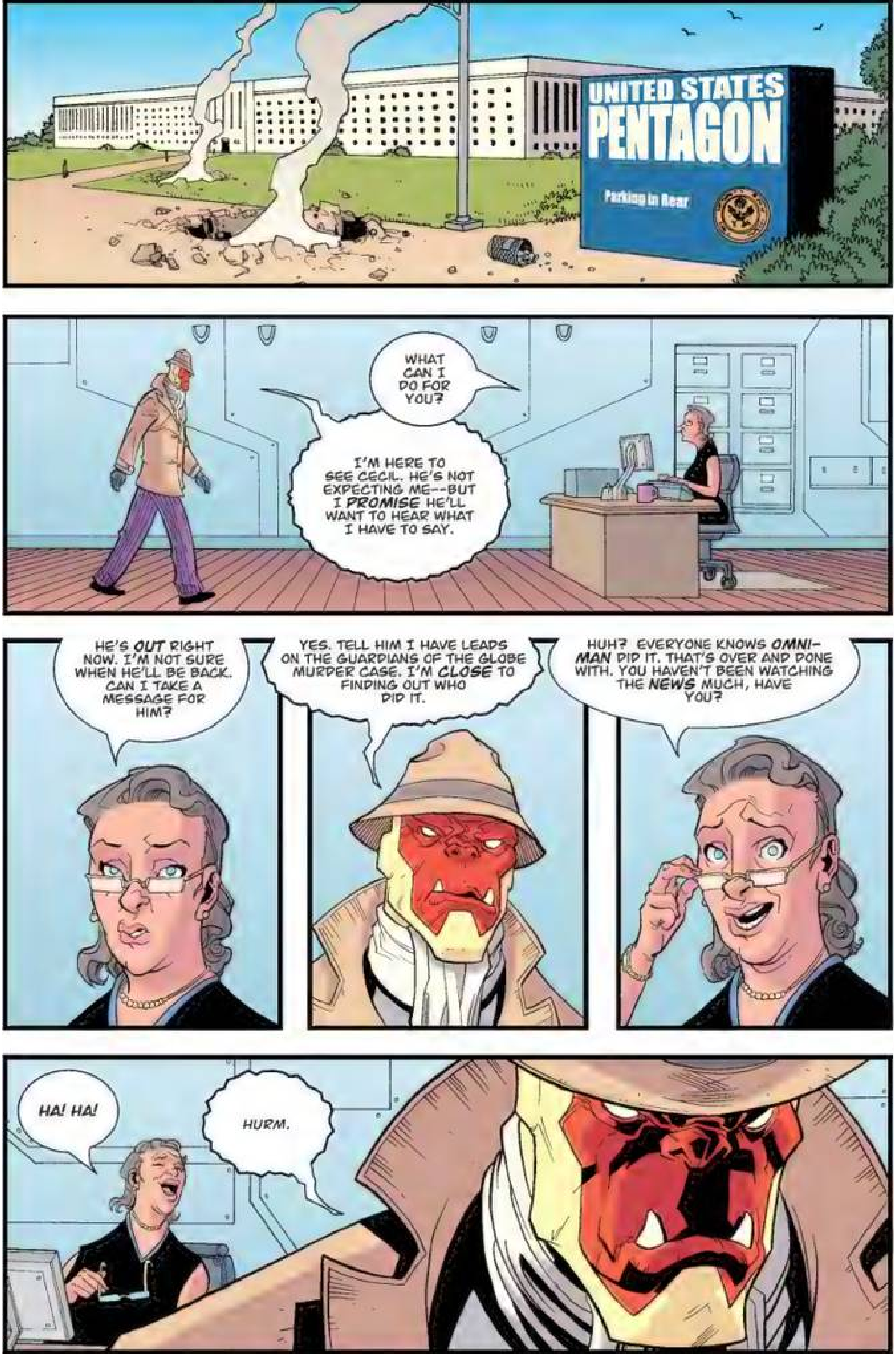

IT'S NOT WORKING.
WHAT? WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT, SIR?
OUR NEW GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE TEAM IS A JOKE. THIS INVASION JUST CEMENTS MY SUSPICIONS. IT NEVER SHOULD HAVE GOTTEN THIS FAR.
THE OLD TEAM WAS NOTHING BUT A-LIST HEROES. THEY WOULD HAVE PREVENTED THIS INVASION WITHIN MINUTES.
YOU DON'T KNOW THAT. THE OLD TEAM WASN'T PERFECT.
THEY WERE CLOSE. DON'T FEEL LIKE YOU NEED TO DEFEND THE NEW TEAM. YOU DIDN'T PICK THEM. I DON'T HOLD YOU RESPONSIBLE. THE BLAME FALLS SOLELY ON ROBOT'S SHOULDERS.
THIS NEW TEAM JUST DOESN'T MEASURE UP.
WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO?
I DON'T KNOW.
I HAVE TO DO SOMETHING.

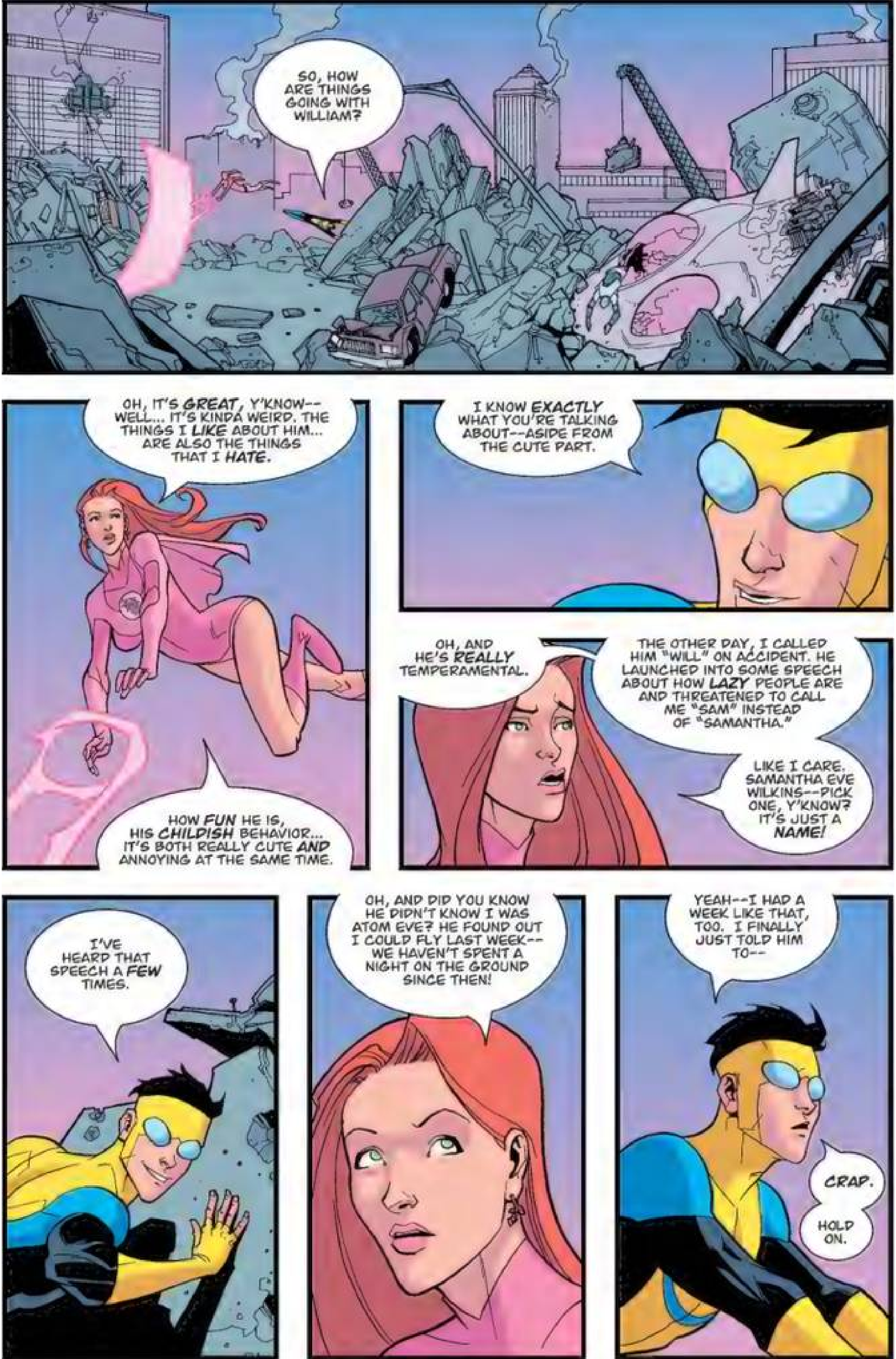

OKAY, GOOD TO HEAR. ALL RIGHT. YEAH--I KNOW. OKAY THEN. BYE.
MOM?
THAT WAS CLAIRE. SHE'S FINE. SHE SAID CHICAGO DIDN'T REALLY GET TOO MUCH DAMAGE DUE TO HER HUSBAND, DRAGON, AND MIGHTY MAN BEING THERE.
THAT'S GOOD TO HEAR. I JUST GOT DONE TALKING TO AMBER. SHE'S FINE, HER GARAGE HAS A BIG HOLE IN IT--BUT OTHERWISE HER WHOLE NEIGHBORHOOD DID OKAY.
WE'RE GOING TO MEET UP AT THE SCHOOL, SEE HOW BAD THE DAMAGE IS THERE. THEN I THINK EVE AND I ARE GOING TO, Y'KNOW--SUIT UP, AND SEE WHAT WE CAN DO TO HELP CLEAN UP.
NOT AT THE SCHOOL--!
NO. I WISH WE *COULD*, BUT SOMEONE WOULD RECOGNIZE US THERE. WHY WOULD INVINCIBLE AND ATOM EVE CHOOSE ONE RANDOM HIGH SCHOOL TO CLEAN UP FIRST?
DON'T WORRY, MOM. I'M BEING CAREFUL.

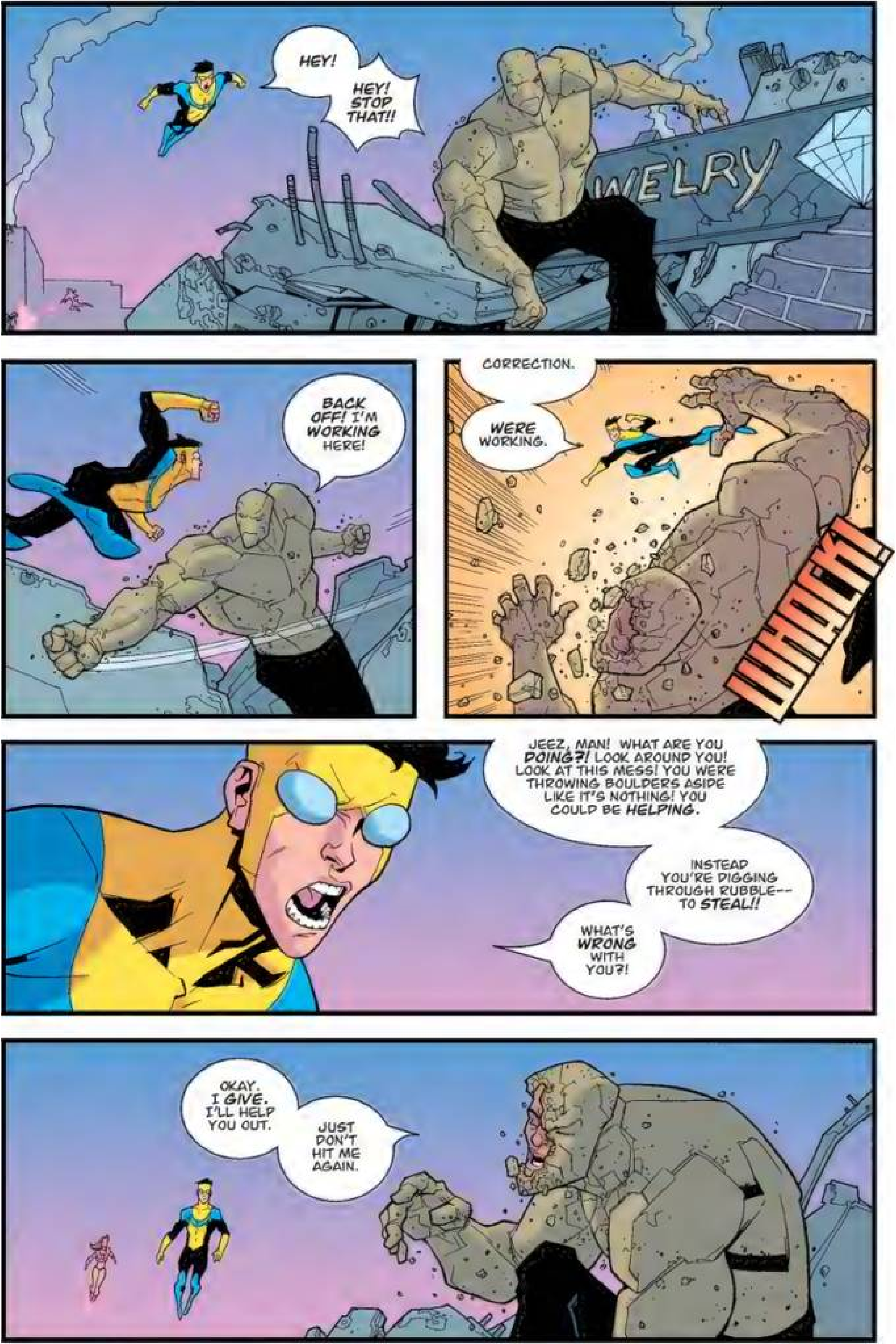

AMBER!
OH, MARK--
WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO?
HEY, BUDDY.
WHO'D A THOUGHT, HUH? ALIEN INVADERS GOT US THE DAY OFF OF SCHOOL.
ACTUALLY, MY MOM CALLED PRINCIPAL WINSLOW AND HE SAID SCHOOL WOULD PROBABLY BE OUT FOR A *MONTH*. OUR GRADUATION IS GOING TO BE PUSHED BACK TOO.
NO KIDDING? OH, MAN! THAT SUCKS!
WELL--IT'LL GIVE ME TIME TO MAKE UP ALL THAT HOMEWORK I MISSED.

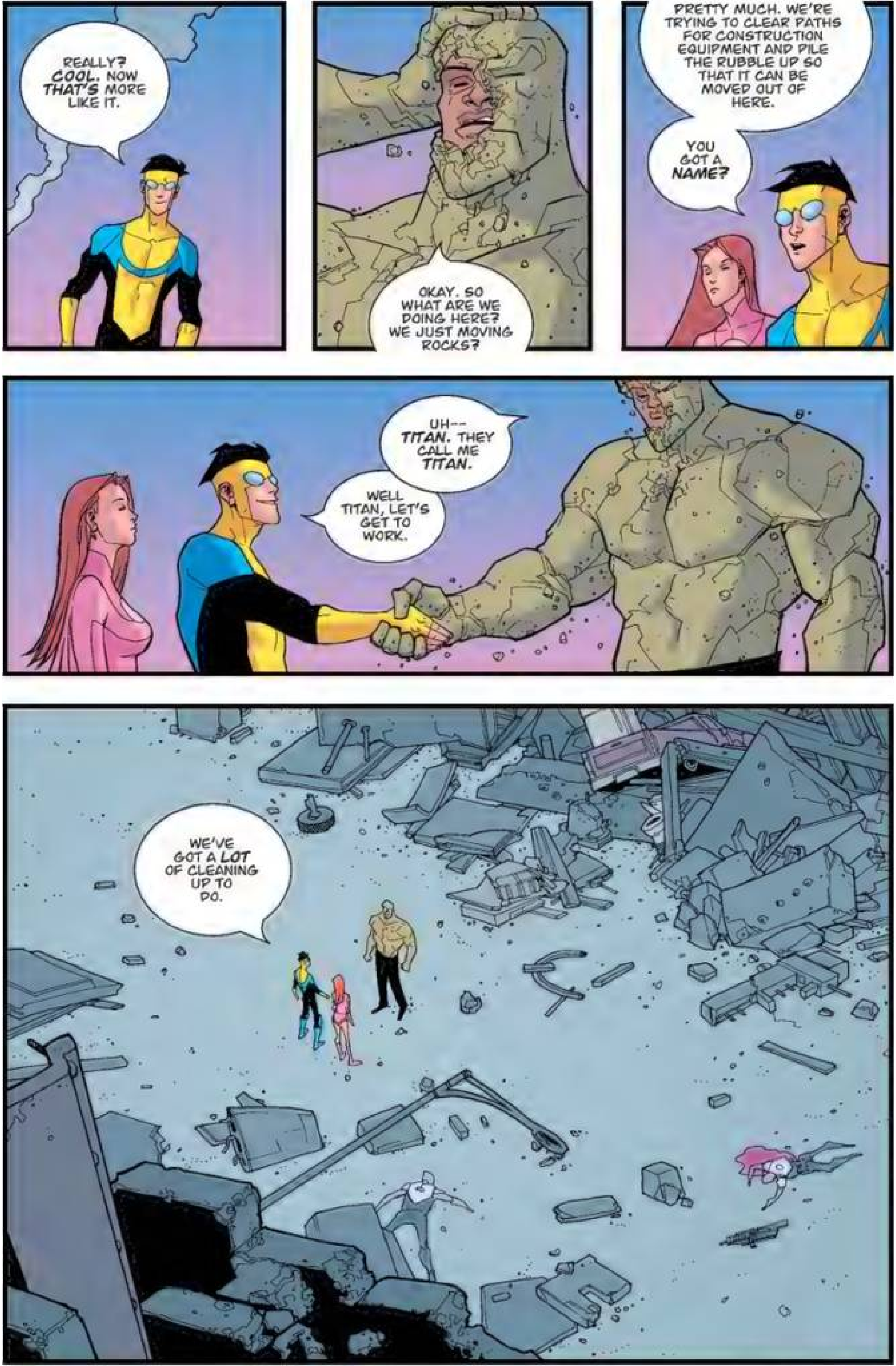

I'M GOING TO GET MY CD PLAYER OUT OF MY LOCKER AND THEN WE CAN GO GRAB SOMETHING TO EAT.
I'M GOING TO STEAL SOME PAPER FOR MY PRINTER AT HOME.
HEH. DON'T GET CAUGHT.
MARK, DO YOU STILL WANT TO BE WITH ME?
WHAT? YES--OF COURSE. WHY WOULD YOU ASK ME THAT?
WE NEVER DO ANYTHING. I KNOW IT SEEMS SELFISH TO BRING IT UP NOW BUT I MISS YOU. IT'S BEEN WEEKS SINCE I WAS OVER AT YOUR HOUSE.
I KNOW. IT'S JUST--MY DAD... I--IT'S HARD TO EXPLAIN. WHEN I'M WITH YOU--IT MAKES ME HAPPY. FEELING HAPPY AFTER EVERYTHING THAT HAPPENED JUST DIDN'T SEEM RIGHT.
OH, MARK. I'M SORRY. YOU'VE BEEN THROUGH SO MUCH--AND NOW THIS. I'M SUCH AN IDIOT.
ALL DONE. READY TO GO?
GIVE US A MOMENT.

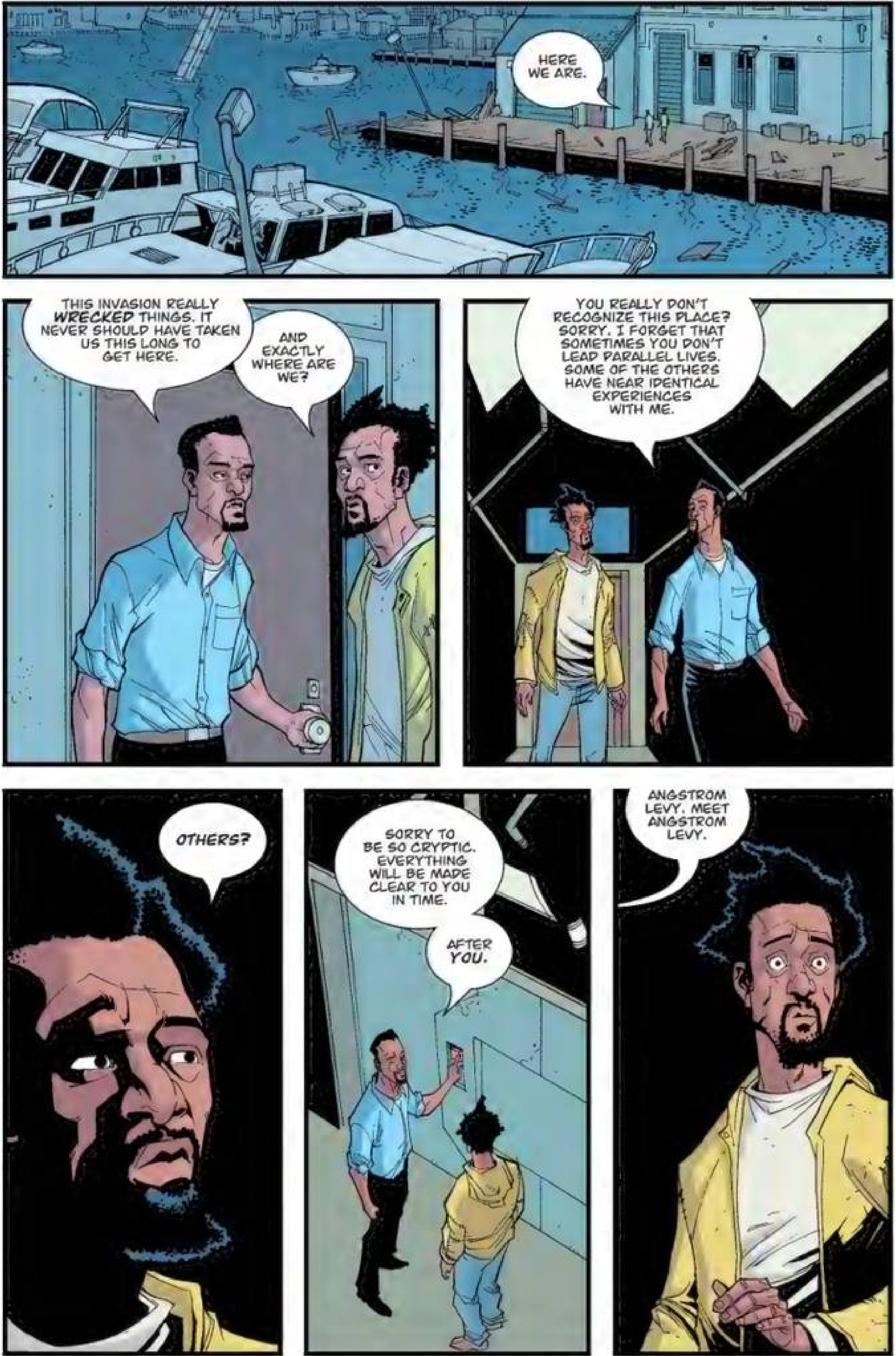

YOU'RE FIRED.
THERE'S NO TWO WAYS ABOUT IT. YOU'RE NOT FIT TO LEAD. WE STOPPED AN ALIEN INVASION THROUGH LUCK. HAD THE IMMORTAL BEEN IN CONTROL OF THIS TEAM, THIS NEVER WOULD HAVE HAPPENED.
EFFECTIVE IMMEDIATELY, HE IS THE LEADER OF THIS TEAM. YOU'RE WELCOME TO STAY ON AS A MEMBER. I THINK WITH YOUR INTELLIGENCE YOU CAN BE VALUABLE IN THAT CAPACITY.
BUT THE DECISION IS YOURS TO MAKE.
I'LL STAY.
FOR NOW.

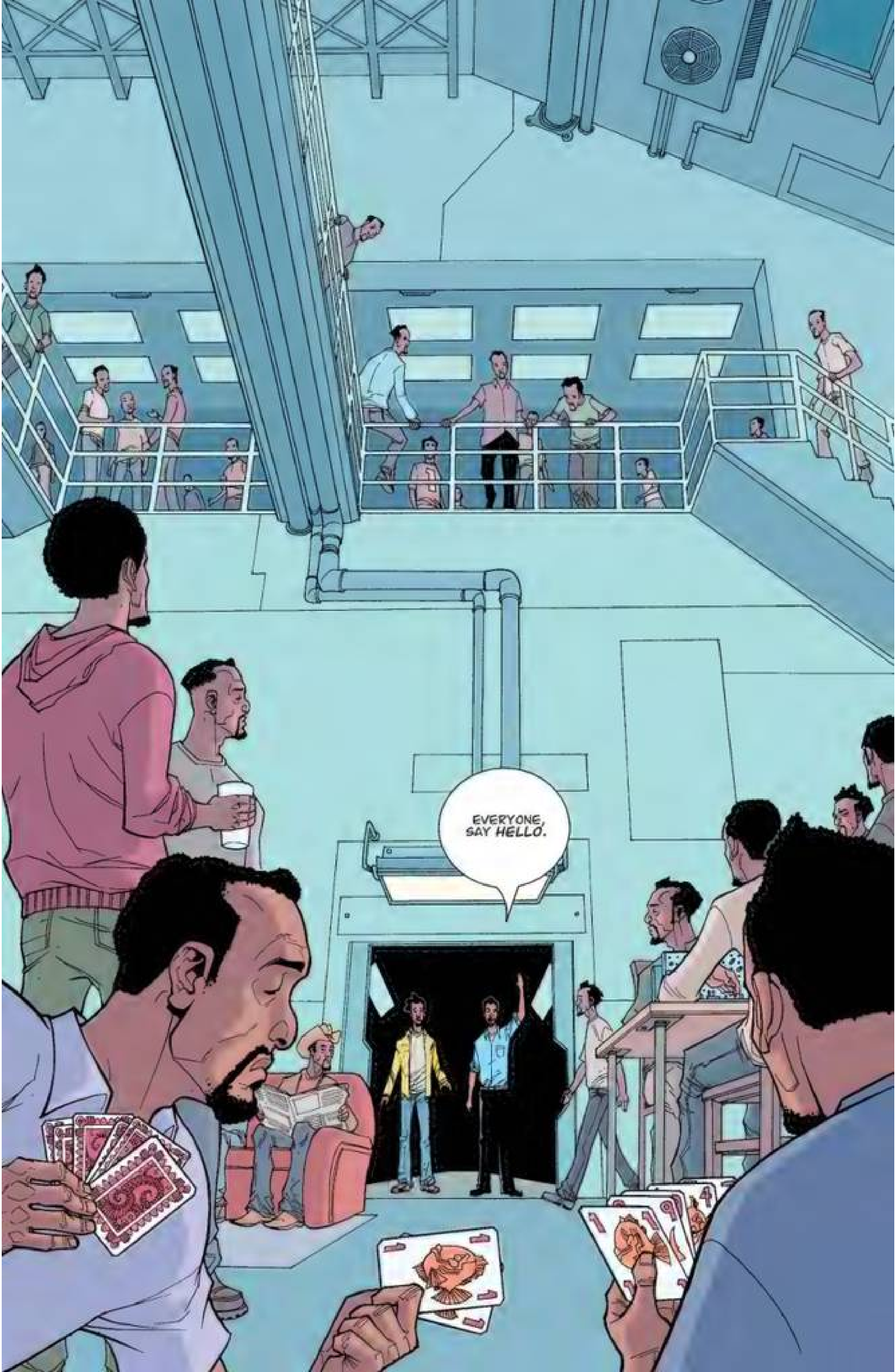

UNITED STATES PENTAGON
Parking in Rear
WHAT CAN I DO FOR YOU?
I'M HERE TO SEE CECIL. HE'S NOT EXPECTING ME--BUT I **PROMISE** HE'LL WANT TO HEAR WHAT I HAVE TO SAY.
HE'S **OUT** RIGHT NOW. I'M NOT SURE WHEN HE'LL BE BACK. CAN I TAKE A MESSAGE FOR HIM?
YES. TELL HIM I HAVE LEADS ON THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE MURDER CASE. I'M **CLOSE** TO FINDING OUT WHO DID IT.
HUH? EVERYONE KNOWS **OMNI-MAN** DID IT. THAT'S OVER AND DONE WITH. YOU HAVEN'T BEEN WATCHING THE **NEWS** MUCH, HAVE YOU?
HA! HA!
HURM.

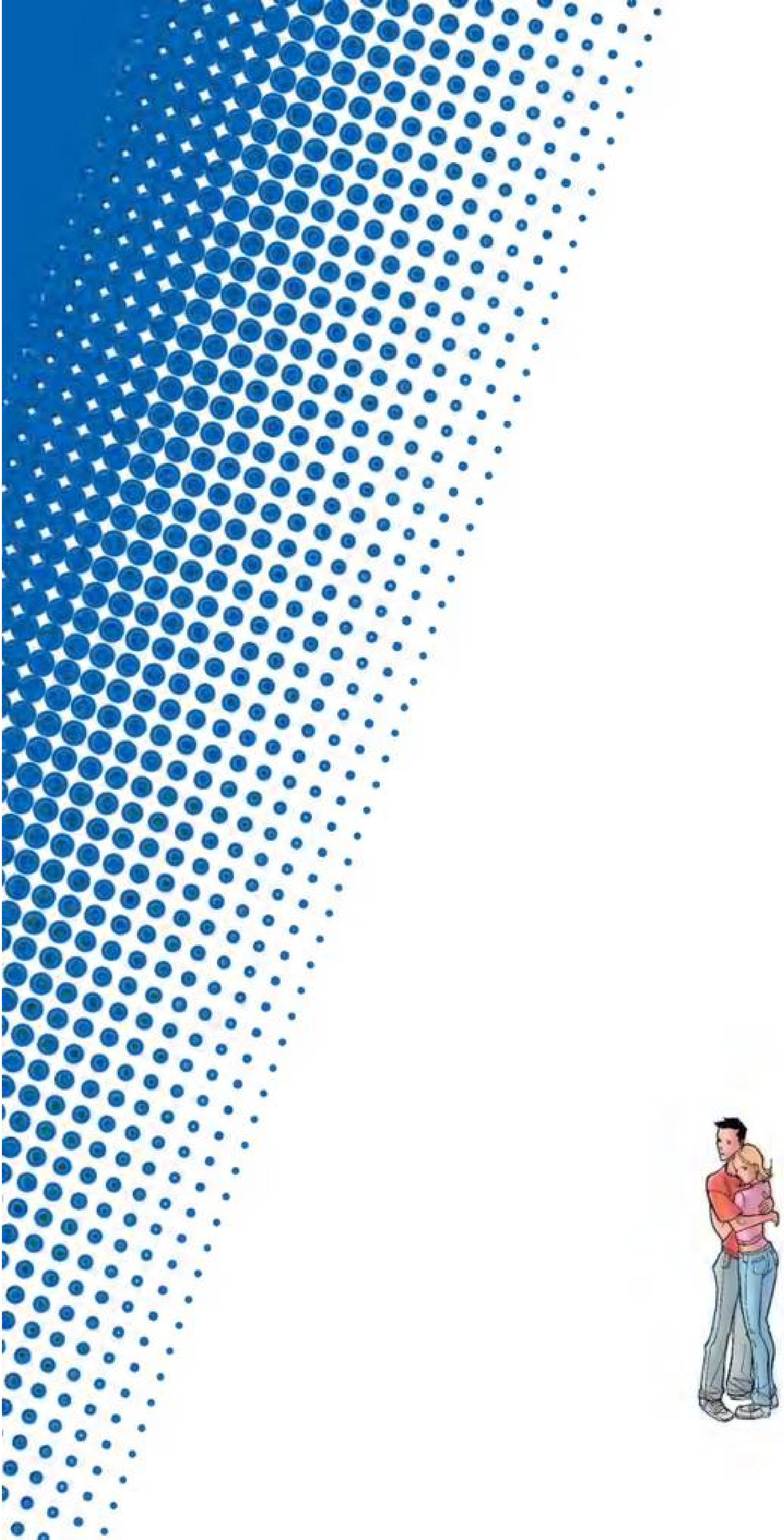

SO, HOW ARE THINGS GOING WITH WILLIAM?
OH, IT'S *GREAT*, Y'KNOW-- WELL... IT'S KINDA WEIRD. THE THINGS I *LIKE* ABOUT HIM... ARE ALSO THE THINGS THAT I *HATE*.
HOW *FUN* HE IS, HIS *CHILDISH* BEHAVIOR... IT'S BOTH REALLY CUTE *AND* ANNOYING AT THE SAME TIME.
I KNOW *EXACTLY* WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT--ASIDE FROM THE CUTE PART.
OH, AND HE'S *REALLY* TEMPERAMENTAL.
THE OTHER DAY, I CALLED HIM "WILL" ON ACCIDENT. HE LAUNCHED INTO SOME SPEECH ABOUT HOW *LAZY* PEOPLE ARE AND THREATENED TO CALL ME "SAM" INSTEAD OF "SAMANTHA."
LIKE I CARE. SAMANTHA EVE WILKINS--PICK ONE, Y'KNOW? IT'S JUST A *NAME!*
I'VE HEARD THAT SPEECH A *FEW* TIMES.
OH, AND DID YOU KNOW HE DIDN'T KNOW I WAS ATOM EVE? HE FOUND OUT I COULD FLY LAST WEEK-- WE HAVEN'T SPENT A NIGHT ON THE GROUND SINCE THEN!
YEAH--I HAD A WEEK LIKE THAT, TOO. I FINALLY JUST TOLD HIM TO--
CRAP.
HOLD ON.


HEY!
HEY! STOP THAT!!
WELRY
BACK OFF! I'M WORKING HERE!
CORRECTION.
WERE WORKING.
WHACK!
JEEZ, MAN! WHAT ARE YOU DOING?! LOOK AROUND YOU! LOOK AT THIS MESS! YOU WERE THROWING BOULDERS ASIDE LIKE IT'S NOTHING! YOU COULD BE HELPING.
INSTEAD YOU'RE DIGGING THROUGH RUBBLE-- TO STEAL!!
WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU?!
OKAY. I GIVE. I'LL HELP YOU OUT.
JUST DON'T HIT ME AGAIN.

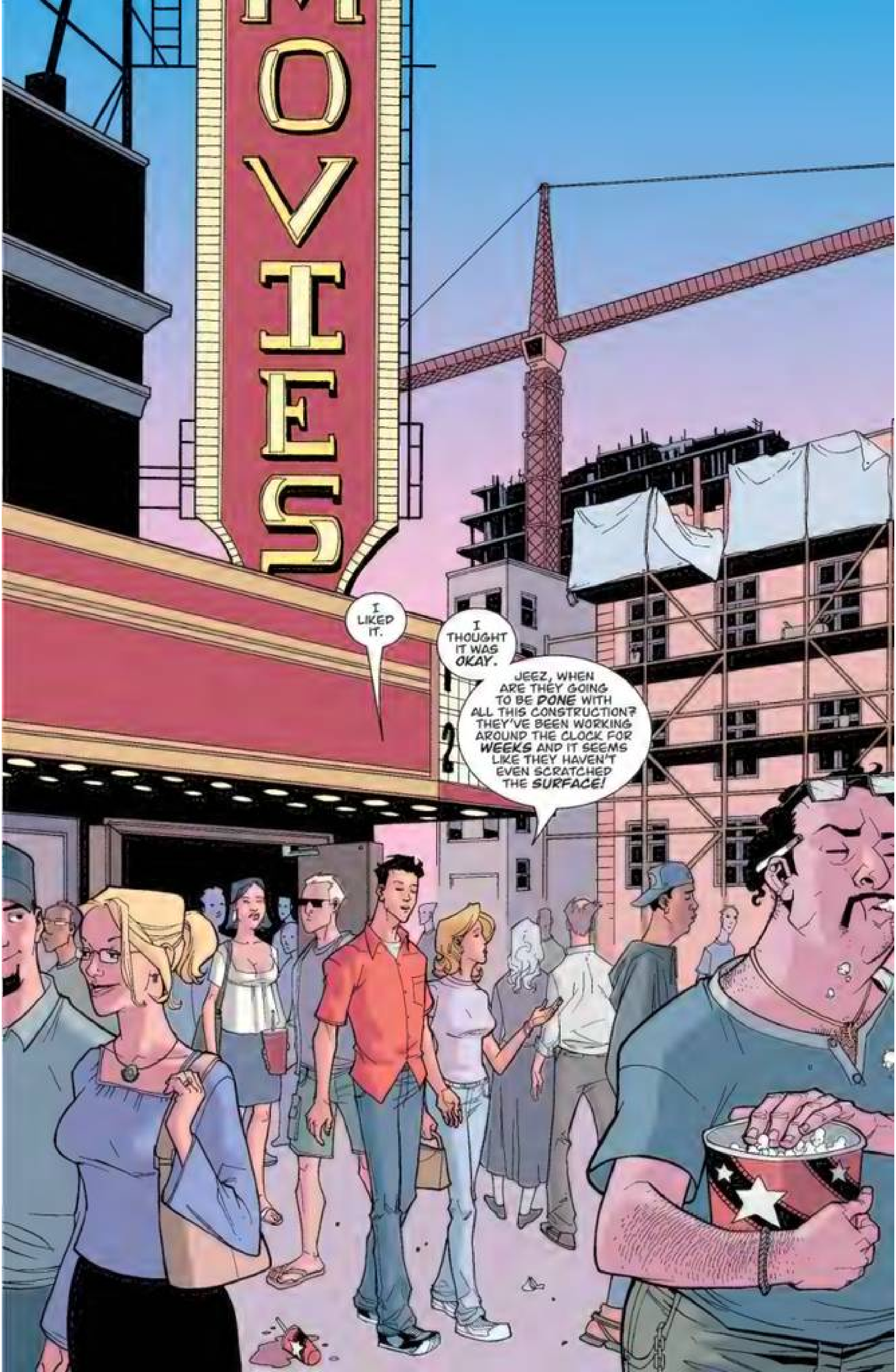

REALLY? COOL. NOW THAT'S MORE LIKE IT.
OKAY. SO WHAT ARE WE DOING HERE? WE JUST MOVING ROCKS?
PRETTY MUCH. WE'RE TRYING TO CLEAR PATHS FOR CONSTRUCTION EQUIPMENT AND PILE THE RUBBLE UP SO THAT IT CAN BE MOVED OUT OF HERE.
YOU GOT A NAME?
UH-- TITAN. THEY CALL ME TITAN.
WELL TITAN, LET'S GET TO WORK.
WE'VE GOT A LOT OF CLEANING UP TO DO.

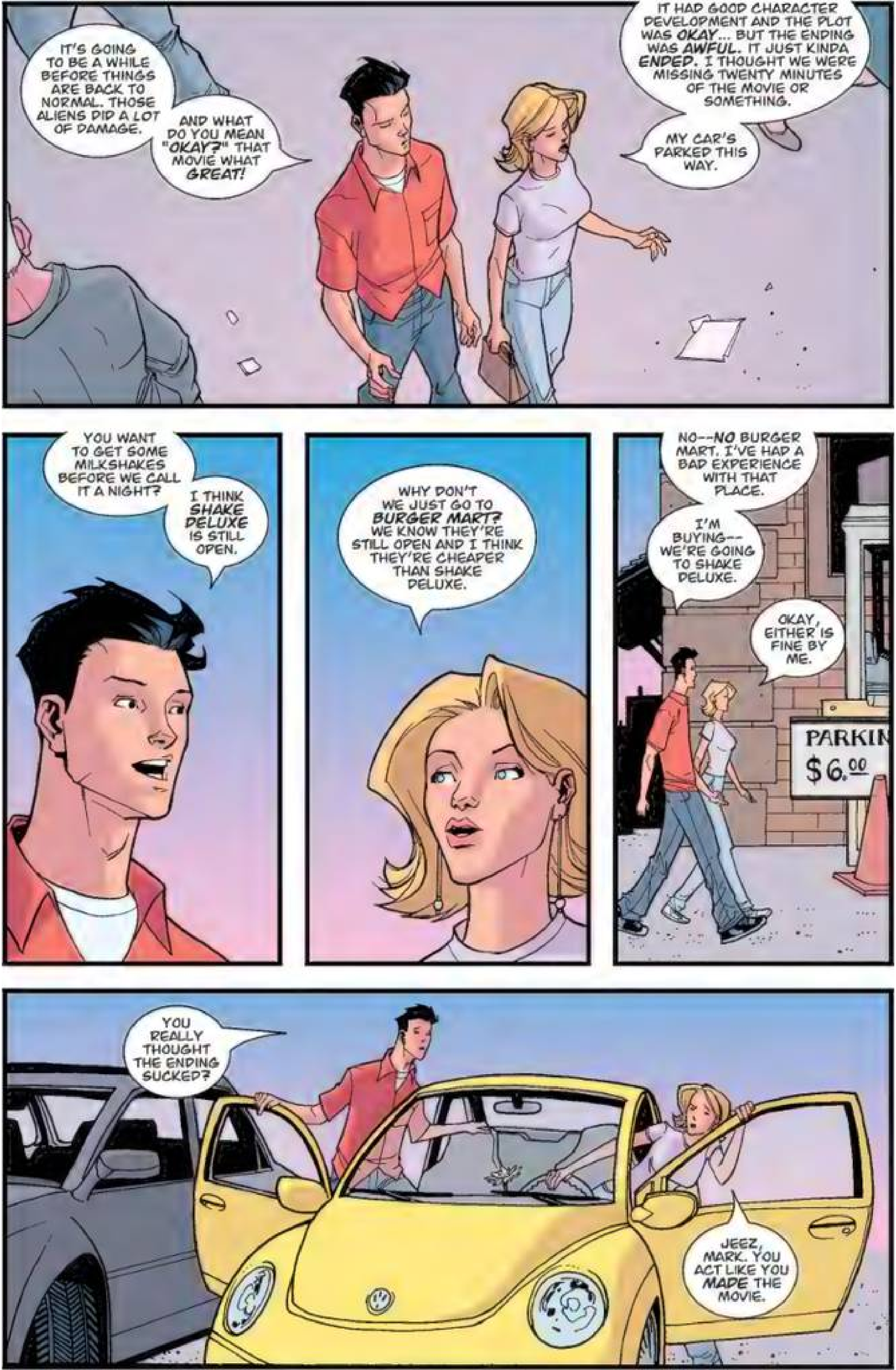

HERE WE ARE.
THIS INVASION REALLY *WRECKED* THINGS. IT NEVER SHOULD HAVE TAKEN US THIS LONG TO GET HERE.
AND EXACTLY WHERE ARE WE?
YOU REALLY DON'T RECOGNIZE THIS PLACE? SORRY. I FORGET THAT SOMETIMES YOU DON'T LEAD PARALLEL LIVES. SOME OF THE OTHERS HAVE NEAR IDENTICAL EXPERIENCES WITH ME.
OTHERS?
SORRY TO BE SO CRYPTIC. EVERYTHING WILL BE MADE CLEAR TO YOU IN TIME.
AFTER *YOU.*
ANGSTROM LEVY. MEET ANGSTROM LEVY.

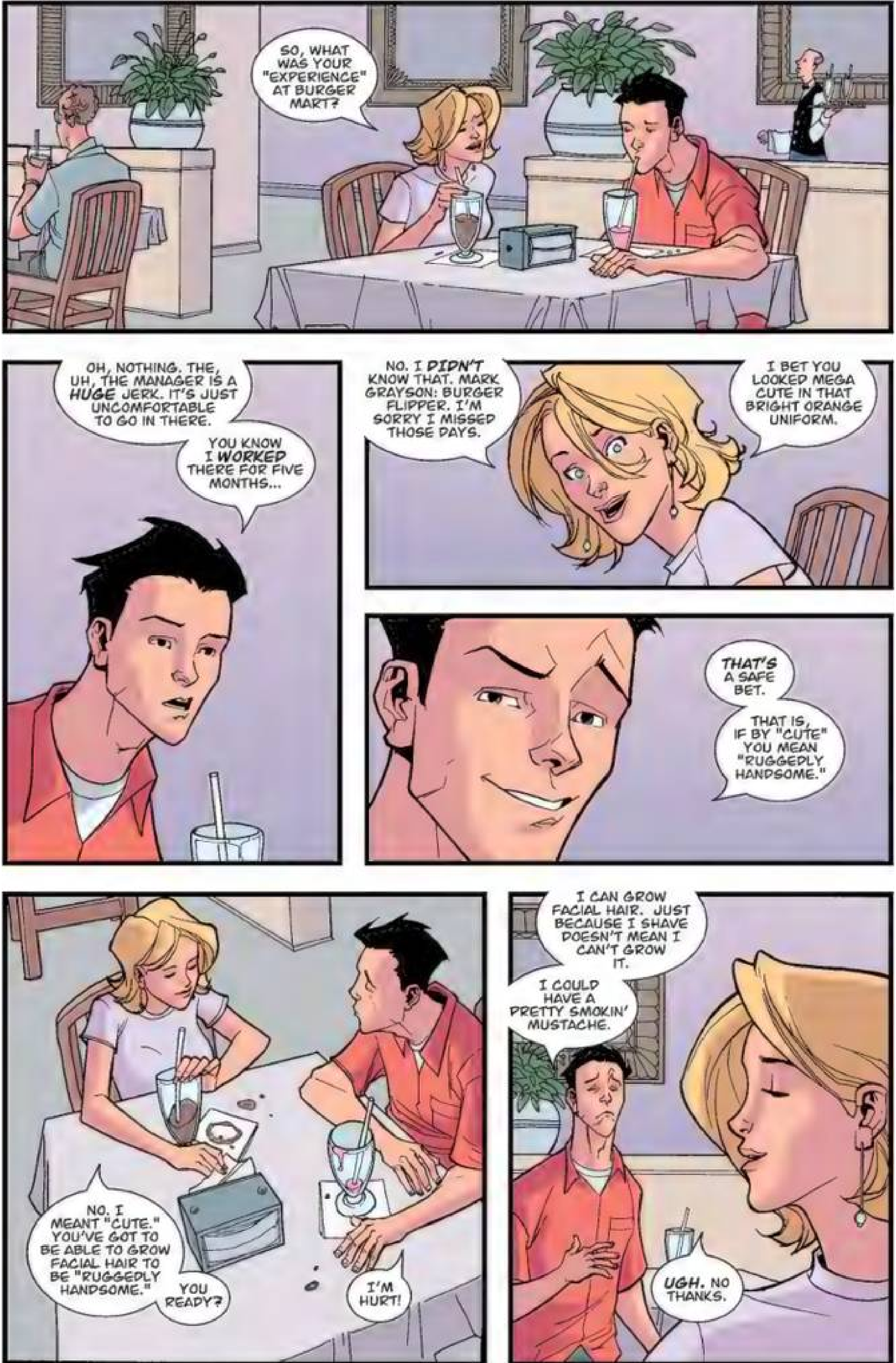

EVERYONE, SAY HELLO.

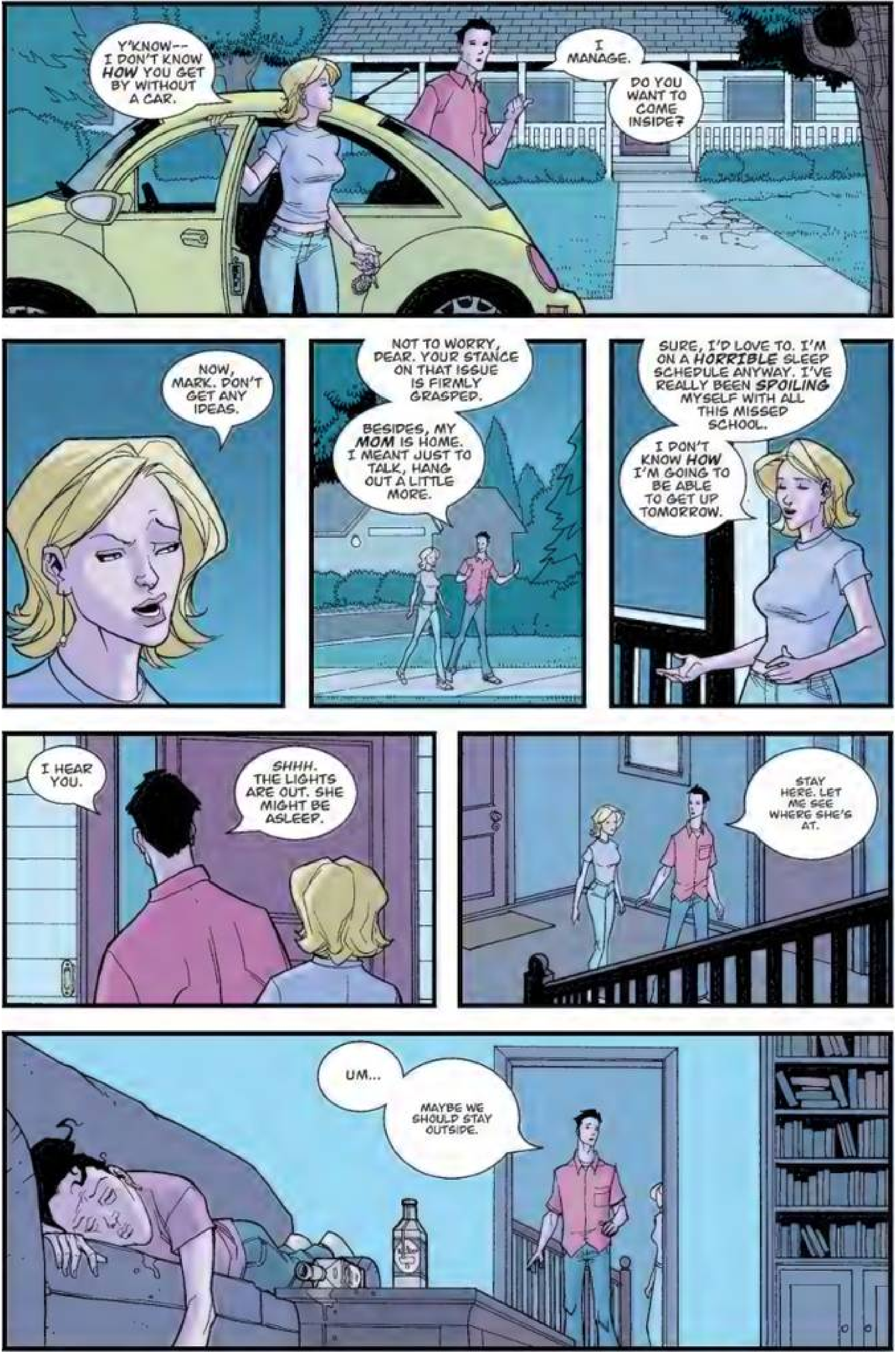


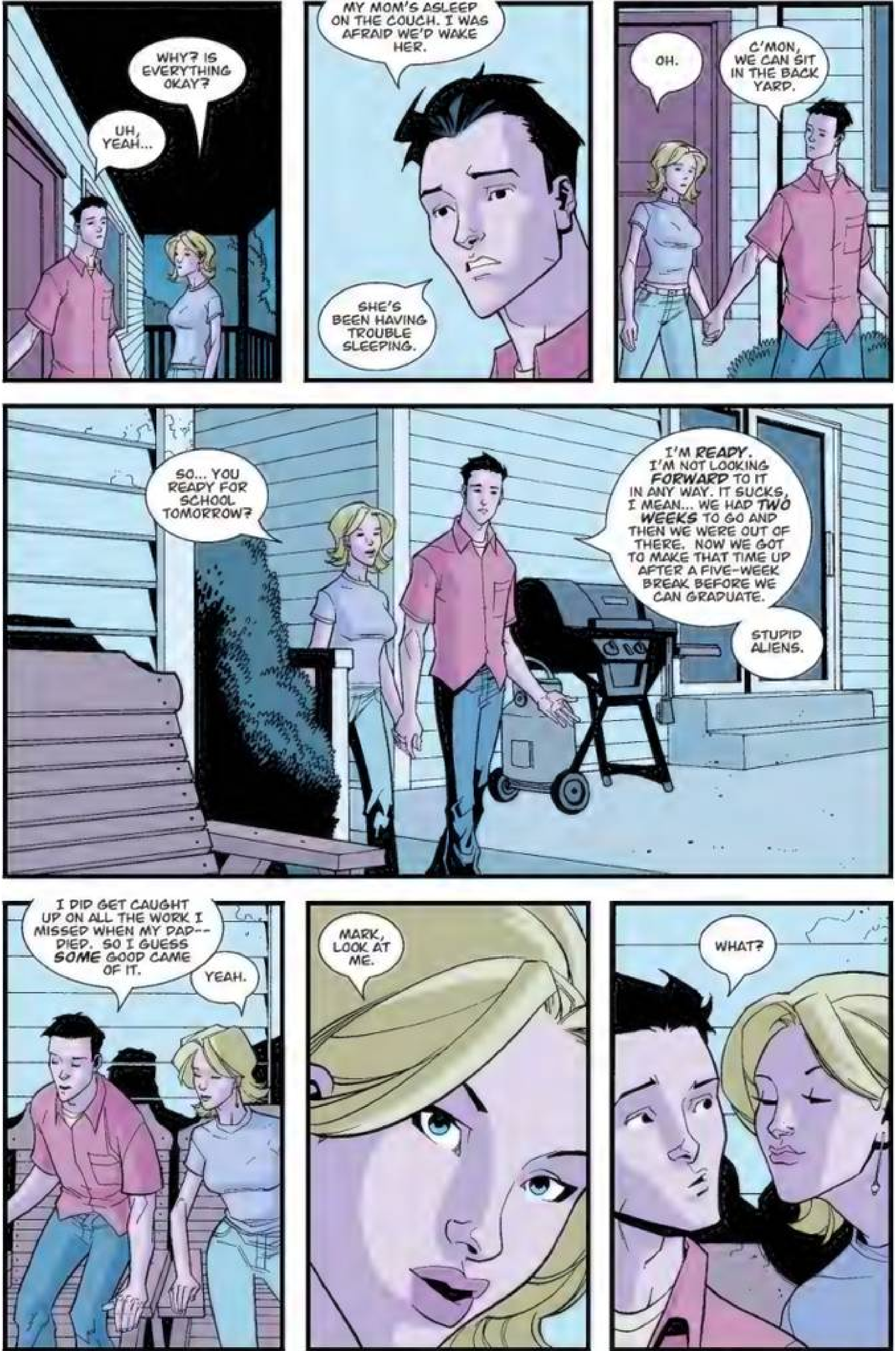
ISSUE SEVENTEEN

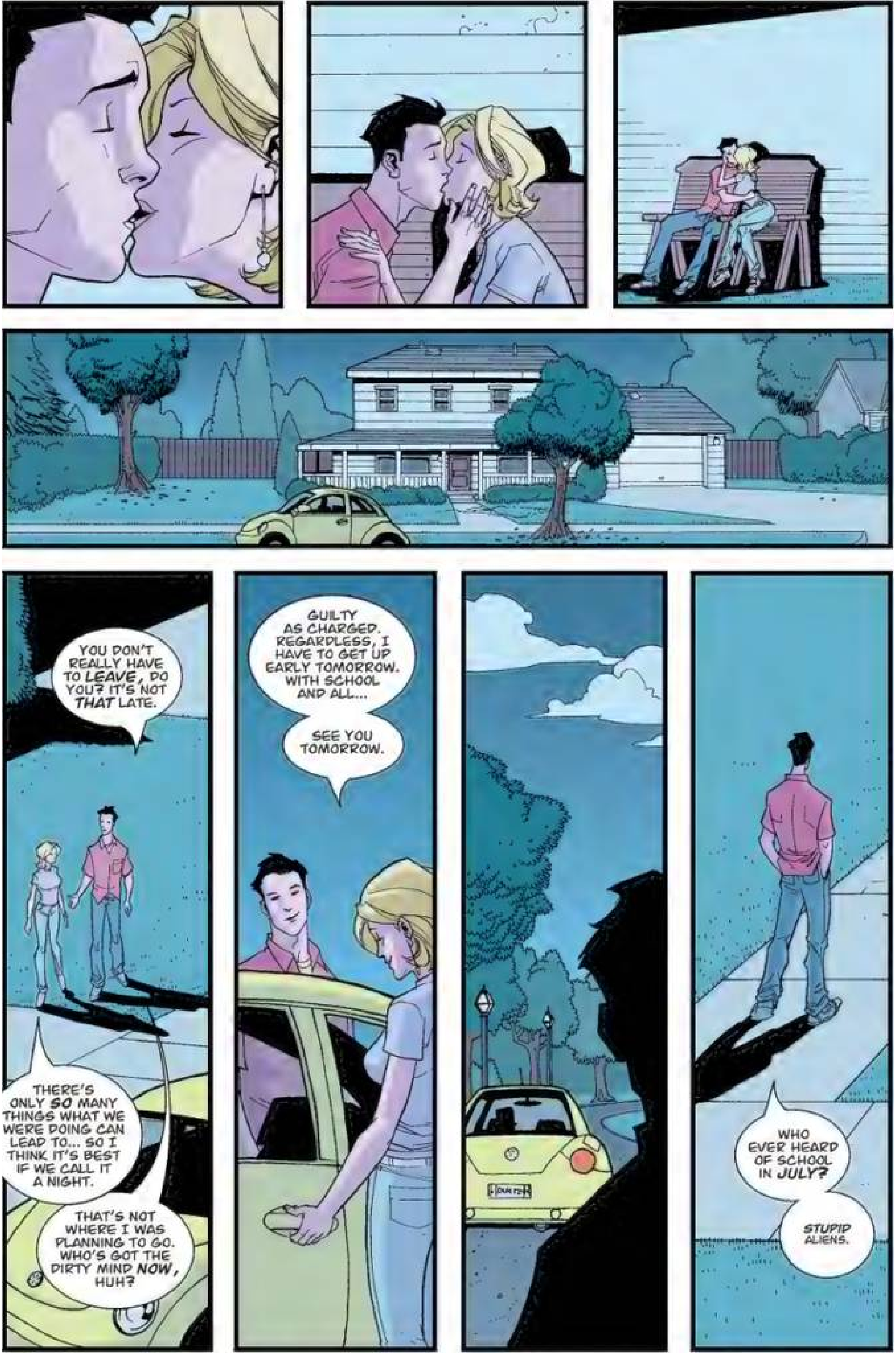

MOVIES
I LIKED IT.
I THOUGHT IT WAS *OKAY*.
JEEZ, WHEN ARE THEY GOING TO BE *DONE* WITH ALL THIS CONSTRUCTION? THEY'VE BEEN WORKING AROUND THE CLOCK FOR *WEEKS* AND IT SEEMS LIKE THEY HAVEN'T EVEN SCRATCHED THE *SURFACE*!

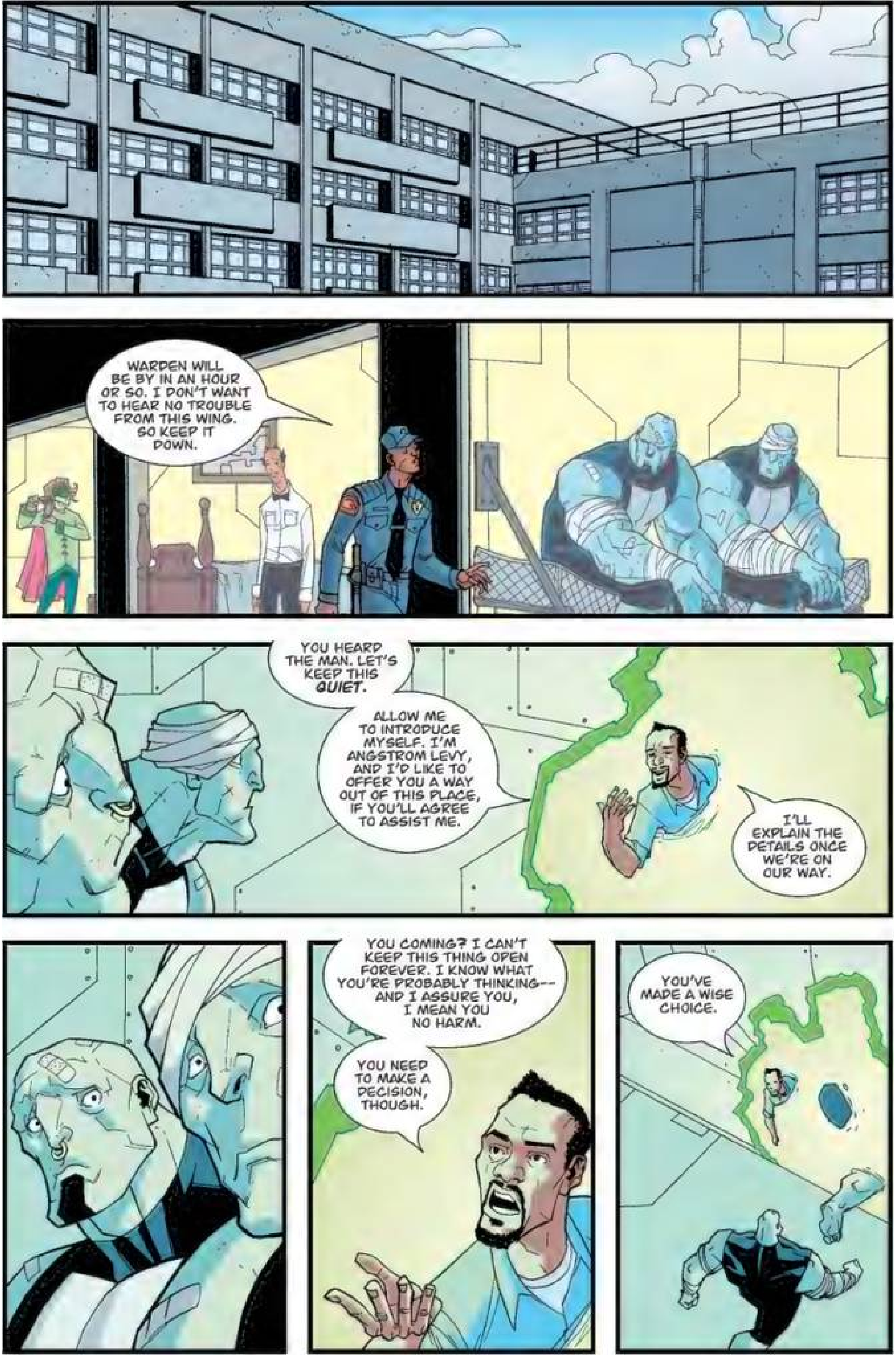

IT'S GOING TO BE A WHILE BEFORE THINGS ARE BACK TO NORMAL. THOSE ALIENS DID A LOT OF DAMAGE.
AND WHAT DO YOU MEAN "OKAY?" THAT MOVIE WHAT GREAT!
IT HAD GOOD CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT AND THE PLOT WAS OKAY... BUT THE ENDING WAS AWFUL. IT JUST KINDA ENDED. I THOUGHT WE WERE MISSING TWENTY MINUTES OF THE MOVIE OR SOMETHING.
MY CAR'S PARKED THIS WAY.
YOU WANT TO GET SOME MILKSHAKES BEFORE WE CALL IT A NIGHT?
I THINK SHAKE DELUXE IS STILL OPEN.
WHY DON'T WE JUST GO TO BURGER MART? WE KNOW THEY'RE STILL OPEN AND I THINK THEY'RE CHEAPER THAN SHAKE DELUXE.
NO--NO BURGER MART. I'VE HAD A BAD EXPERIENCE WITH THAT PLACE.
I'M BUYING-- WE'RE GOING TO SHAKE DELUXE.
OKAY, EITHER IS FINE BY ME.
PARKIN
$6.00
YOU REALLY THOUGHT THE ENDING SUCKED?
JEEZ, MARK. YOU ACT LIKE YOU MADE THE MOVIE.

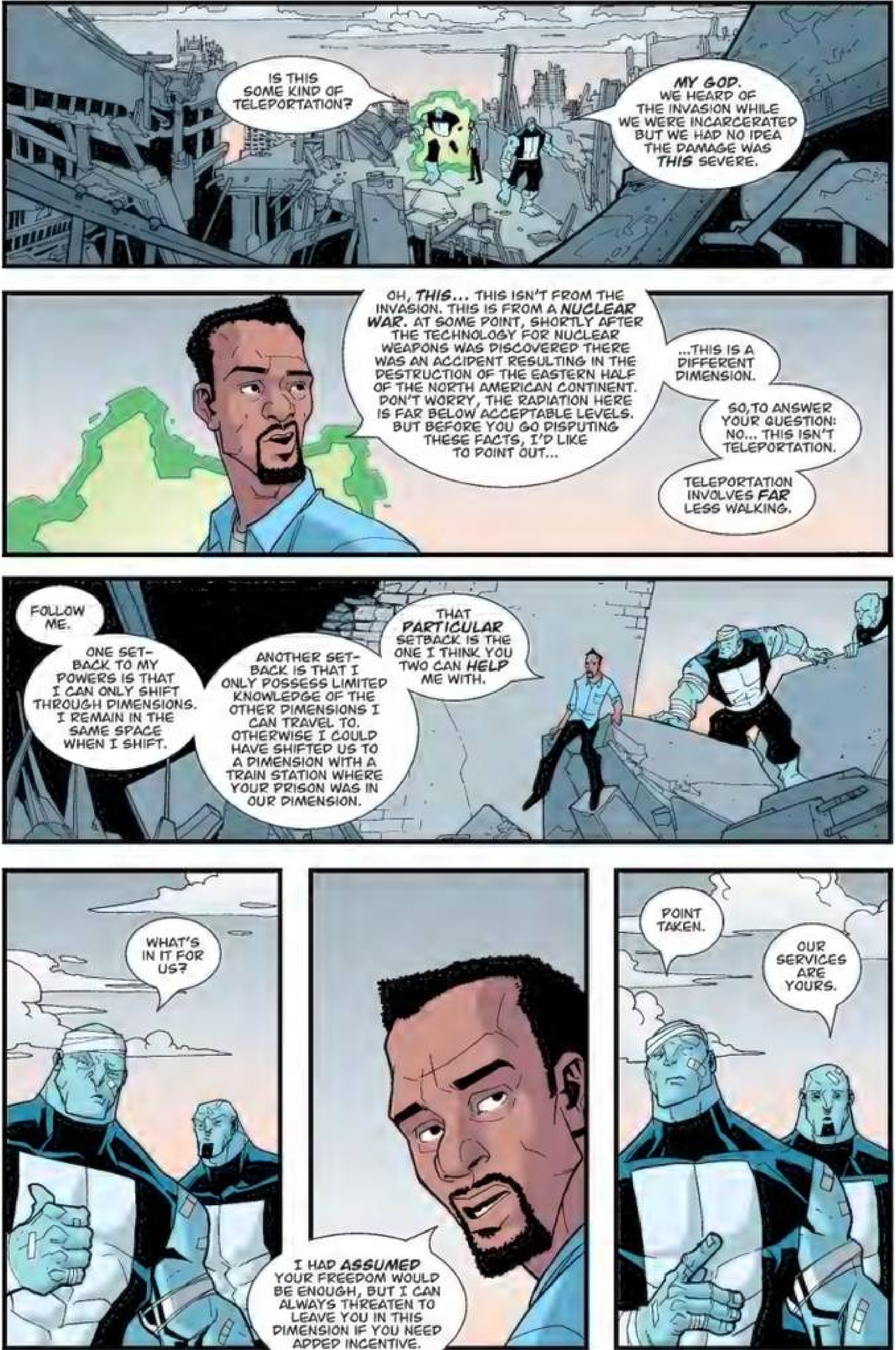

SO, WHAT WAS YOUR "EXPERIENCE" AT BURGER MART?
OH, NOTHING. THE, UH, THE MANAGER IS A **HUGE** JERK. IT'S JUST UNCOMFORTABLE TO GO IN THERE.
YOU KNOW I **WORKED** THERE FOR FIVE MONTHS...
NO. I **DIDN'T** KNOW THAT. MARK GRAYSON: BURGER FLIPPER. I'M SORRY I MISSED THOSE DAYS.
I BET YOU LOOKED MEGA CUTE IN THAT BRIGHT ORANGE UNIFORM.
THAT'S A SAFE BET.
THAT IS, IF BY "CUTE" YOU MEAN "RUGGEDLY HANDSOME."
NO. I MEANT "CUTE." YOU'VE GOT TO BE ABLE TO GROW FACIAL HAIR TO BE "RUGGEDLY HANDSOME."
YOU READY?
I'M HURT!
I CAN GROW FACIAL HAIR. JUST BECAUSE I SHAVE DOESN'T MEAN I CAN'T GROW IT.
I COULD HAVE A PRETTY SMOKIN' MUSTACHE.
UGH. NO THANKS.

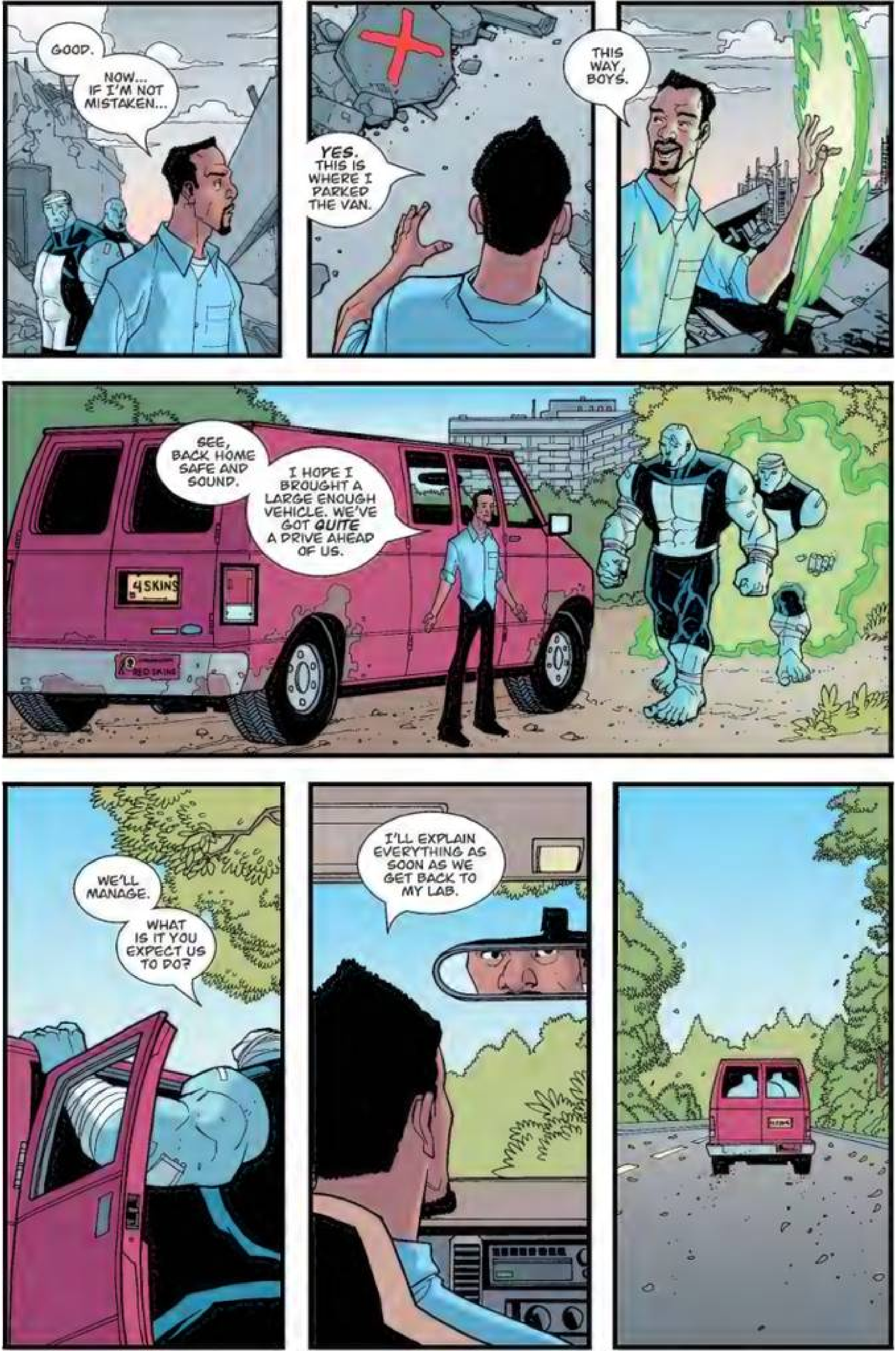

Y'KNOW-- I DON'T KNOW **HOW** YOU GET BY WITHOUT A CAR.
I MANAGE.
DO YOU WANT TO COME INSIDE?
NOW, MARK. DON'T GET ANY IDEAS.
NOT TO WORRY, DEAR. YOUR STANCE ON THAT ISSUE IS FIRMLY GRASPED.
BESIDES, MY **MOM** IS HOME. I MEANT JUST TO TALK, HANG OUT A LITTLE MORE.
SURE, I'D LOVE TO. I'M ON A **HORRIBLE** SLEEP SCHEDULE ANYWAY. I'VE REALLY BEEN **SPOILING** MYSELF WITH ALL THIS MISSED SCHOOL.
I DON'T KNOW **HOW** I'M GOING TO BE ABLE TO GET UP TOMORROW.
I HEAR YOU.
SHHH. THE LIGHTS ARE OUT. SHE MIGHT BE ASLEEP.
STAY HERE. LET ME SEE WHERE SHE'S AT.
UM...
MAYBE WE SHOULD STAY OUTSIDE.

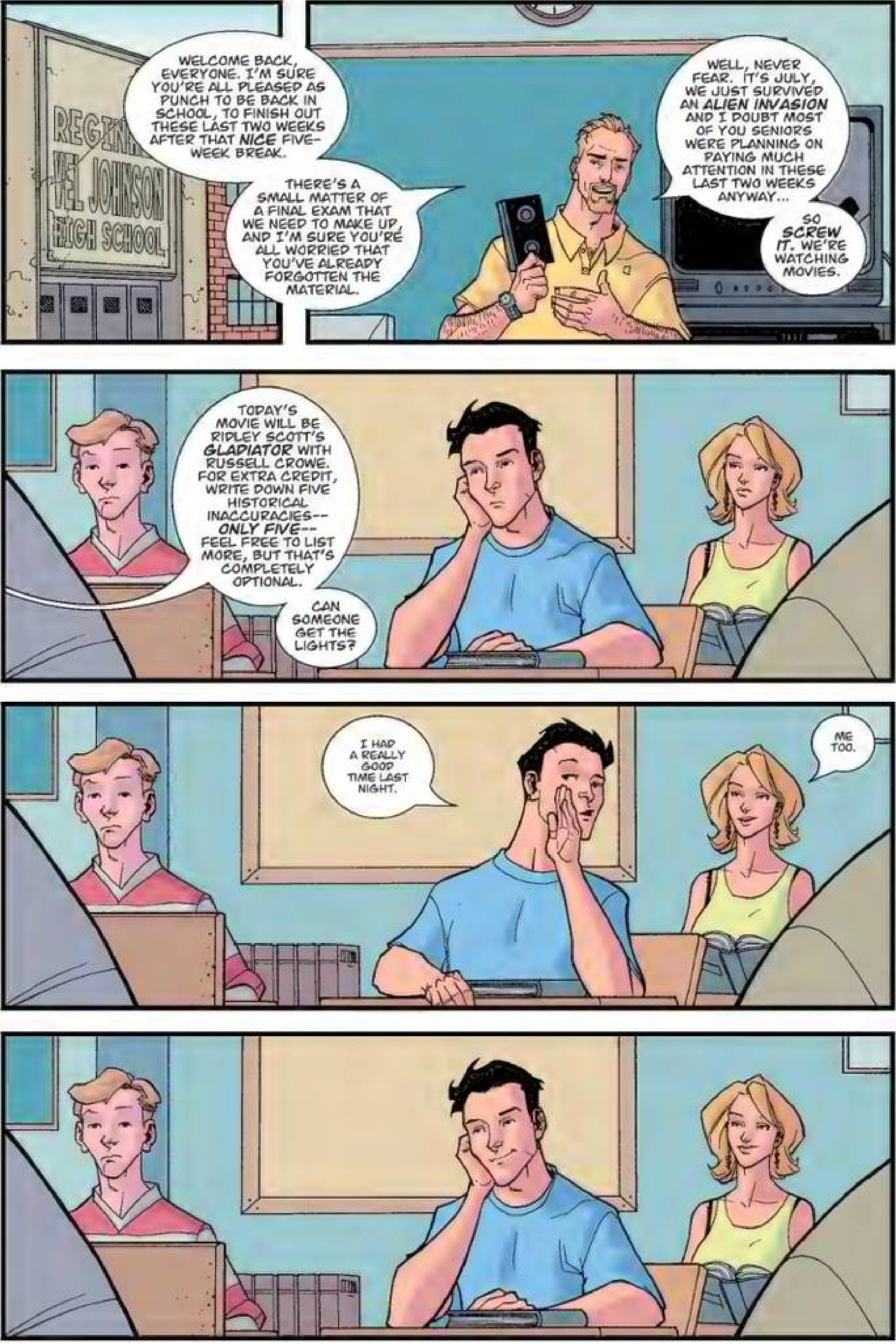

WHY? IS EVERYTHING OKAY?
UH, YEAH...
MY MOM'S ASLEEP ON THE COUCH. I WAS AFRAID WE'D WAKE HER.
SHE'S BEEN HAVING TROUBLE SLEEPING.
OH.
C'MON, WE CAN SIT IN THE BACK YARD.
SO... YOU READY FOR SCHOOL TOMORROW?
I'M READY. I'M NOT LOOKING FORWARD TO IT IN ANY WAY. IT SUCKS, I MEAN... WE HAD TWO WEEKS TO GO AND THEN WE WERE OUT OF THERE. NOW WE GOT TO MAKE THAT TIME UP AFTER A FIVE-WEEK BREAK BEFORE WE CAN GRADUATE.
STUPID ALIENS.
I DID GET CAUGHT UP ON ALL THE WORK I MISSED WHEN MY DAD--DIED. SO I GUESS SOME GOOD CAME OF IT.
YEAH.
MARK, LOOK AT ME.
WHAT?

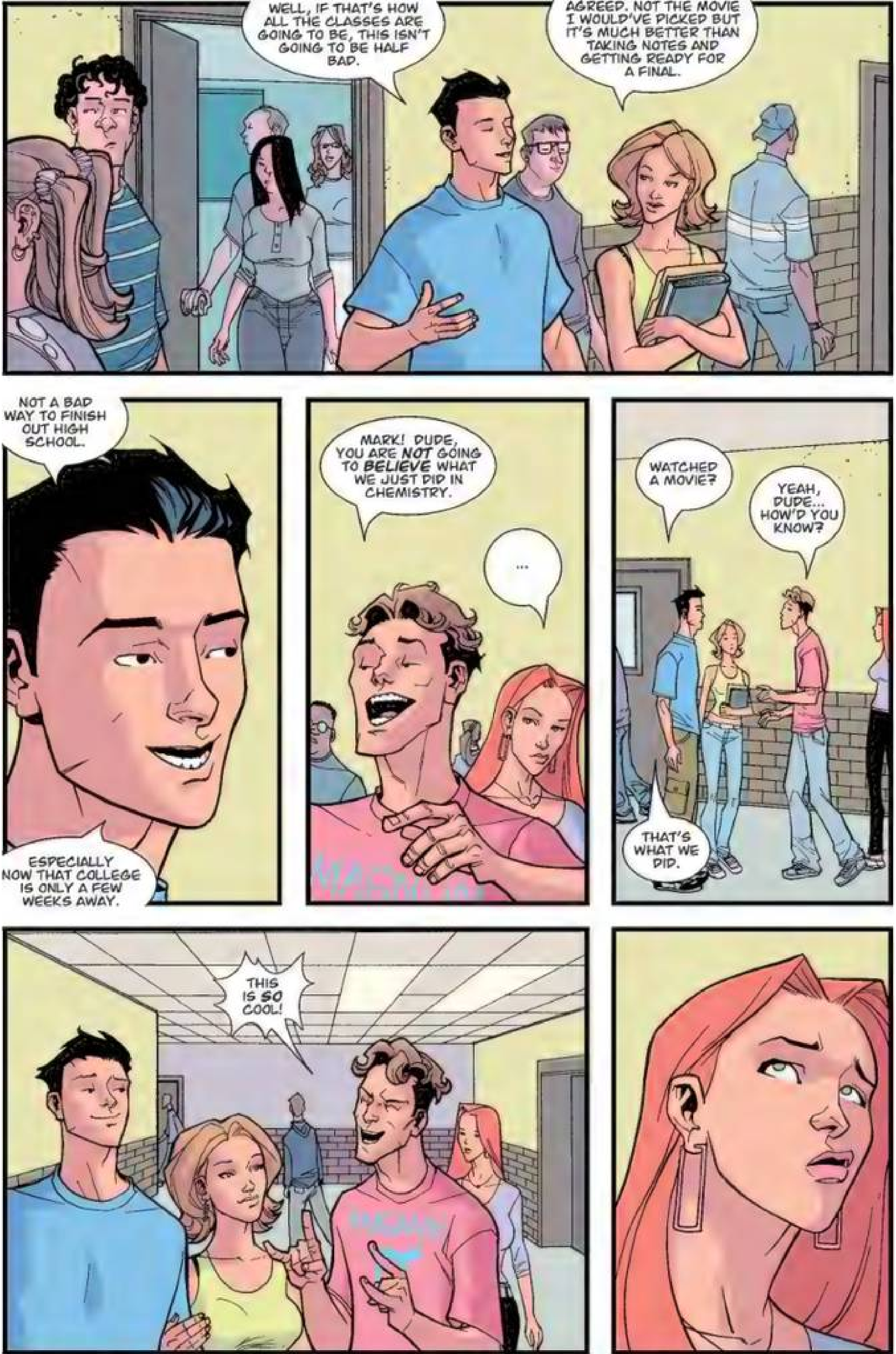

YOU DON'T REALLY HAVE TO **LEAVE**, DO YOU? IT'S NOT **THAT** LATE.
THERE'S ONLY **SO** MANY THINGS WHAT WE WERE DOING CAN LEAD TO... SO I THINK IT'S BEST IF WE CALL IT A NIGHT.
THAT'S NOT WHERE I WAS PLANNING TO GO. WHO'S GOT THE DIRTY MIND **NOW**, HUH?
GUILTY AS CHARGED. REGARDLESS, I HAVE TO GET UP EARLY TOMORROW. WITH SCHOOL AND ALL...
SEE YOU TOMORROW.
WHO EVER HEARD OF SCHOOL IN **JULY?**
STUPID ALIENS.

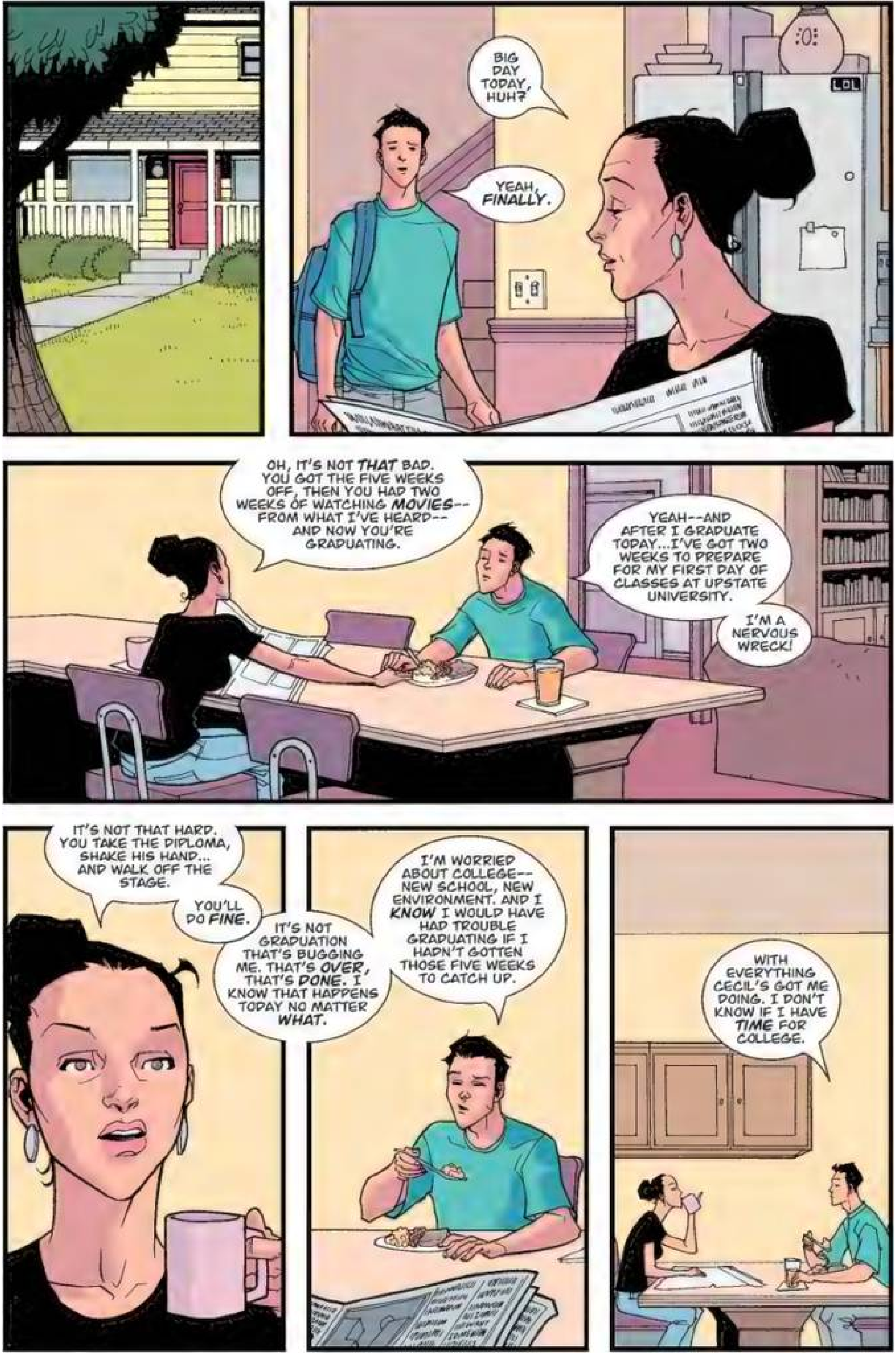

WARDEN WILL BE BY IN AN HOUR OR SO. I DON'T WANT TO HEAR NO TROUBLE FROM THIS WING. SO KEEP IT DOWN.
YOU HEARD THE MAN. LET'S KEEP THIS **QUIET**.
ALLOW ME TO INTRODUCE MYSELF. I'M ANGSTROM LEVY, AND I'D LIKE TO OFFER YOU A WAY OUT OF THIS PLACE, IF YOU'LL AGREE TO ASSIST ME.
I'LL EXPLAIN THE DETAILS ONCE WE'RE ON OUR WAY.
YOU COMING? I CAN'T KEEP THIS THING OPEN FOREVER. I KNOW WHAT YOU'RE PROBABLY THINKING-- AND I ASSURE YOU, I MEAN YOU NO HARM.
YOU NEED TO MAKE A DECISION, THOUGH.
YOU'VE MADE A WISE CHOICE.

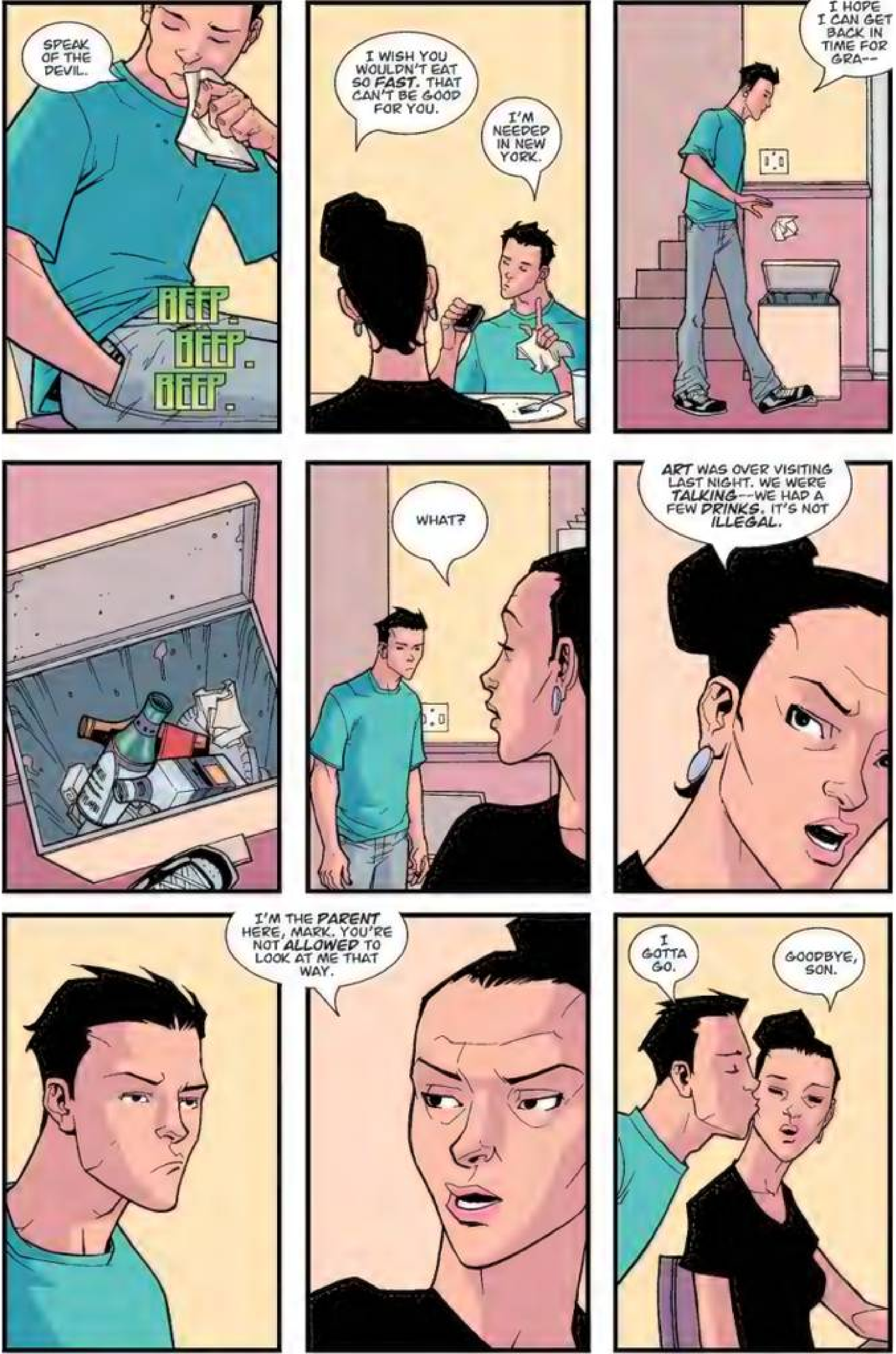

IS THIS SOME KIND OF TELEPORTATION?
MY GOD. WE HEARD OF THE INVASION WHILE WE WERE INCARCERATED BUT WE HAD NO IDEA THE DAMAGE WAS THIS SEVERE.
OH, THIS... THIS ISN'T FROM THE INVASION. THIS IS FROM A NUCLEAR WAR. AT SOME POINT, SHORTLY AFTER THE TECHNOLOGY FOR NUCLEAR WEAPONS WAS DISCOVERED THERE WAS AN ACCIDENT RESULTING IN THE DESTRUCTION OF THE EASTERN HALF OF THE NORTH AMERICAN CONTINENT. DON'T WORRY, THE RADIATION HERE IS FAR BELOW ACCEPTABLE LEVELS. BUT BEFORE YOU GO DISPUTING THESE FACTS, I'D LIKE TO POINT OUT...
...THIS IS A DIFFERENT DIMENSION.
SO, TO ANSWER YOUR QUESTION: NO... THIS ISN'T TELEPORTATION.
TELEPORTATION INVOLVES FAR LESS WALKING.
FOLLOW ME.
ONE SETBACK TO MY POWERS IS THAT I CAN ONLY SHIFT THROUGH DIMENSIONS. I REMAIN IN THE SAME SPACE WHEN I SHIFT.
ANOTHER SETBACK IS THAT I ONLY POSSESS LIMITED KNOWLEDGE OF THE OTHER DIMENSIONS I CAN TRAVEL TO. OTHERWISE I COULD HAVE SHIFTED US TO A DIMENSION WITH A TRAIN STATION WHERE YOUR PRISON WAS IN OUR DIMENSION.
THAT PARTICULAR SETBACK IS THE ONE I THINK YOU TWO CAN HELP ME WITH.
WHAT'S IN IT FOR US?
I HAD ASSUMED YOUR FREEDOM WOULD BE ENOUGH, BUT I CAN ALWAYS THREATEN TO LEAVE YOU IN THIS DIMENSION IF YOU NEED ADDED INCENTIVE.
POINT TAKEN.
OUR SERVICES ARE YOURS.

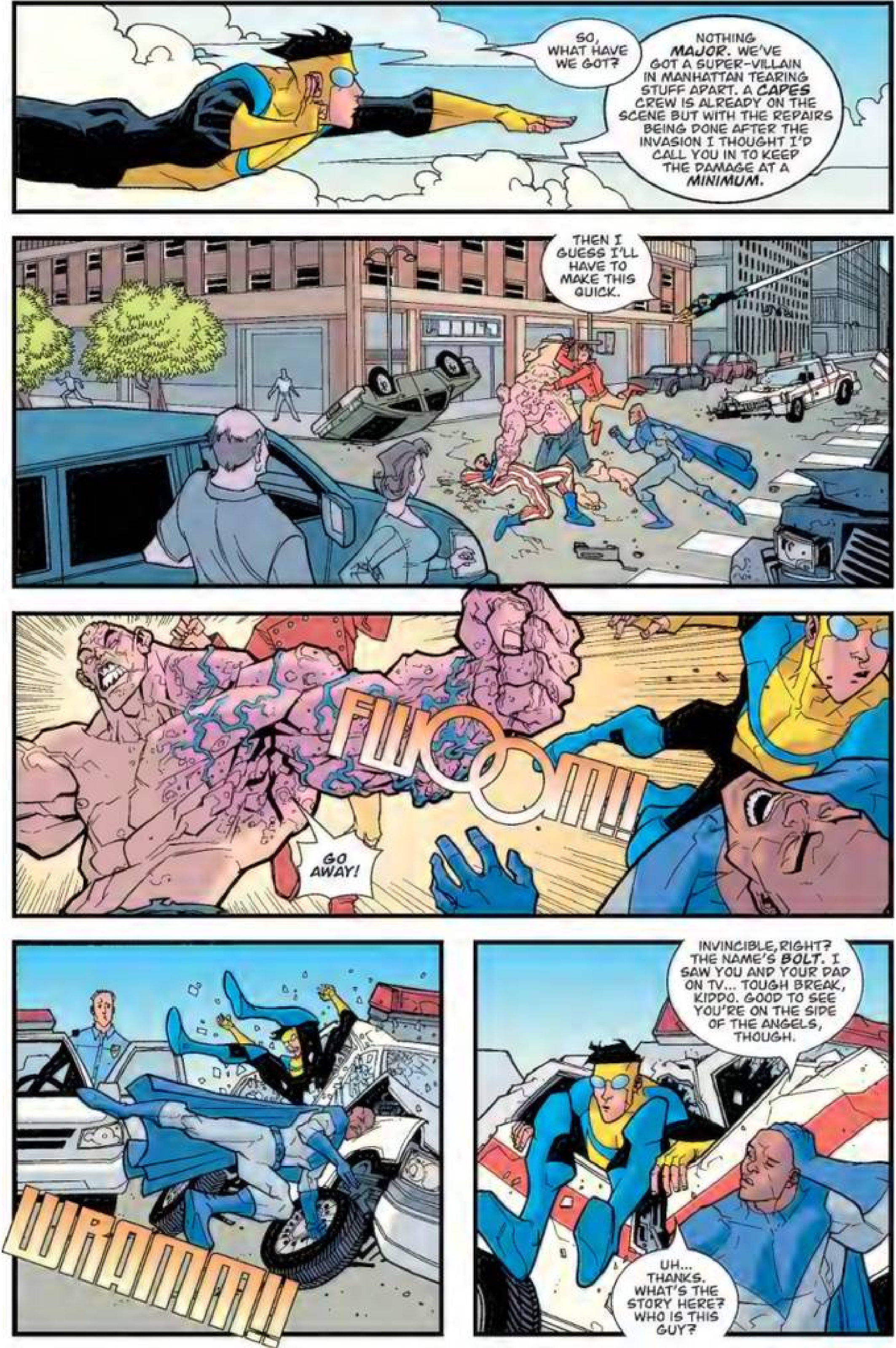

GOOD.
NOW... IF I'M NOT MISTAKEN...
YES. THIS IS WHERE I PARKED THE VAN.
THIS WAY, BOYS.
SEE, BACK HOME SAFE AND SOUND.
I HOPE I BROUGHT A LARGE ENOUGH VEHICLE. WE'VE GOT QUITE A DRIVE AHEAD OF US.
4SKINS
RED SKINS
WE'LL MANAGE.
WHAT IS IT YOU EXPECT US TO DO?
I'LL EXPLAIN EVERYTHING AS SOON AS WE GET BACK TO MY LAB.

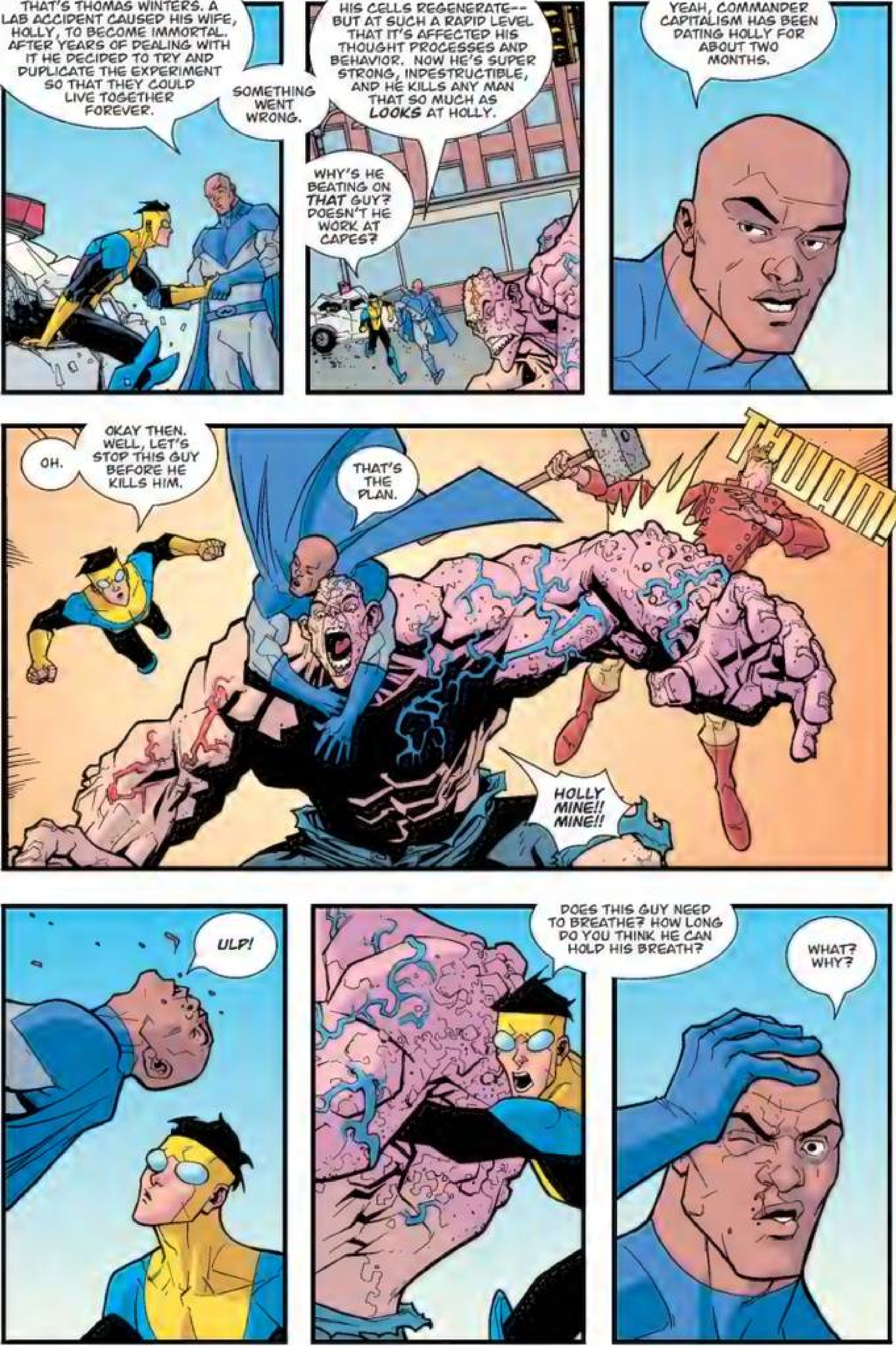

REGINALD VEL JOHNSON HIGH SCHOOL
WELCOME BACK, EVERYONE. I'M SURE YOU'RE ALL PLEASED AS PUNCH TO BE BACK IN SCHOOL, TO FINISH OUT THESE LAST TWO WEEKS AFTER THAT NICE FIVE-WEEK BREAK.
THERE'S A SMALL MATTER OF A FINAL EXAM THAT WE NEED TO MAKE UP, AND I'M SURE YOU'RE ALL WORRIED THAT YOU'VE ALREADY FORGOTTEN THE MATERIAL.
WELL, NEVER FEAR. IT'S JULY, WE JUST SURVIVED AN ALIEN INVASION AND I DOUBT MOST OF YOU SENIORS WERE PLANNING ON PAYING MUCH ATTENTION IN THESE LAST TWO WEEKS ANYWAY...
SO SCREW IT. WE'RE WATCHING MOVIES.
TODAY'S MOVIE WILL BE RIDLEY SCOTT'S GLADIATOR WITH RUSSELL CROWE. FOR EXTRA CREDIT, WRITE DOWN FIVE HISTORICAL INACCURACIES-- ONLY FIVE-- FEEL FREE TO LIST MORE, BUT THAT'S COMPLETELY OPTIONAL.
CAN SOMEONE GET THE LIGHTS?
I HAD A REALLY GOOD TIME LAST NIGHT.
ME TOO.

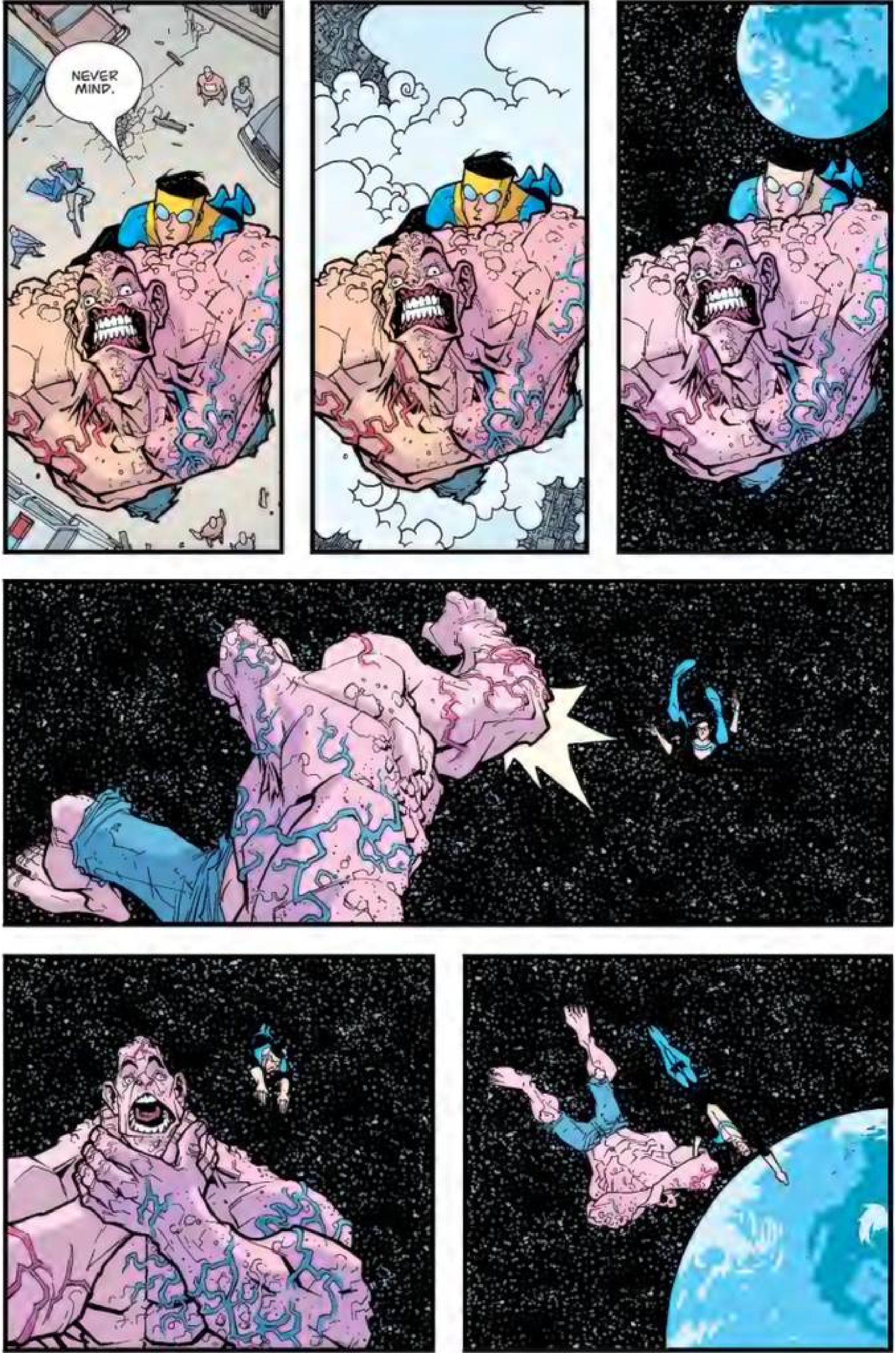

WELL, IF THAT'S HOW ALL THE CLASSES ARE GOING TO BE, THIS ISN'T GOING TO BE HALF BAD.
AGREED. NOT THE MOVIE I WOULD'VE PICKED BUT IT'S MUCH BETTER THAN TAKING NOTES AND GETTING READY FOR A FINAL.
NOT A BAD WAY TO FINISH OUT HIGH SCHOOL.
ESPECIALLY NOW THAT COLLEGE IS ONLY A FEW WEEKS AWAY.
MARK! DUDE, YOU ARE **NOT** GOING TO **BELIEVE** WHAT WE JUST DID IN CHEMISTRY.
...
WATCHED A MOVIE?
YEAH, DUDE... HOW'D YOU KNOW?
THAT'S WHAT WE DID.
THIS IS **SO** COOL!

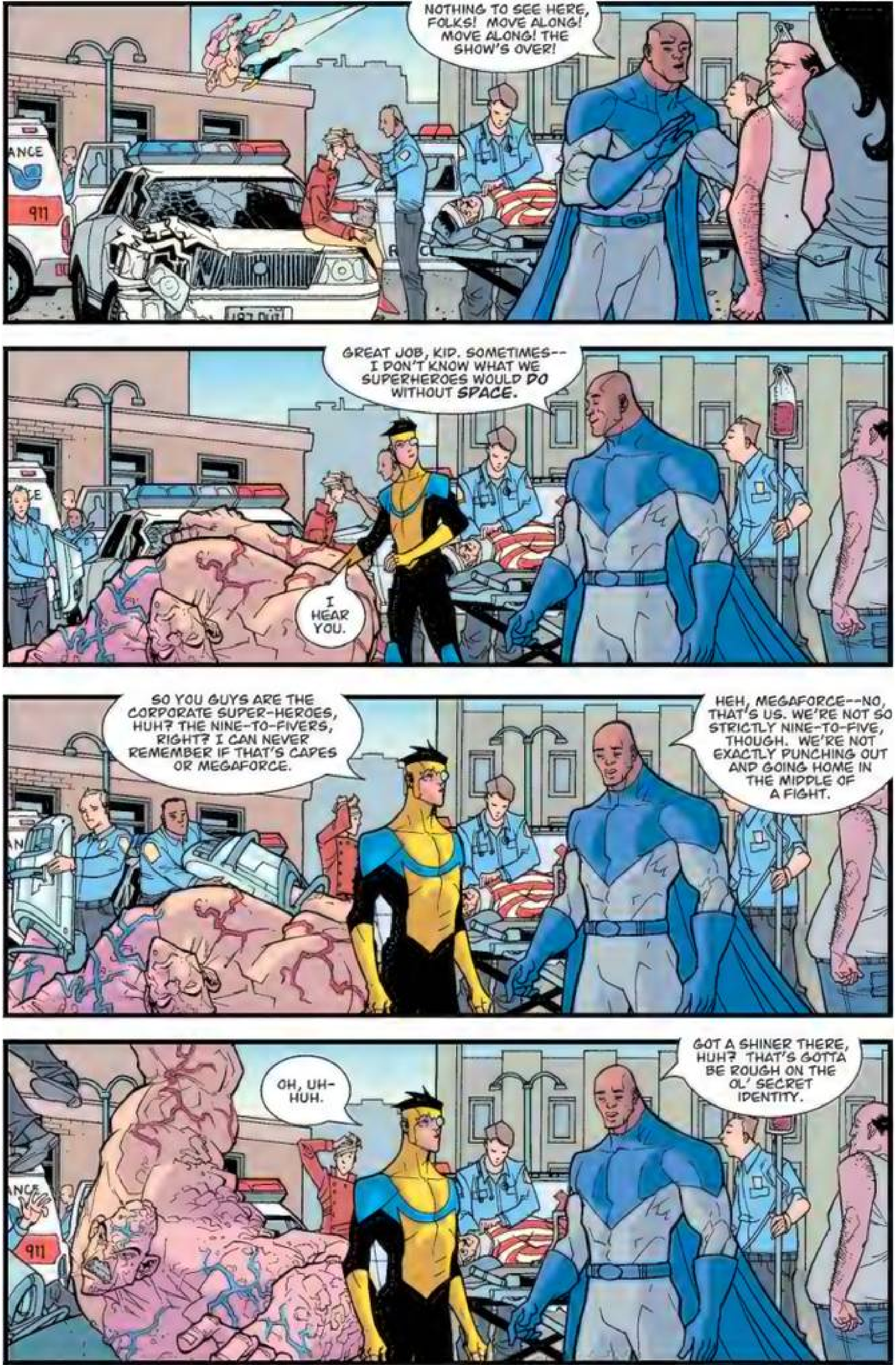

LOL
BIG DAY TODAY, HUH?
YEAH, *FINALLY*.
OH, IT'S NOT *THAT* BAD. YOU GOT THE FIVE WEEKS OFF, THEN YOU HAD TWO WEEKS OF WATCHING *MOVIES*-- FROM WHAT I'VE HEARD-- AND NOW YOU'RE GRADUATING.
YEAH--AND AFTER I GRADUATE TODAY...I'VE GOT TWO WEEKS TO PREPARE FOR MY FIRST DAY OF CLASSES AT UPSTATE UNIVERSITY.
I'M A NERVOUS WRECK!
IT'S NOT THAT HARD. YOU TAKE THE DIPLOMA, SHAKE HIS HAND... AND WALK OFF THE STAGE.
YOU'LL DO *FINE*.
IT'S NOT GRADUATION THAT'S BUGGING ME. THAT'S *OVER*, THAT'S *DONE*. I KNOW THAT HAPPENS TODAY NO MATTER *WHAT*.
I'M WORRIED ABOUT COLLEGE-- NEW SCHOOL, NEW ENVIRONMENT. AND I *KNOW* I WOULD HAVE HAD TROUBLE GRADUATING IF I HADN'T GOTTEN THOSE FIVE WEEKS TO CATCH UP.
WITH EVERYTHING CECIL'S GOT ME DOING, I DON'T KNOW IF I HAVE *TIME* FOR COLLEGE.

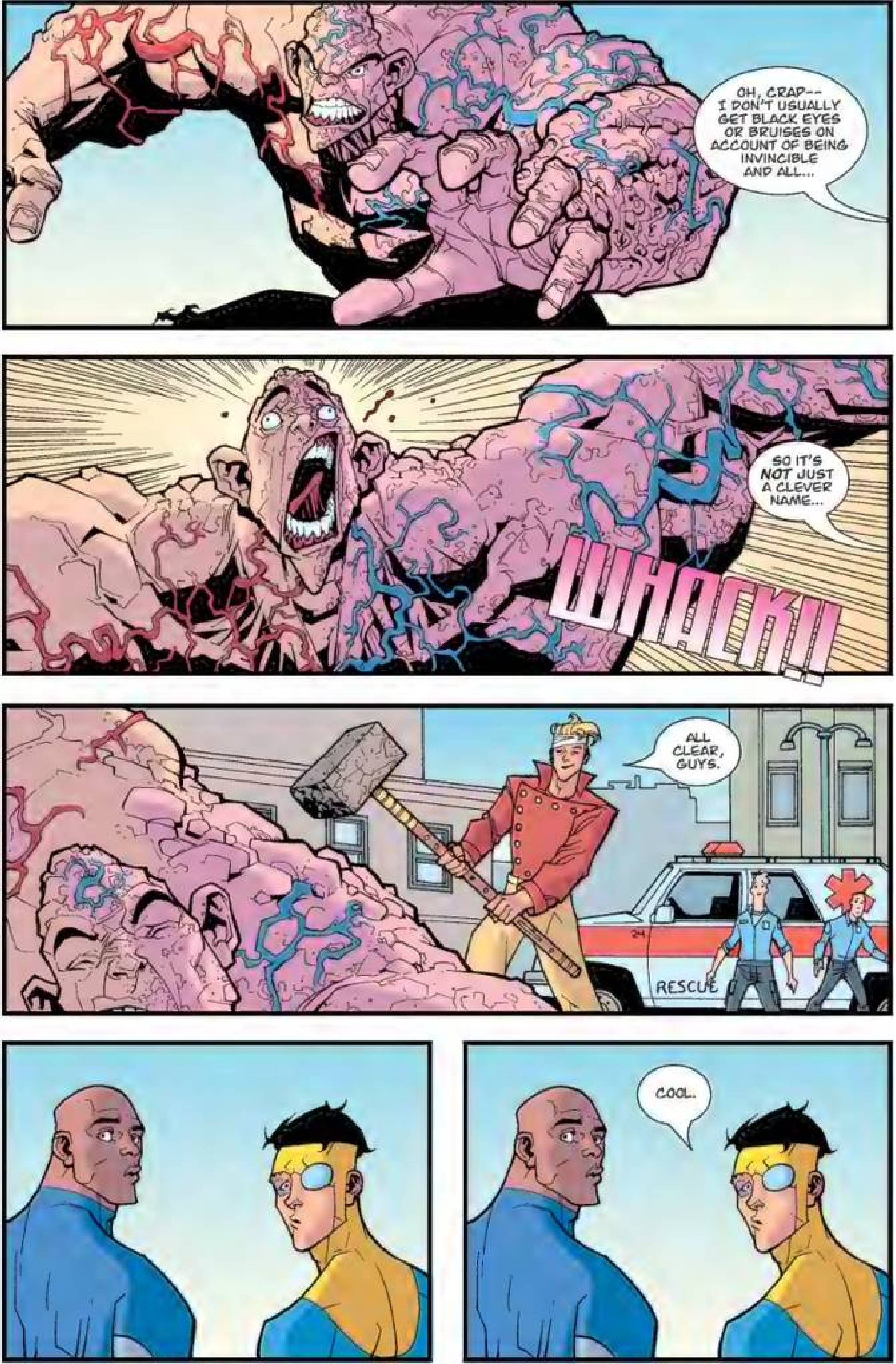

SPEAK OF THE DEVIL.
BEEP. BEEP. BEEP.
I WISH YOU WOULDN'T EAT SO FAST. THAT CAN'T BE GOOD FOR YOU.
I'M NEEDED IN NEW YORK.
I HOPE I CAN GET BACK IN TIME FOR GRA--
WHAT?
ART WAS OVER VISITING LAST NIGHT. WE WERE TALKING--WE HAD A FEW DRINKS. IT'S NOT ILLEGAL.
I'M THE PARENT HERE, MARK. YOU'RE NOT ALLOWED TO LOOK AT ME THAT WAY.
I GOTTA GO.
GOODBYE, SON.

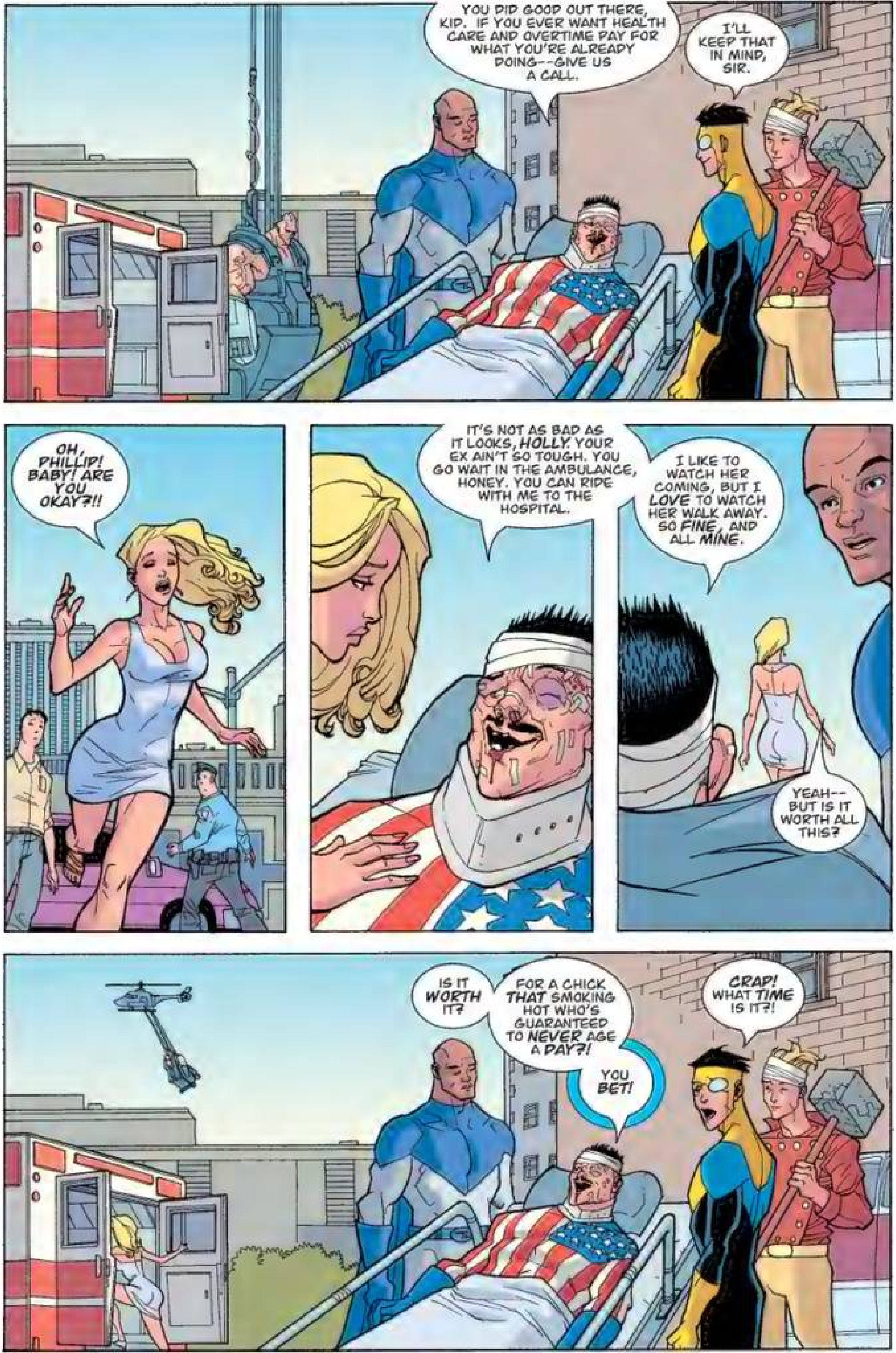

SO, WHAT HAVE WE GOT?
NOTHING **MAJOR.** WE'VE GOT A SUPER-VILLAIN IN MANHATTAN TEARING STUFF APART. A **CAPES** CREW IS ALREADY ON THE SCENE BUT WITH THE REPAIRS BEING DONE AFTER THE INVASION I THOUGHT I'D CALL YOU IN TO KEEP THE DAMAGE AT A ***MINIMUM.***
THEN I GUESS I'LL HAVE TO MAKE THIS QUICK.
FWOOMM
GO AWAY!
WHAMMM
INVINCIBLE, RIGHT? THE NAME'S ***BOLT.*** I SAW YOU AND YOUR DAD ON TV... TOUGH BREAK, KIDDO. GOOD TO SEE YOU'RE ON THE SIDE OF THE ANGELS, THOUGH.
UH... THANKS. WHAT'S THE STORY HERE? WHO IS THIS GUY?

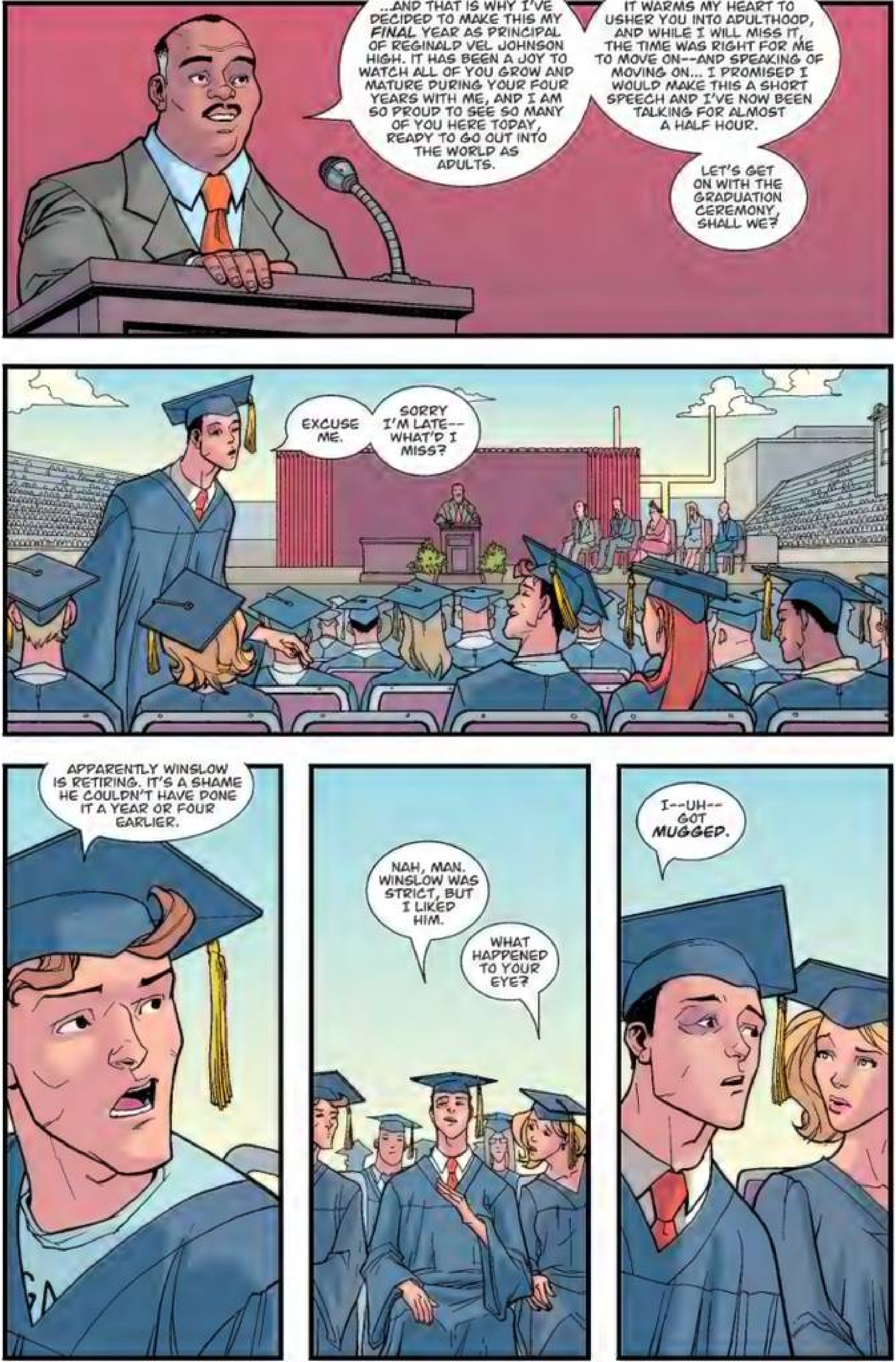

THAT'S THOMAS WINTERS. A LAB ACCIDENT CAUSED HIS WIFE, HOLLY, TO BECOME IMMORTAL. AFTER YEARS OF DEALING WITH IT HE DECIDED TO TRY AND DUPLICATE THE EXPERIMENT SO THAT THEY COULD LIVE TOGETHER FOREVER.
SOMETHING WENT WRONG.
HIS CELLS REGENERATE-- BUT AT SUCH A RAPID LEVEL THAT IT'S AFFECTED HIS THOUGHT PROCESSES AND BEHAVIOR. NOW HE'S SUPER STRONG, INDESTRUCTIBLE, AND HE KILLS ANY MAN THAT SO MUCH AS LOOKS AT HOLLY.
WHY'S HE BEATING ON THAT GUY? DOESN'T HE WORK AT CAPES?
YEAH, COMMANDER CAPITALISM HAS BEEN DATING HOLLY FOR ABOUT TWO MONTHS.
OH.
OKAY THEN. WELL, LET'S STOP THIS GUY BEFORE HE KILLS HIM.
THAT'S THE PLAN.
THUOOM!
HOLLY MINE!! MINE!!
ULP!
DOES THIS GUY NEED TO BREATHE? HOW LONG DO YOU THINK HE CAN HOLD HIS BREATH?
WHAT? WHY?

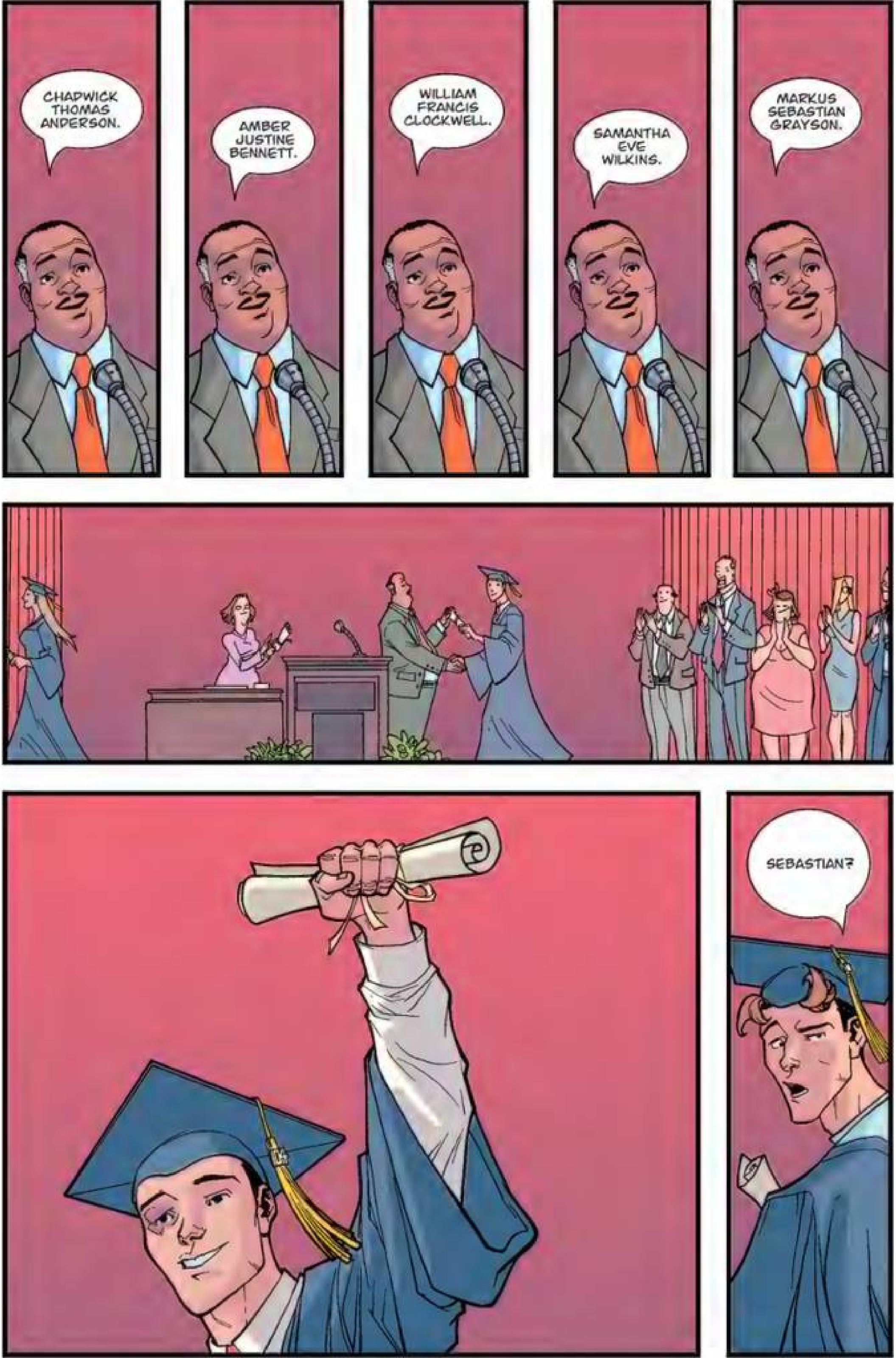

NEVER MIND.

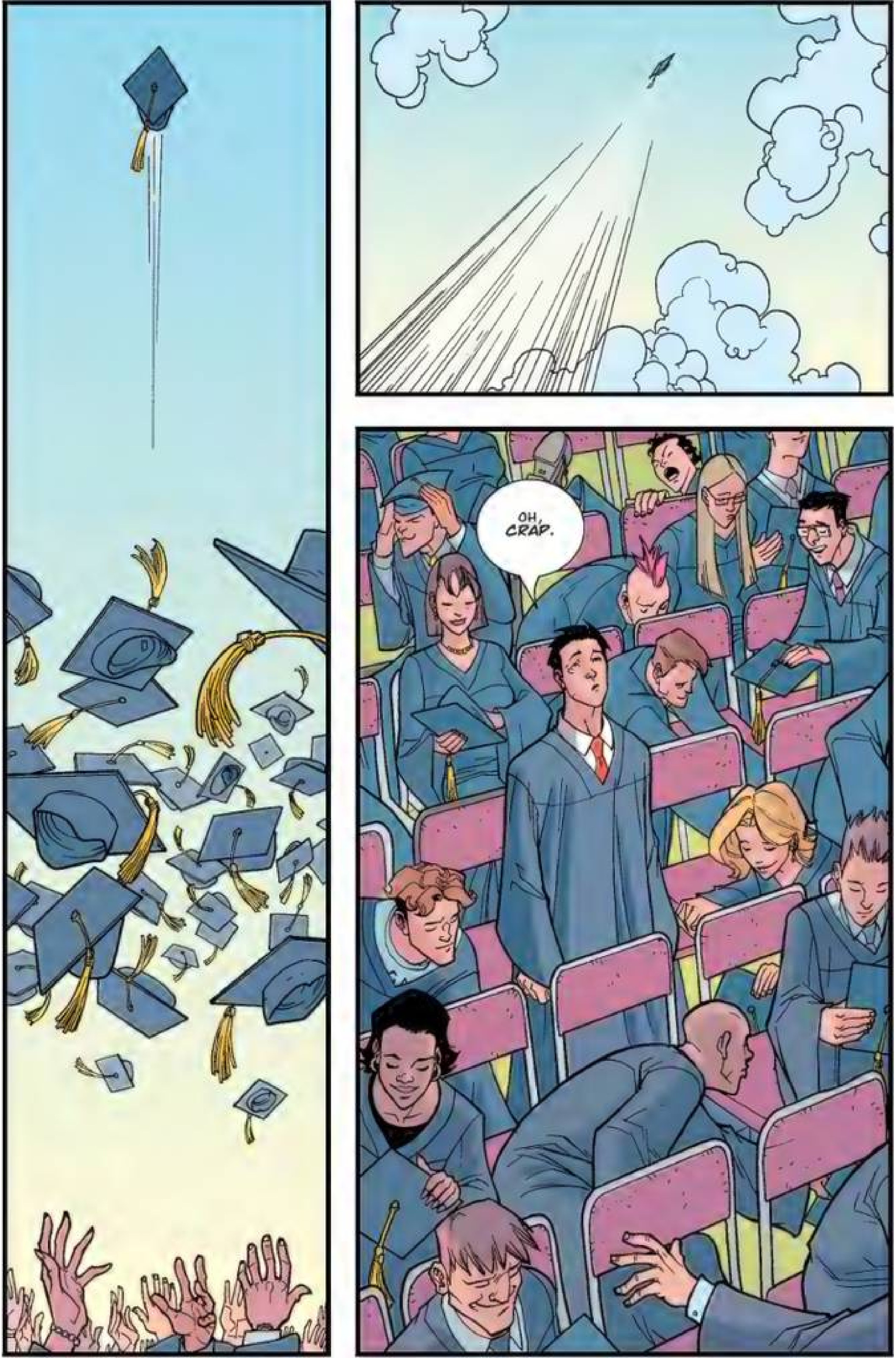

NOTHING TO SEE HERE, FOLKS! MOVE ALONG! MOVE ALONG! THE SHOW'S OVER!
ANCE
911
GREAT JOB, KID. SOMETIMES-- I DON'T KNOW WHAT WE SUPERHEROES WOULD *DO* WITHOUT *SPACE*.
I HEAR YOU.
SO YOU GUYS ARE THE CORPORATE SUPER-HEROES, HUH? THE NINE-TO-FIVERS, RIGHT? I CAN NEVER REMEMBER IF THAT'S CAPES OR MEGAFORCE.
HEH, MEGAFORCE--NO, THAT'S US. WE'RE NOT SO STRICTLY NINE-TO-FIVE, THOUGH. WE'RE NOT EXACTLY PUNCHING OUT AND GOING HOME IN THE MIDDLE OF A FIGHT.
OH, UH-HUH.
GOT A SHINER THERE, HUH? THAT'S GOTTA BE ROUGH ON THE OL' SECRET IDENTITY.
ANCE
911


OH, CRAP-- I DON'T USUALLY GET BLACK EYES OR BRUISES ON ACCOUNT OF BEING INVINCIBLE AND ALL...
SO IT'S *NOT* JUST A CLEVER NAME...
WHACK!!
ALL CLEAR, GUYS.
24
RESCUE
COOL.

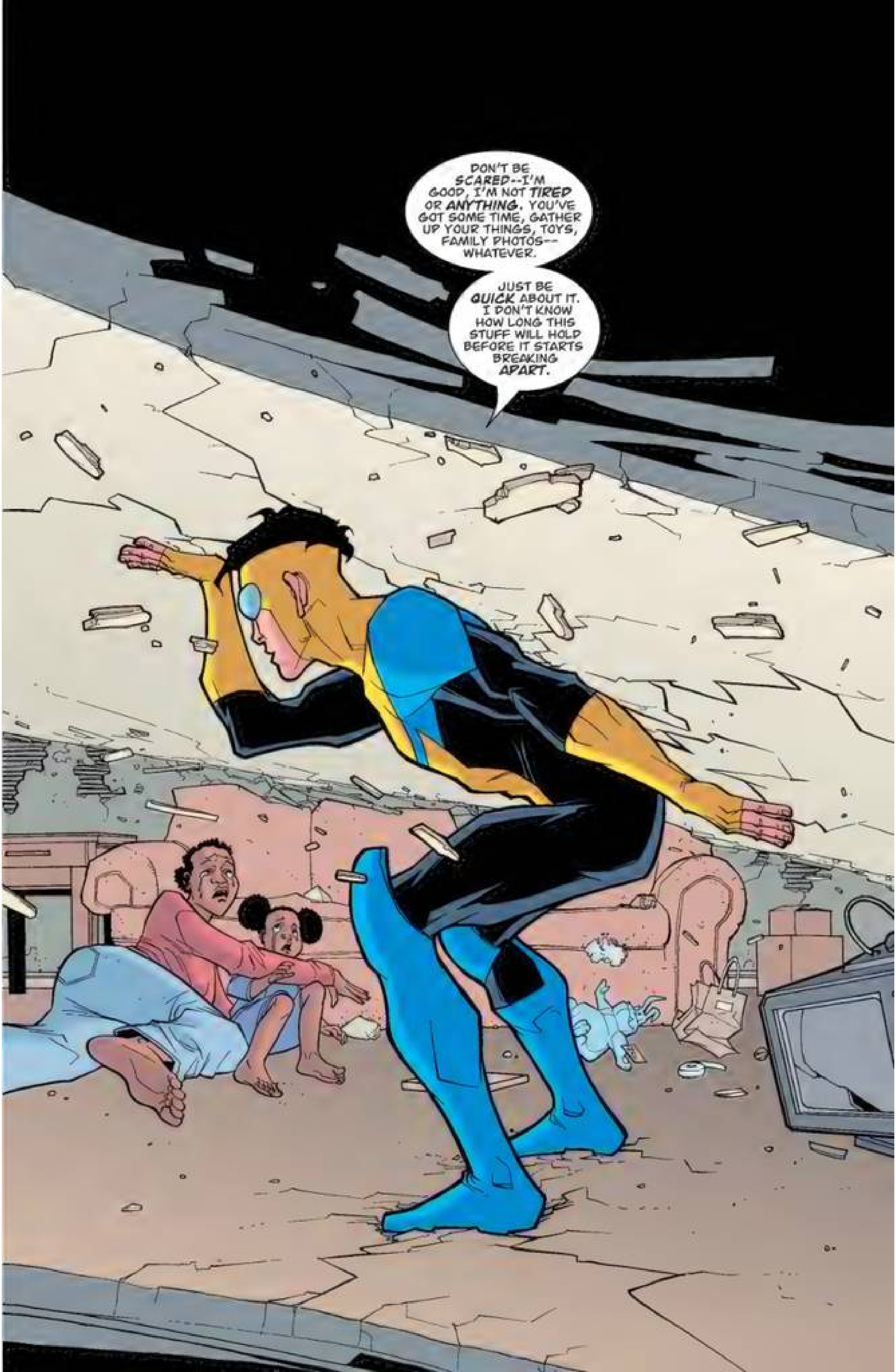

YOU DID GOOD OUT THERE, KID. IF YOU EVER WANT HEALTH CARE AND OVERTIME PAY FOR WHAT YOU'RE ALREADY DOING--GIVE US A CALL.
I'LL KEEP THAT IN MIND, SIR.
OH, PHILLIP! BABY! ARE YOU OKAY?!!
IT'S NOT AS BAD AS IT LOOKS, HOLLY. YOUR EX AIN'T SO TOUGH. YOU GO WAIT IN THE AMBULANCE, HONEY. YOU CAN RIDE WITH ME TO THE HOSPITAL.
I LIKE TO WATCH HER COMING, BUT I LOVE TO WATCH HER WALK AWAY. SO FINE, AND ALL MINE.
YEAH--BUT IS IT WORTH ALL THIS?
IS IT WORTH IT?
FOR A CHICK THAT SMOKING HOT WHO'S GUARANTEED TO NEVER AGE A DAY?!
YOU BET!
CRAP! WHAT TIME IS IT?!

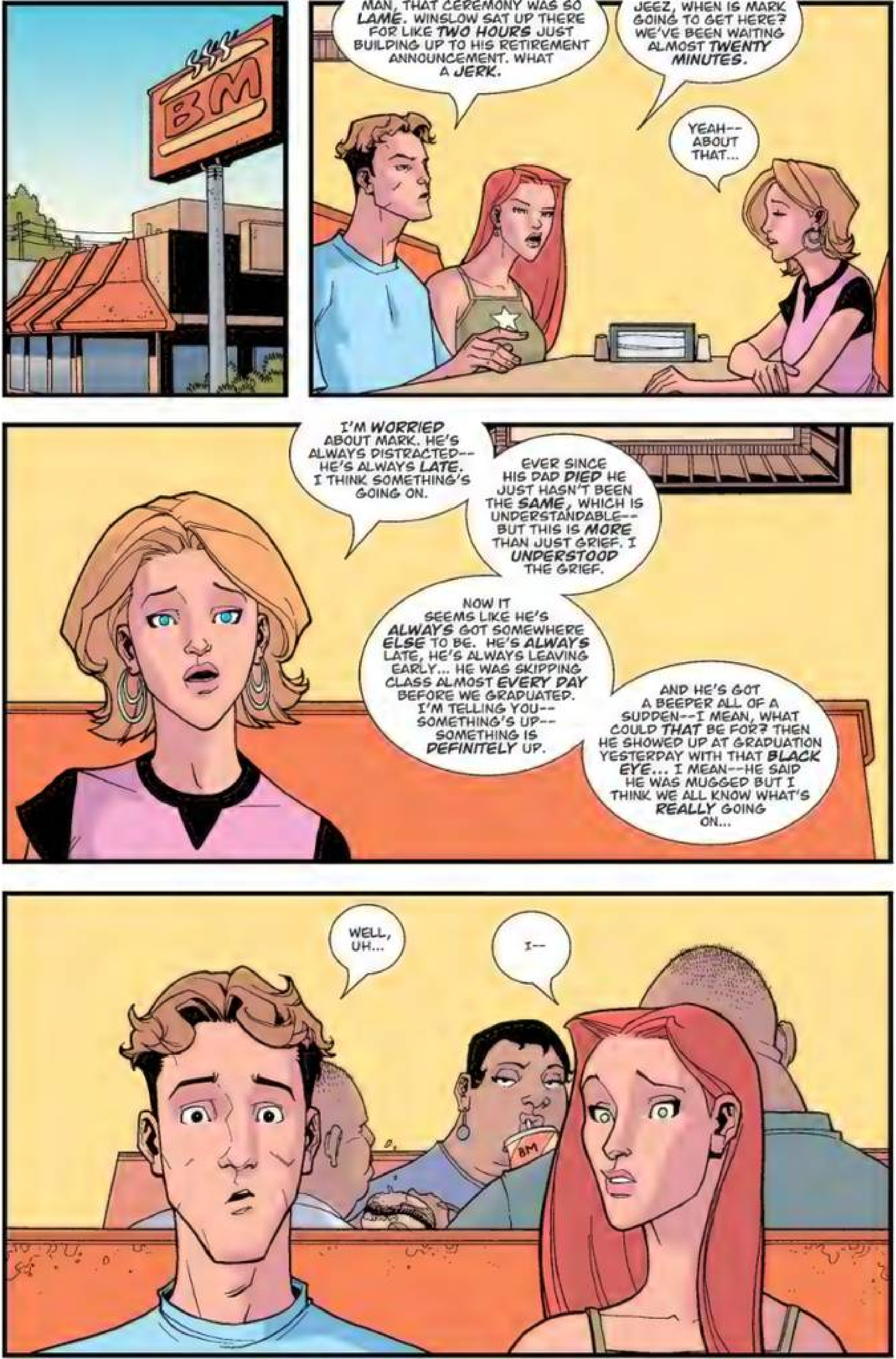

...AND THAT IS WHY I'VE DECIDED TO MAKE THIS MY *FINAL* YEAR AS PRINCIPAL OF REGINALD VEL JOHNSON HIGH. IT HAS BEEN A JOY TO WATCH ALL OF YOU GROW AND MATURE DURING YOUR FOUR YEARS WITH ME, AND I AM SO PROUD TO SEE SO MANY OF YOU HERE TODAY, READY TO GO OUT INTO THE WORLD AS ADULTS.
IT WARMS MY HEART TO USHER YOU INTO ADULTHOOD, AND WHILE I WILL MISS IT, THE TIME WAS RIGHT FOR ME TO MOVE ON--AND SPEAKING OF MOVING ON... I PROMISED I WOULD MAKE THIS A SHORT SPEECH AND I'VE NOW BEEN TALKING FOR ALMOST A HALF HOUR.
LET'S GET ON WITH THE GRADUATION CEREMONY, SHALL WE?
EXCUSE ME.
SORRY I'M LATE-- WHAT'D I MISS?
APPARENTLY WINSLOW IS RETIRING. IT'S A SHAME HE COULDN'T HAVE DONE IT A YEAR OR FOUR EARLIER.
NAH, MAN. WINSLOW WAS STRICT, BUT I LIKED HIM.
WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR EYE?
I--UH-- GOT **MUGGED.**

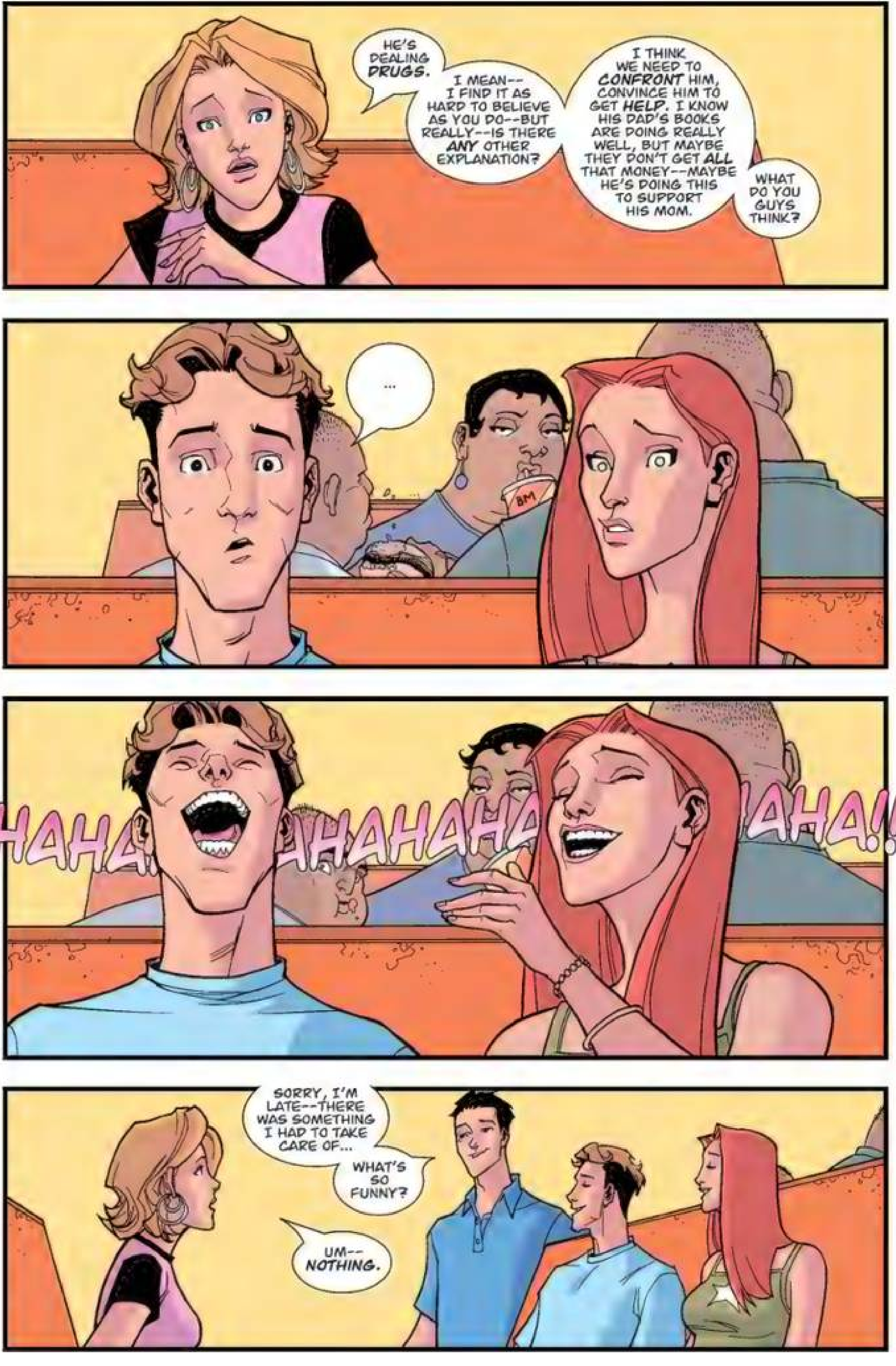

CHADWICK THOMAS ANDERSON.
AMBER JUSTINE BENNETT.
WILLIAM FRANCIS CLOCKWELL.
SAMANTHA EVE WILKINS.
MARKUS SEBASTIAN GRAYSON.
SEBASTIAN?

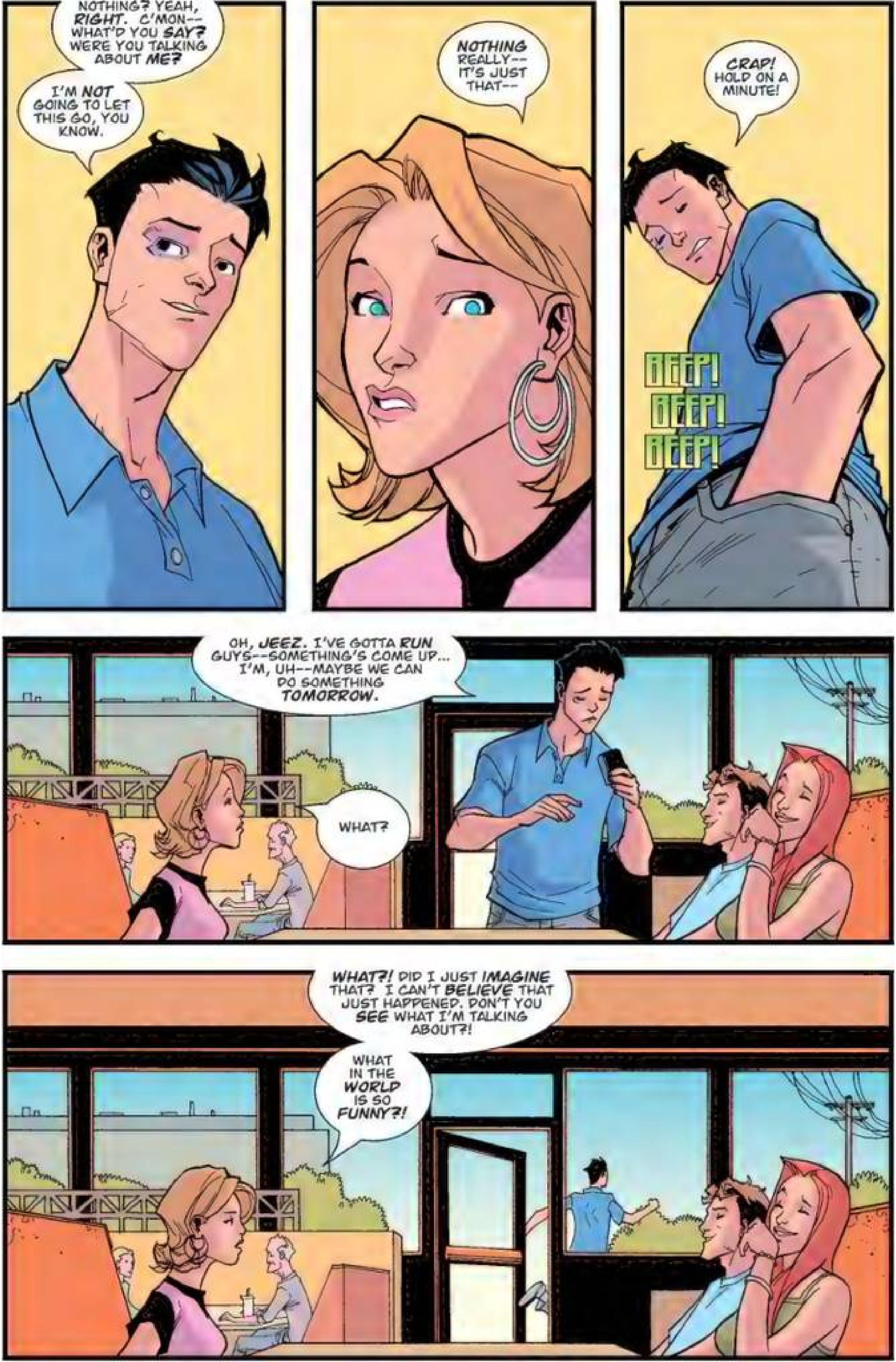

OH, CRAP.

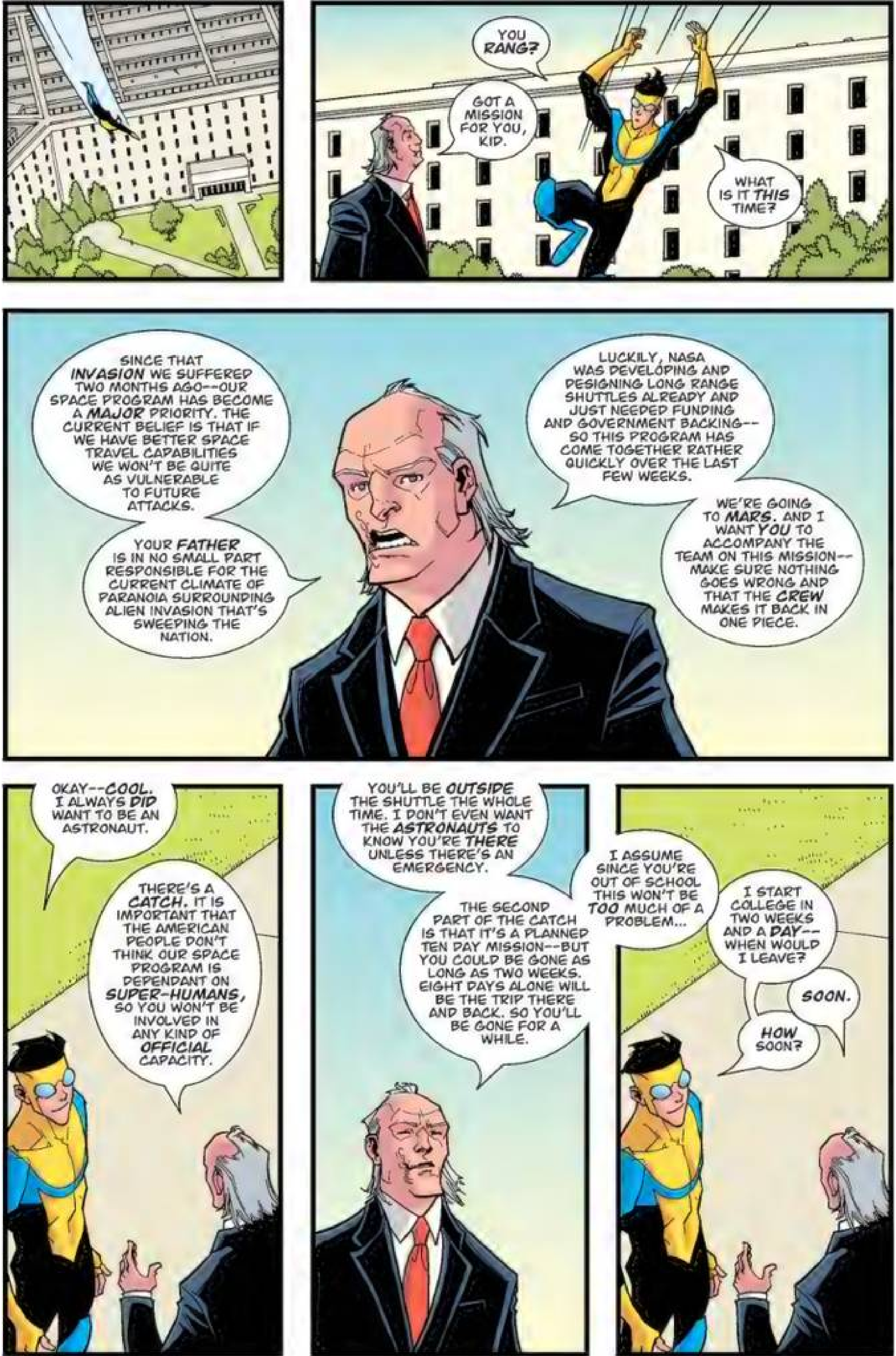
ISSUE EIGHTEEN

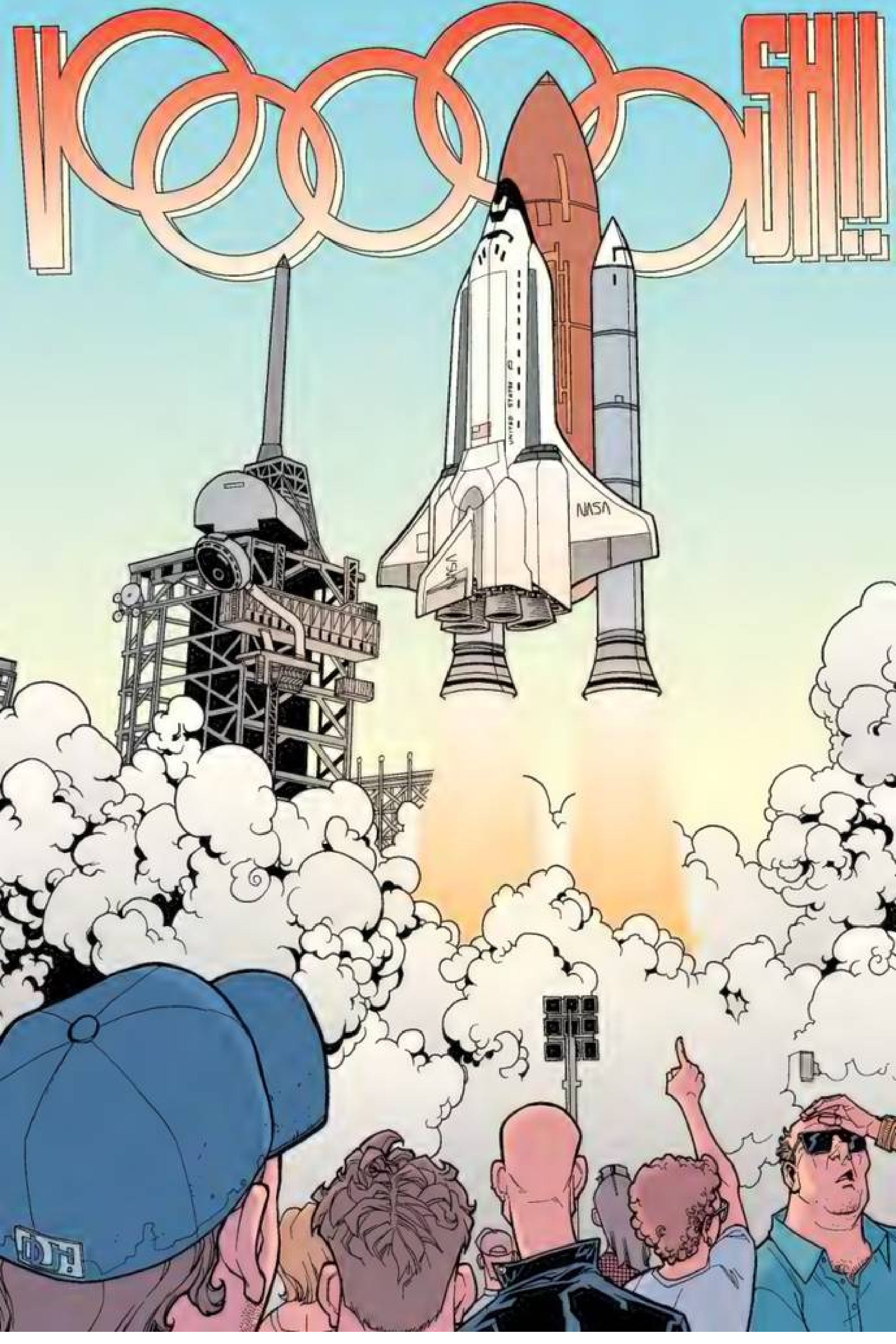

DON'T BE SCARED--I'M GOOD, I'M NOT TIRED OR ANYTHING. YOU'VE GOT SOME TIME, GATHER UP YOUR THINGS, TOYS, FAMILY PHOTOS--WHATEVER.
JUST BE QUICK ABOUT IT. I DON'T KNOW HOW LONG THIS STUFF WILL HOLD BEFORE IT STARTS BREAKING APART.

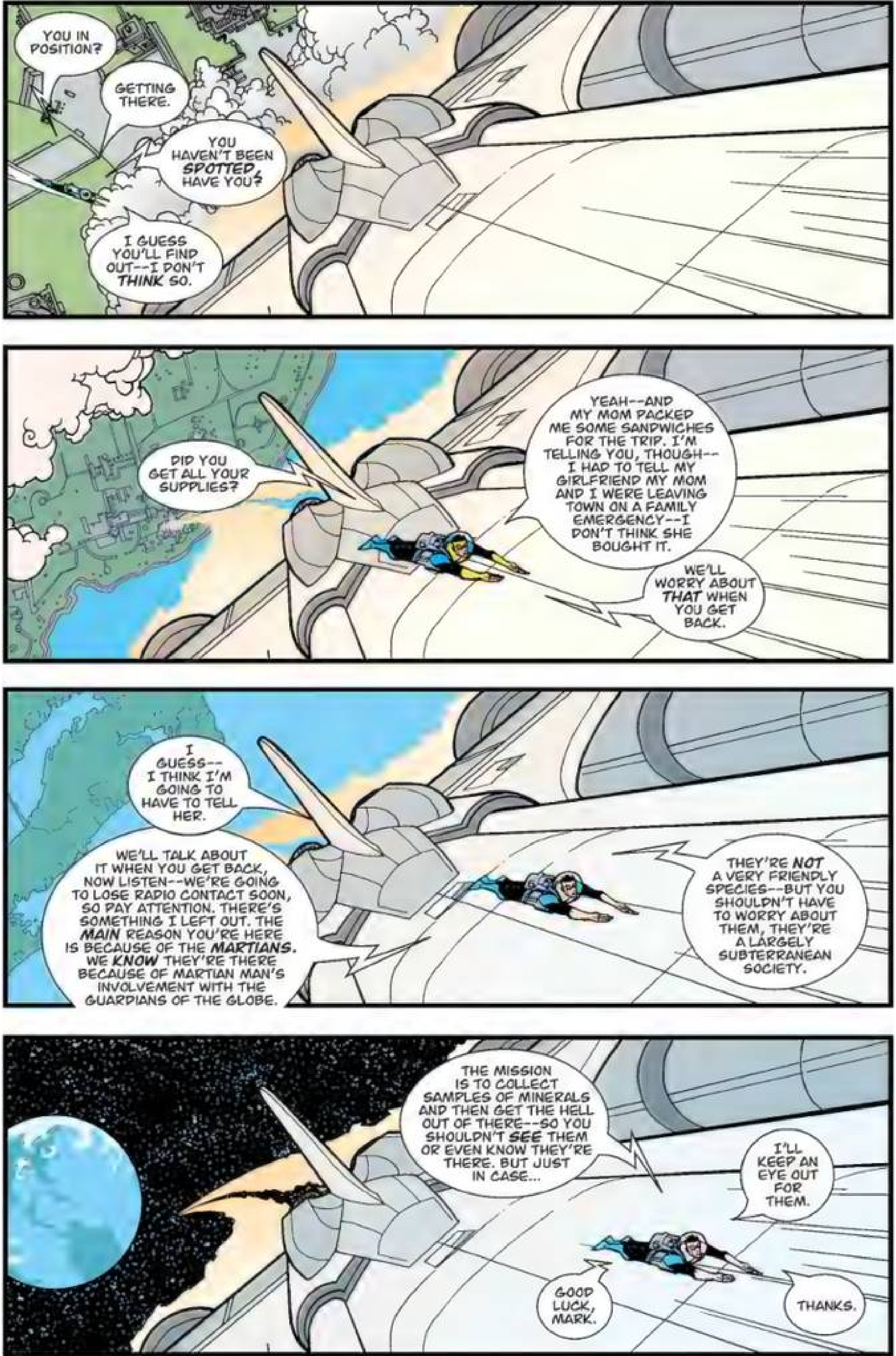

BM
MAN, THAT CEREMONY WAS SO LAME. WINSLOW SAT UP THERE FOR LIKE TWO HOURS JUST BUILDING UP TO HIS RETIREMENT ANNOUNCEMENT. WHAT A JERK.
JEEZ, WHEN IS MARK GOING TO GET HERE? WE'VE BEEN WAITING ALMOST TWENTY MINUTES.
YEAH-- ABOUT THAT...
I'M WORRIED ABOUT MARK. HE'S ALWAYS DISTRACTED-- HE'S ALWAYS LATE. I THINK SOMETHING'S GOING ON.
EVER SINCE HIS DAD DIED HE JUST HASN'T BEEN THE SAME, WHICH IS UNDERSTANDABLE-- BUT THIS IS MORE THAN JUST GRIEF. I UNDERSTOOD THE GRIEF.
NOW IT SEEMS LIKE HE'S ALWAYS GOT SOMEWHERE ELSE TO BE. HE'S ALWAYS LATE, HE'S ALWAYS LEAVING EARLY... HE WAS SKIPPING CLASS ALMOST EVERY DAY BEFORE WE GRADUATED. I'M TELLING YOU-- SOMETHING'S UP-- SOMETHING IS DEFINITELY UP.
AND HE'S GOT A BEEPER ALL OF A SUDDEN--I MEAN, WHAT COULD THAT BE FOR? THEN HE SHOWED UP AT GRADUATION YESTERDAY WITH THAT BLACK EYE... I MEAN--HE SAID HE WAS MUGGED BUT I THINK WE ALL KNOW WHAT'S REALLY GOING ON...
WELL, UH...
I--
BM

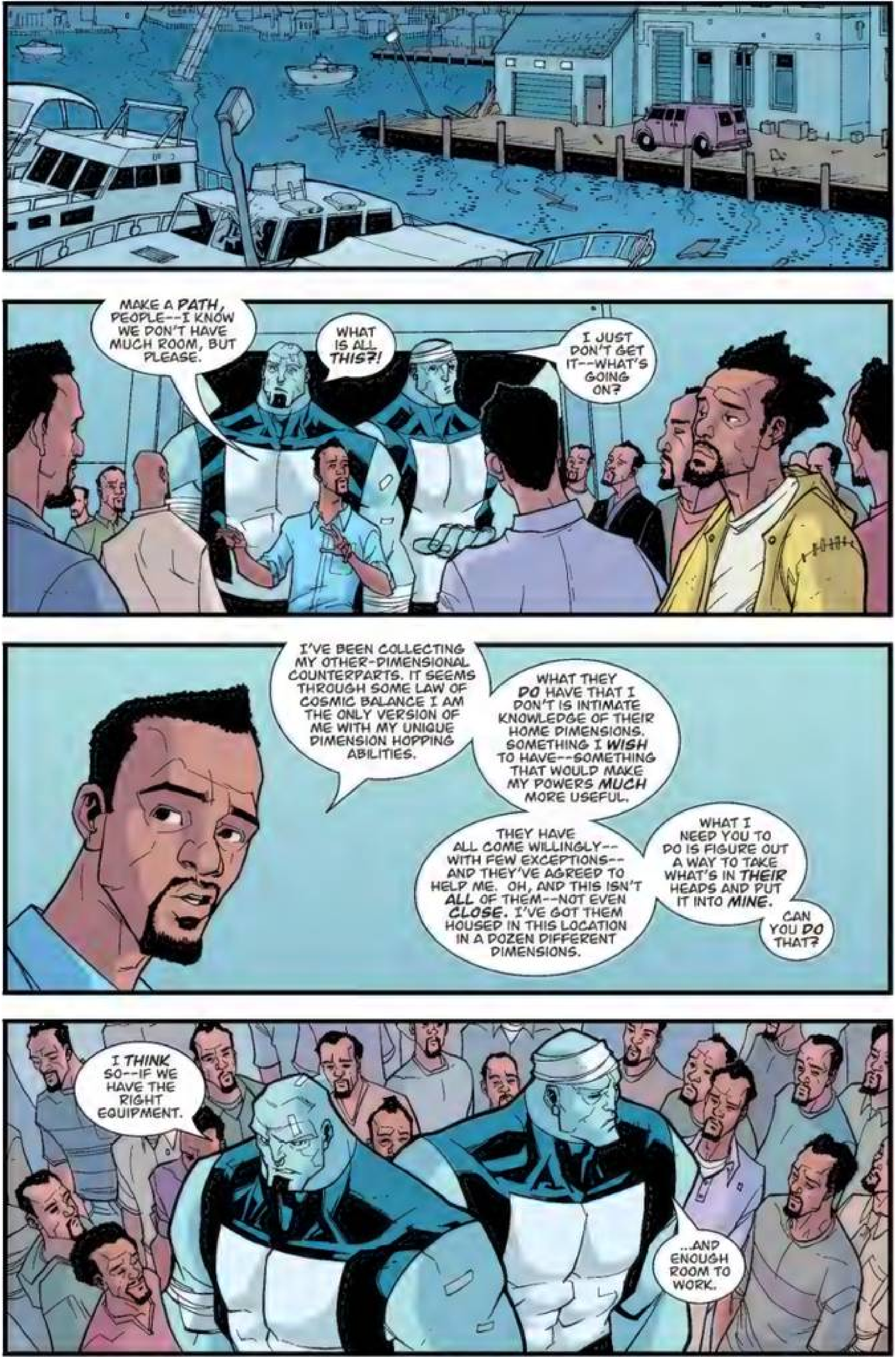

HE'S DEALING **DRUGS.**
I MEAN-- I FIND IT AS HARD TO BELIEVE AS YOU DO--BUT REALLY--IS THERE **ANY** OTHER EXPLANATION?
I THINK WE NEED TO **CONFRONT** HIM, CONVINCE HIM TO GET **HELP.** I KNOW HIS DAD'S BOOKS ARE DOING REALLY WELL, BUT MAYBE THEY DON'T GET **ALL** THAT MONEY--MAYBE HE'S DOING THIS TO SUPPORT HIS MOM.
WHAT DO YOU GUYS THINK?
...
BM
HAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA!!
SORRY, I'M LATE--THERE WAS SOMETHING I HAD TO TAKE CARE OF...
WHAT'S SO FUNNY?
UM-- **NOTHING.**

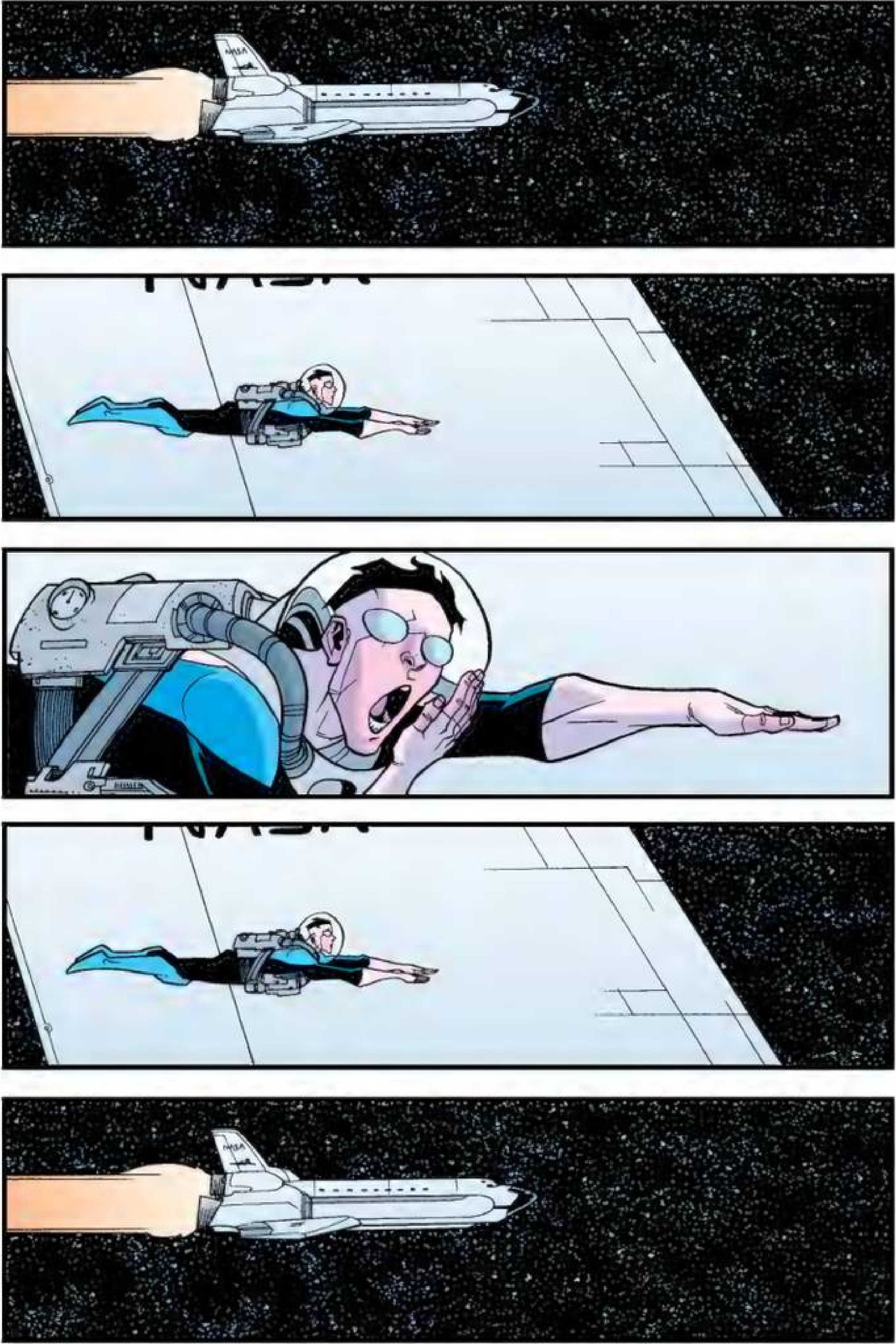

NOTHING? YEAH, RIGHT. C'MON-- WHAT'D YOU SAY? WERE YOU TALKING ABOUT ME?
I'M NOT GOING TO LET THIS GO, YOU KNOW.
NOTHING REALLY-- IT'S JUST THAT--
CRAP! HOLD ON A MINUTE!
BEEP! BEEP! BEEP!
OH, JEEZ. I'VE GOTTA RUN GUYS--SOMETHING'S COME UP... I'M, UH--MAYBE WE CAN DO SOMETHING TOMORROW.
WHAT?
WHAT?! DID I JUST IMAGINE THAT? I CAN'T BELIEVE THAT JUST HAPPENED. DON'T YOU SEE WHAT I'M TALKING ABOUT?!
WHAT IN THE WORLD IS SO FUNNY?!

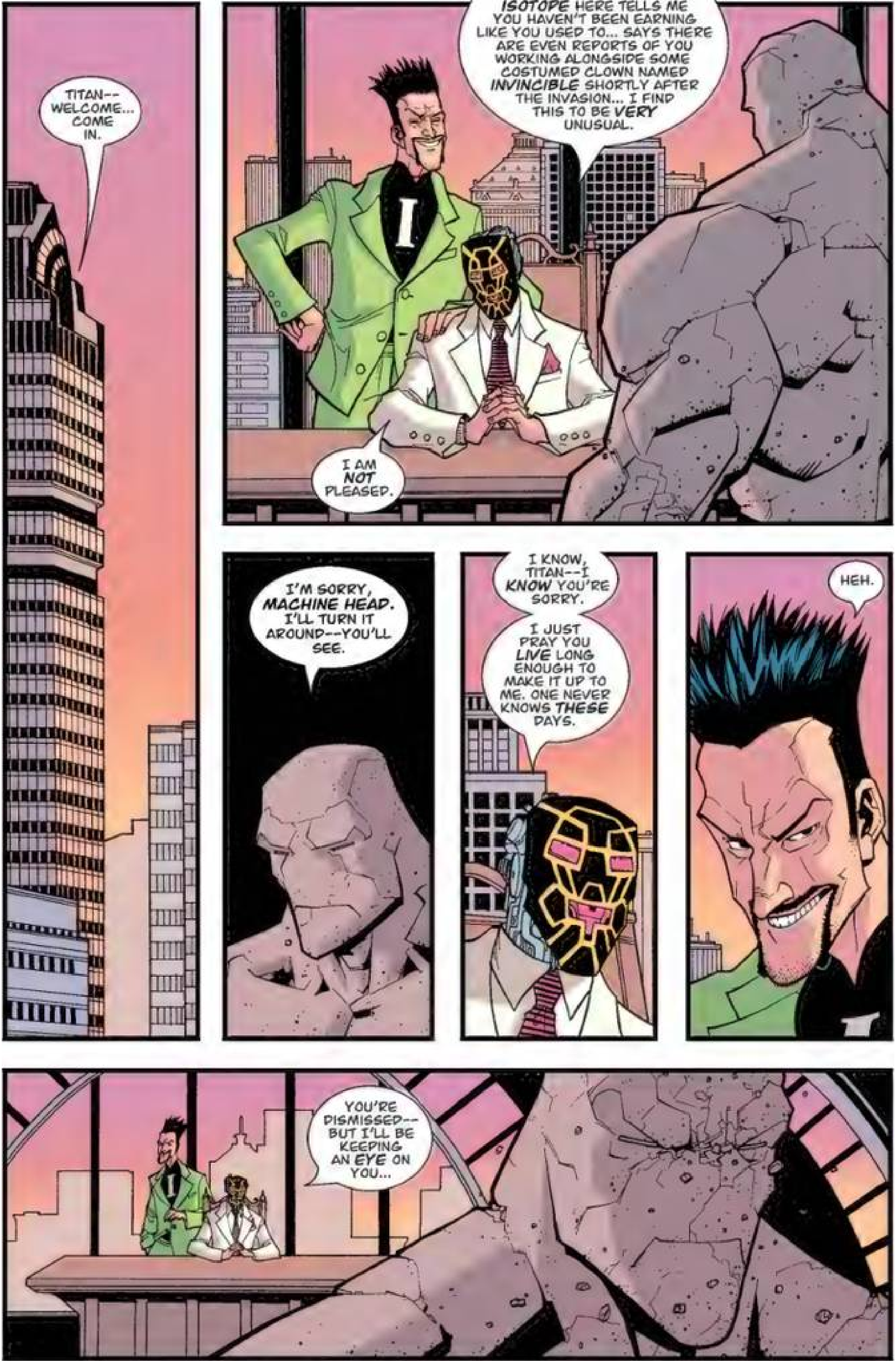

YOU RANG?
GOT A MISSION FOR YOU, KID.
WHAT IS IT THIS TIME?
SINCE THAT INVASION WE SUFFERED TWO MONTHS AGO--OUR SPACE PROGRAM HAS BECOME A MAJOR PRIORITY. THE CURRENT BELIEF IS THAT IF WE HAVE BETTER SPACE TRAVEL CAPABILITIES WE WON'T BE QUITE AS VULNERABLE TO FUTURE ATTACKS.
YOUR FATHER IS IN NO SMALL PART RESPONSIBLE FOR THE CURRENT CLIMATE OF PARANOIA SURROUNDING ALIEN INVASION THAT'S SWEEPING THE NATION.
LUCKILY, NASA WAS DEVELOPING AND DESIGNING LONG RANGE SHUTTLES ALREADY AND JUST NEEDED FUNDING AND GOVERNMENT BACKING--SO THIS PROGRAM HAS COME TOGETHER RATHER QUICKLY OVER THE LAST FEW WEEKS.
WE'RE GOING TO MARS. AND I WANT YOU TO ACCOMPANY THE TEAM ON THIS MISSION--MAKE SURE NOTHING GOES WRONG AND THAT THE CREW MAKES IT BACK IN ONE PIECE.
OKAY--COOL. I ALWAYS DID WANT TO BE AN ASTRONAUT.
THERE'S A CATCH. IT IS IMPORTANT THAT THE AMERICAN PEOPLE DON'T THINK OUR SPACE PROGRAM IS DEPENDANT ON SUPER-HUMANS, SO YOU WON'T BE INVOLVED IN ANY KIND OF OFFICIAL CAPACITY.
YOU'LL BE OUTSIDE THE SHUTTLE THE WHOLE TIME. I DON'T EVEN WANT THE ASTRONAUTS TO KNOW YOU'RE THERE UNLESS THERE'S AN EMERGENCY.
THE SECOND PART OF THE CATCH IS THAT IT'S A PLANNED TEN DAY MISSION--BUT YOU COULD BE GONE AS LONG AS TWO WEEKS. EIGHT DAYS ALONE WILL BE THE TRIP THERE AND BACK. SO YOU'LL BE GONE FOR A WHILE.
I ASSUME SINCE YOU'RE OUT OF SCHOOL THIS WON'T BE TOO MUCH OF A PROBLEM...
I START COLLEGE IN TWO WEEKS AND A DAY--WHEN WOULD I LEAVE?
SOON.
HOW SOON?

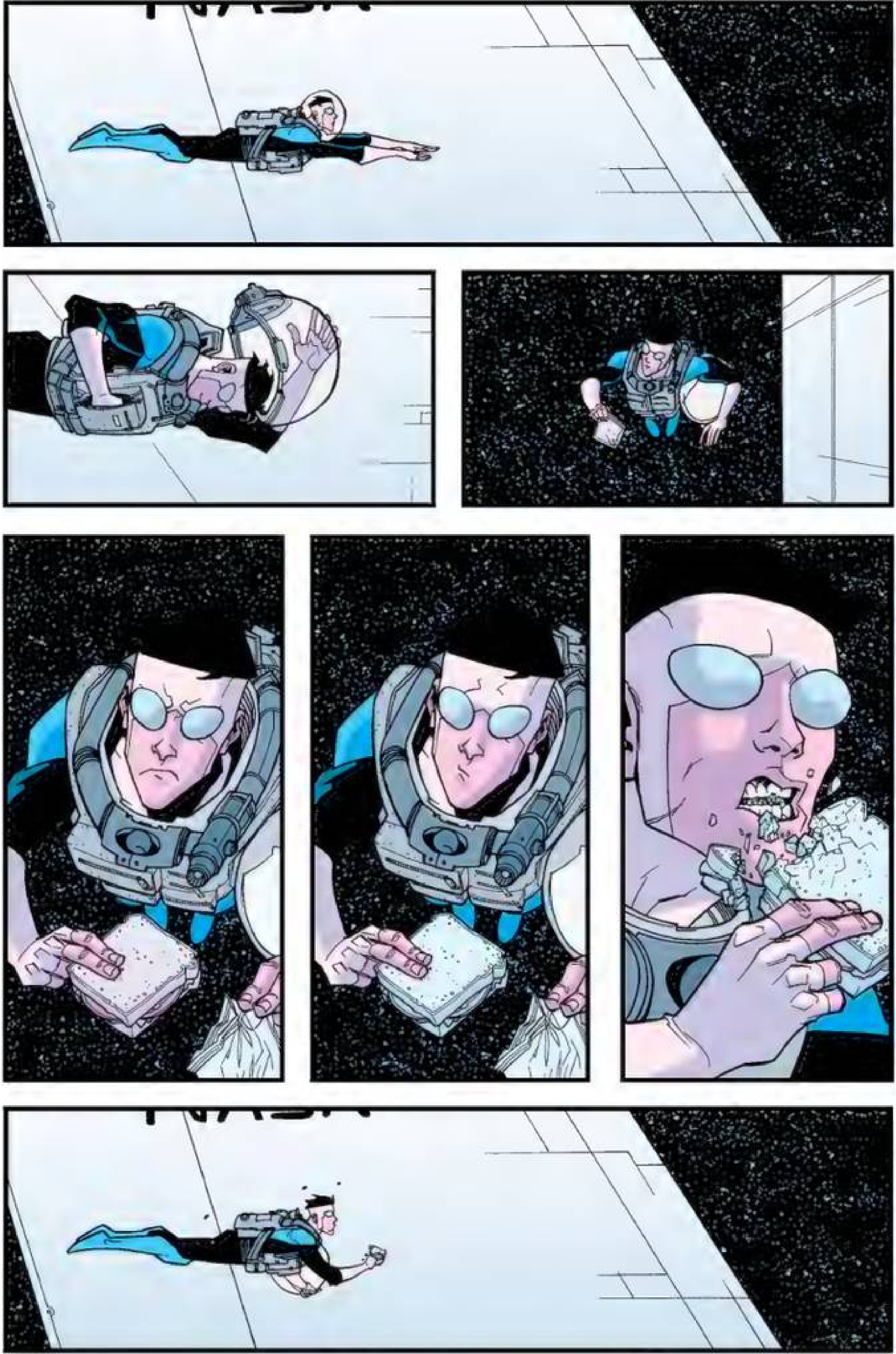

KOOOOOSH!!
UNITED STATES
NASA
NASA

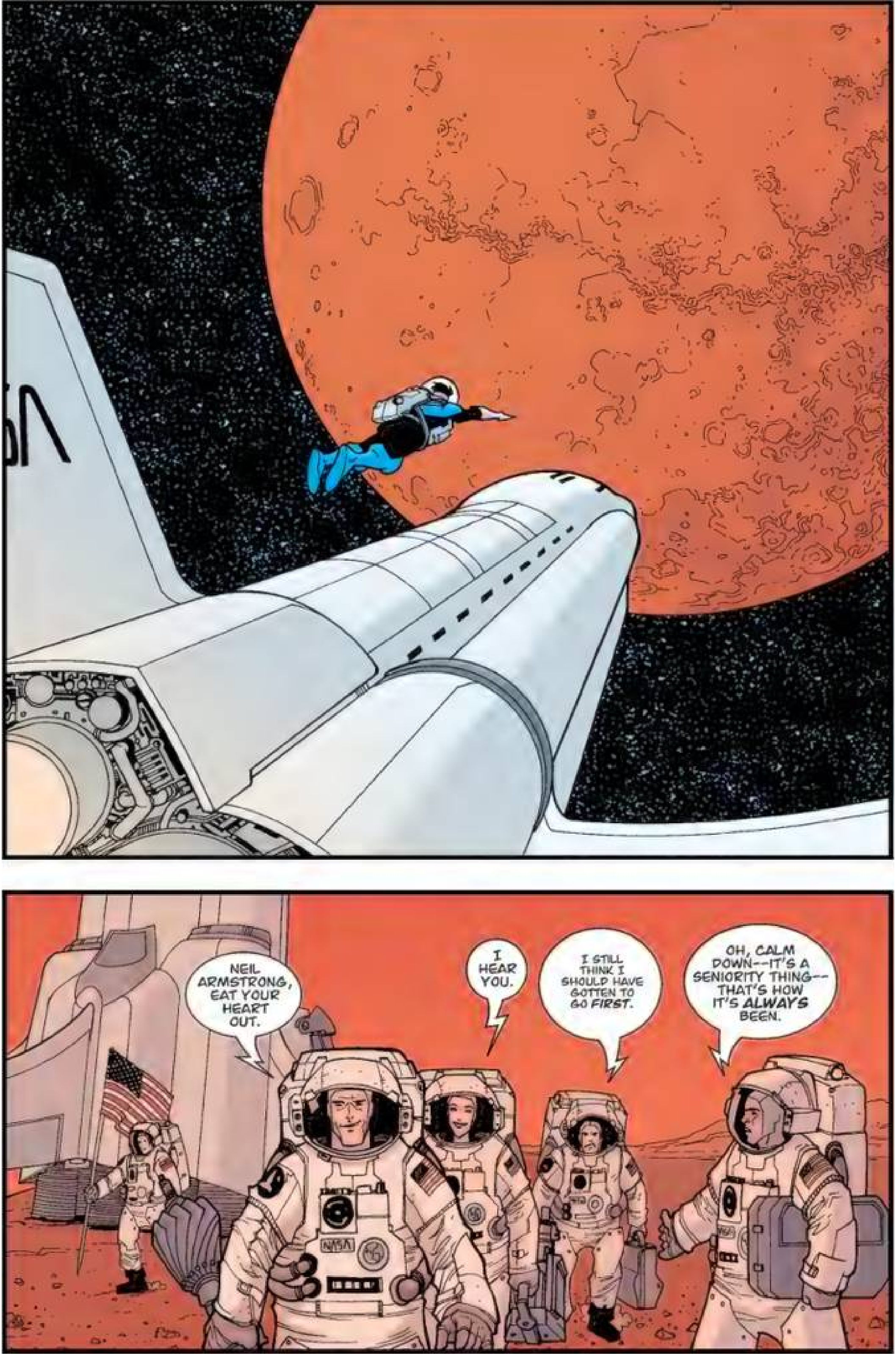

YOU IN POSITION?
GETTING THERE.
YOU HAVEN'T BEEN SPOTTED, HAVE YOU?
I GUESS YOU'LL FIND OUT--I DON'T THINK SO.
DID YOU GET ALL YOUR SUPPLIES?
YEAH--AND MY MOM PACKED ME SOME SANDWICHES FOR THE TRIP. I'M TELLING YOU, THOUGH--I HAD TO TELL MY GIRLFRIEND MY MOM AND I WERE LEAVING TOWN ON A FAMILY EMERGENCY--I DON'T THINK SHE BOUGHT IT.
WE'LL WORRY ABOUT THAT WHEN YOU GET BACK.
I GUESS--I THINK I'M GOING TO HAVE TO TELL HER.
WE'LL TALK ABOUT IT WHEN YOU GET BACK, NOW LISTEN--WE'RE GOING TO LOSE RADIO CONTACT SOON, SO PAY ATTENTION. THERE'S SOMETHING I LEFT OUT. THE MAIN REASON YOU'RE HERE IS BECAUSE OF THE MARTIANS. WE KNOW THEY'RE THERE BECAUSE OF MARTIAN MAN'S INVOLVEMENT WITH THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE.
THEY'RE NOT A VERY FRIENDLY SPECIES--BUT YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT THEM, THEY'RE A LARGELY SUBTERRANEAN SOCIETY.
THE MISSION IS TO COLLECT SAMPLES OF MINERALS AND THEN GET THE HELL OUT OF THERE--SO YOU SHOULDN'T SEE THEM OR EVEN KNOW THEY'RE THERE. BUT JUST IN CASE...
I'LL KEEP AN EYE OUT FOR THEM.
GOOD LUCK, MARK.
THANKS.

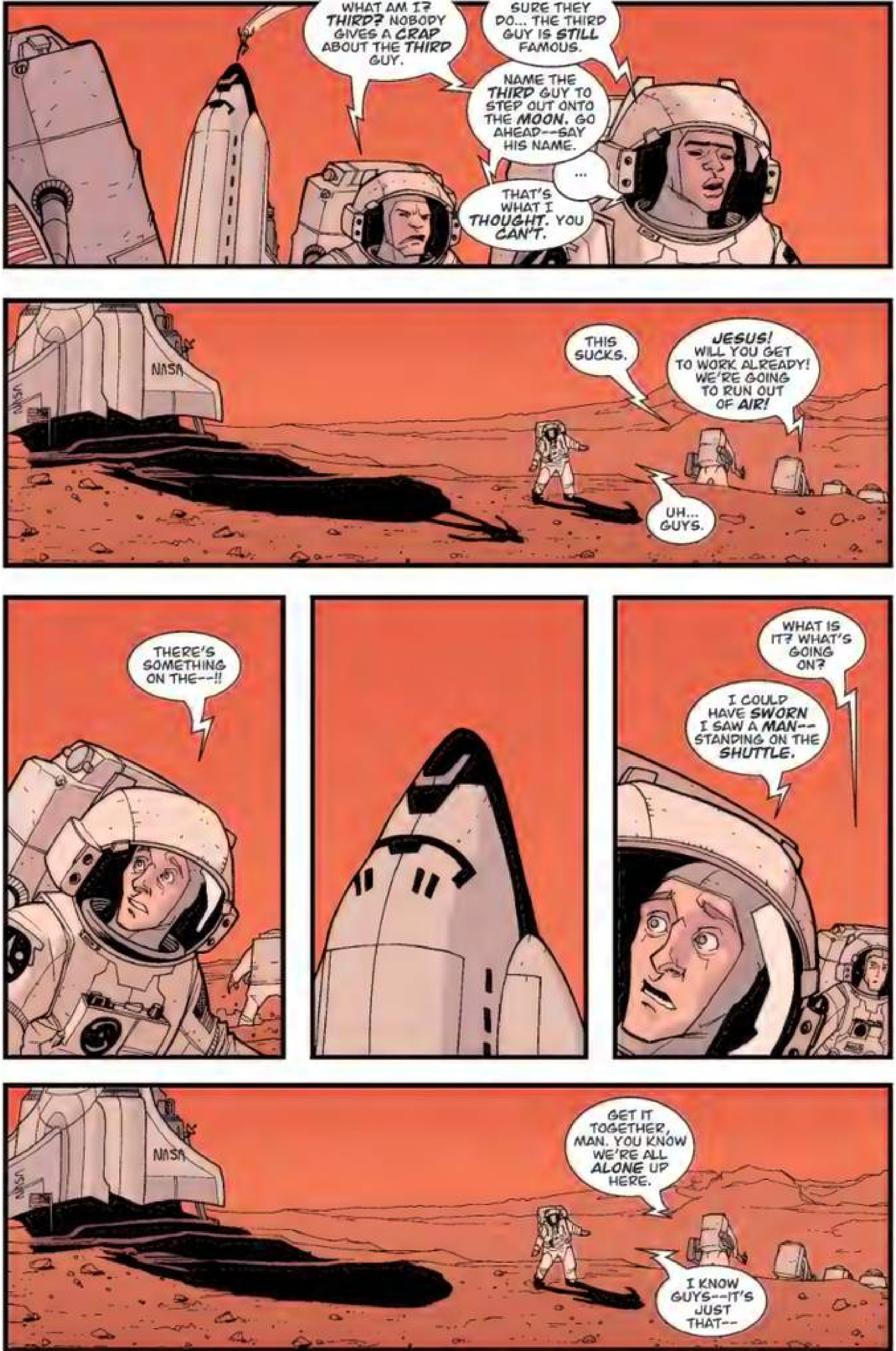

MAKE A *PATH*, PEOPLE--I KNOW WE DON'T HAVE MUCH ROOM, BUT PLEASE.
WHAT IS ALL *THIS?!*
I JUST DON'T GET IT--WHAT'S GOING ON?
I'VE BEEN COLLECTING MY OTHER-DIMENSIONAL COUNTERPARTS. IT SEEMS THROUGH SOME LAW OF COSMIC BALANCE I AM THE ONLY VERSION OF ME WITH MY UNIQUE DIMENSION HOPPING ABILITIES.
WHAT THEY *DO* HAVE THAT I DON'T IS INTIMATE KNOWLEDGE OF THEIR HOME DIMENSIONS. SOMETHING I *WISH* TO HAVE--SOMETHING THAT WOULD MAKE MY POWERS *MUCH* MORE USEFUL.
THEY HAVE ALL COME WILLINGLY--WITH FEW EXCEPTIONS--AND THEY'VE AGREED TO HELP ME. OH, AND THIS ISN'T *ALL* OF THEM--NOT EVEN *CLOSE*. I'VE GOT THEM HOUSED IN THIS LOCATION IN A DOZEN DIFFERENT DIMENSIONS.
WHAT I NEED YOU TO DO IS FIGURE OUT A WAY TO TAKE WHAT'S IN *THEIR* HEADS AND PUT IT INTO *MINE*.
CAN YOU *DO* THAT?
I *THINK* SO--IF WE HAVE THE RIGHT EQUIPMENT.
...AND ENOUGH ROOM TO WORK.

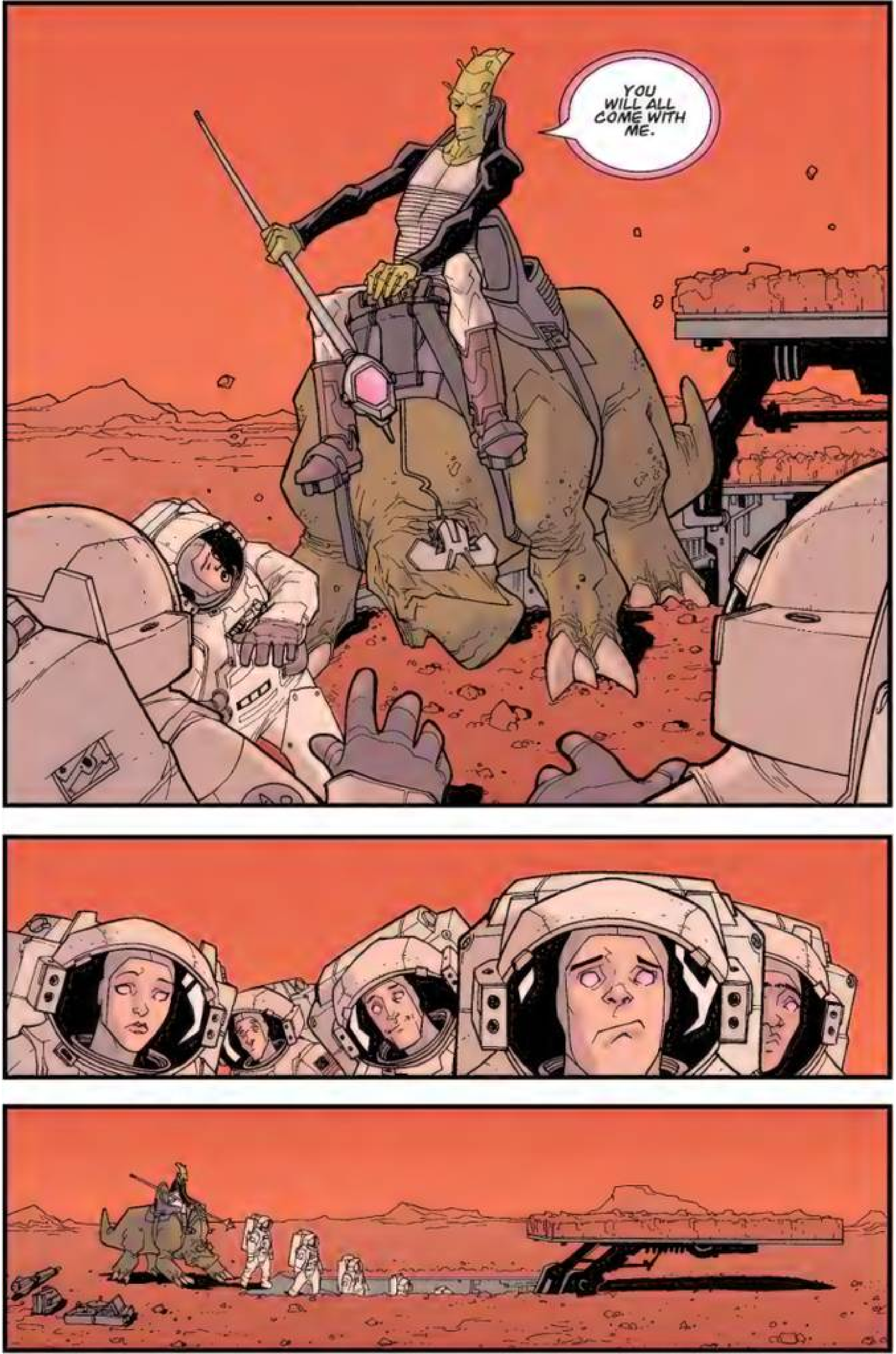


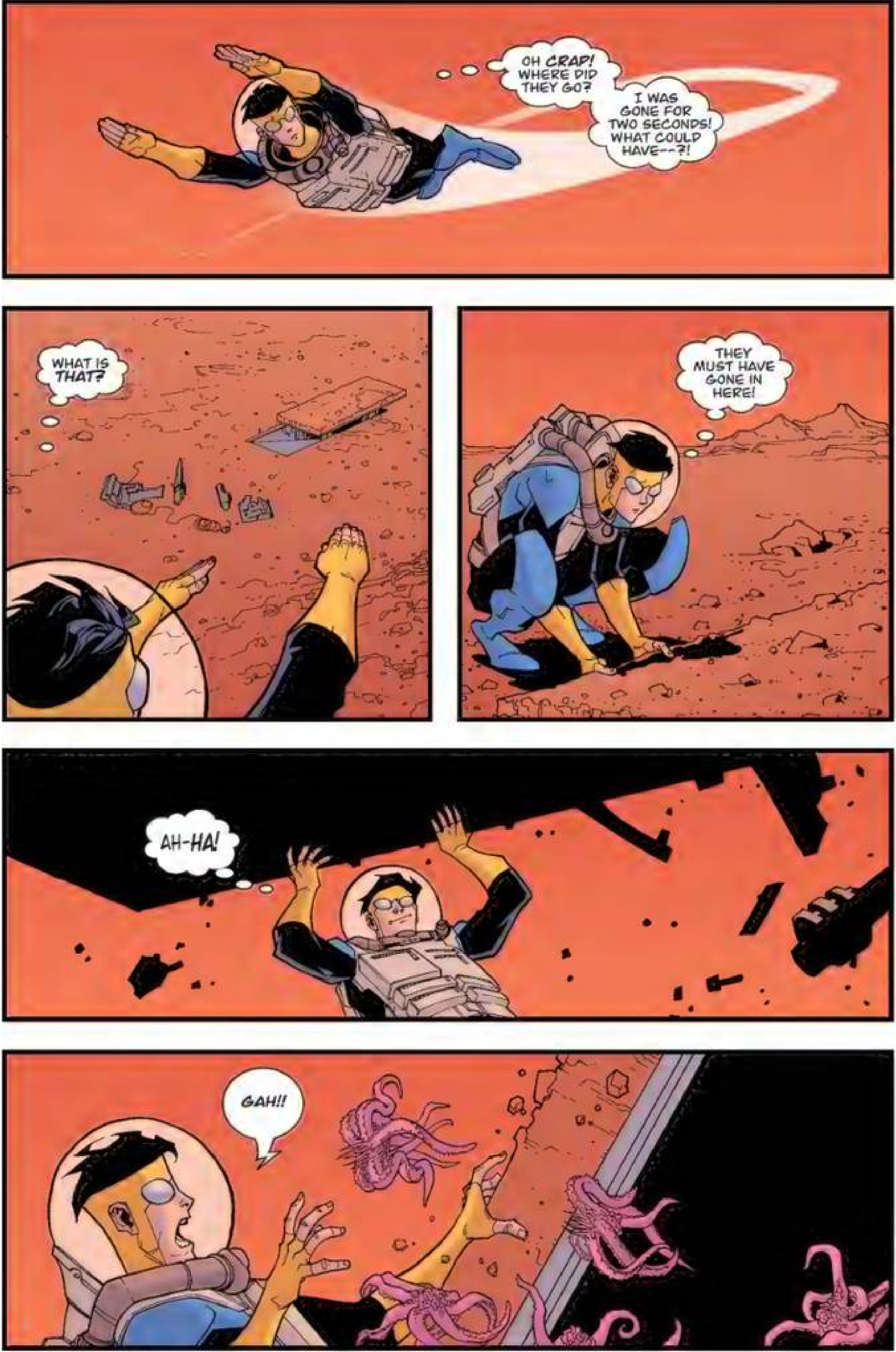

TITAN-- WELCOME... COME IN.
ISOTOPE HERE TELLS ME YOU HAVEN'T BEEN EARNING LIKE YOU USED TO... SAYS THERE ARE EVEN REPORTS OF YOU WORKING ALONGSIDE SOME COSTUMED CLOWN NAMED INVINCIBLE SHORTLY AFTER THE INVASION... I FIND THIS TO BE VERY UNUSUAL.
I AM NOT PLEASED.
I'M SORRY, MACHINE HEAD. I'LL TURN IT AROUND--YOU'LL SEE.
I KNOW, TITAN--I KNOW YOU'RE SORRY.
I JUST PRAY YOU LIVE LONG ENOUGH TO MAKE IT UP TO ME. ONE NEVER KNOWS THESE DAYS.
HEH.
YOU'RE DISMISSED-- BUT I'LL BE KEEPING AN EYE ON YOU...

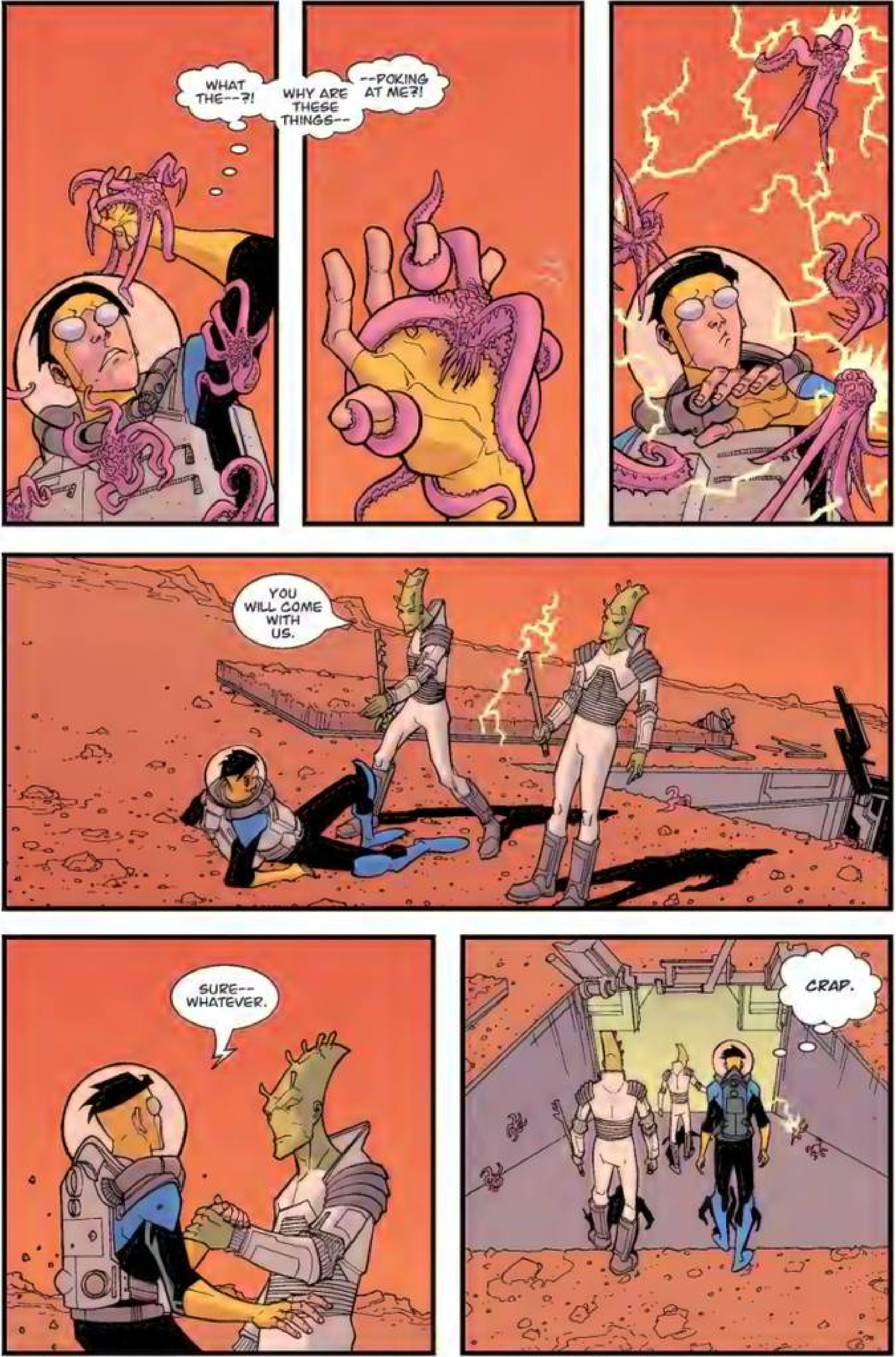


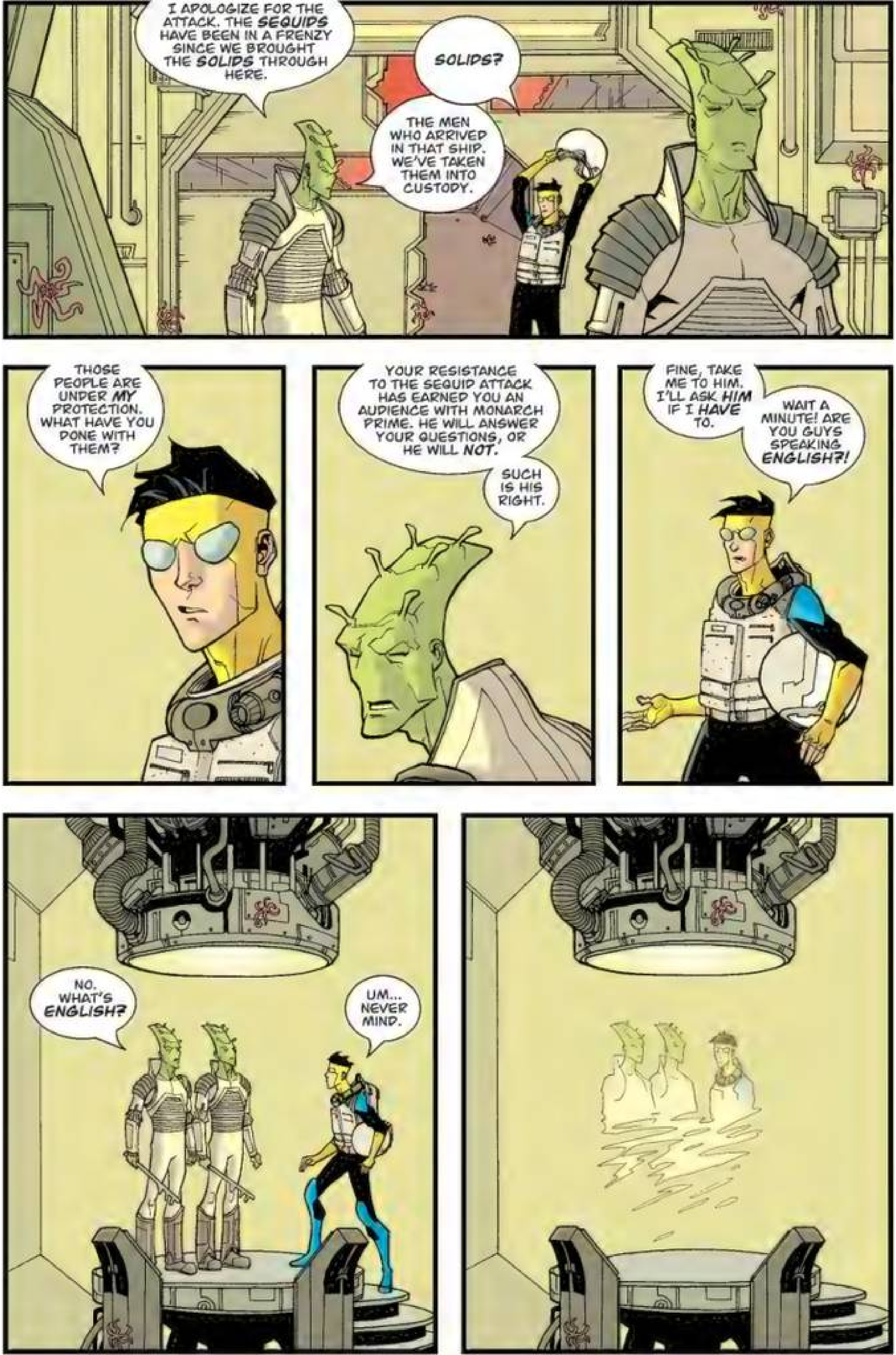

NEIL ARMSTRONG, EAT YOUR HEART OUT.
I HEAR YOU.
I STILL THINK I SHOULD HAVE GOTTEN TO GO *FIRST*.
OH, CALM DOWN--IT'S A SENIORITY THING--THAT'S HOW IT'S ***ALWAYS*** BEEN.

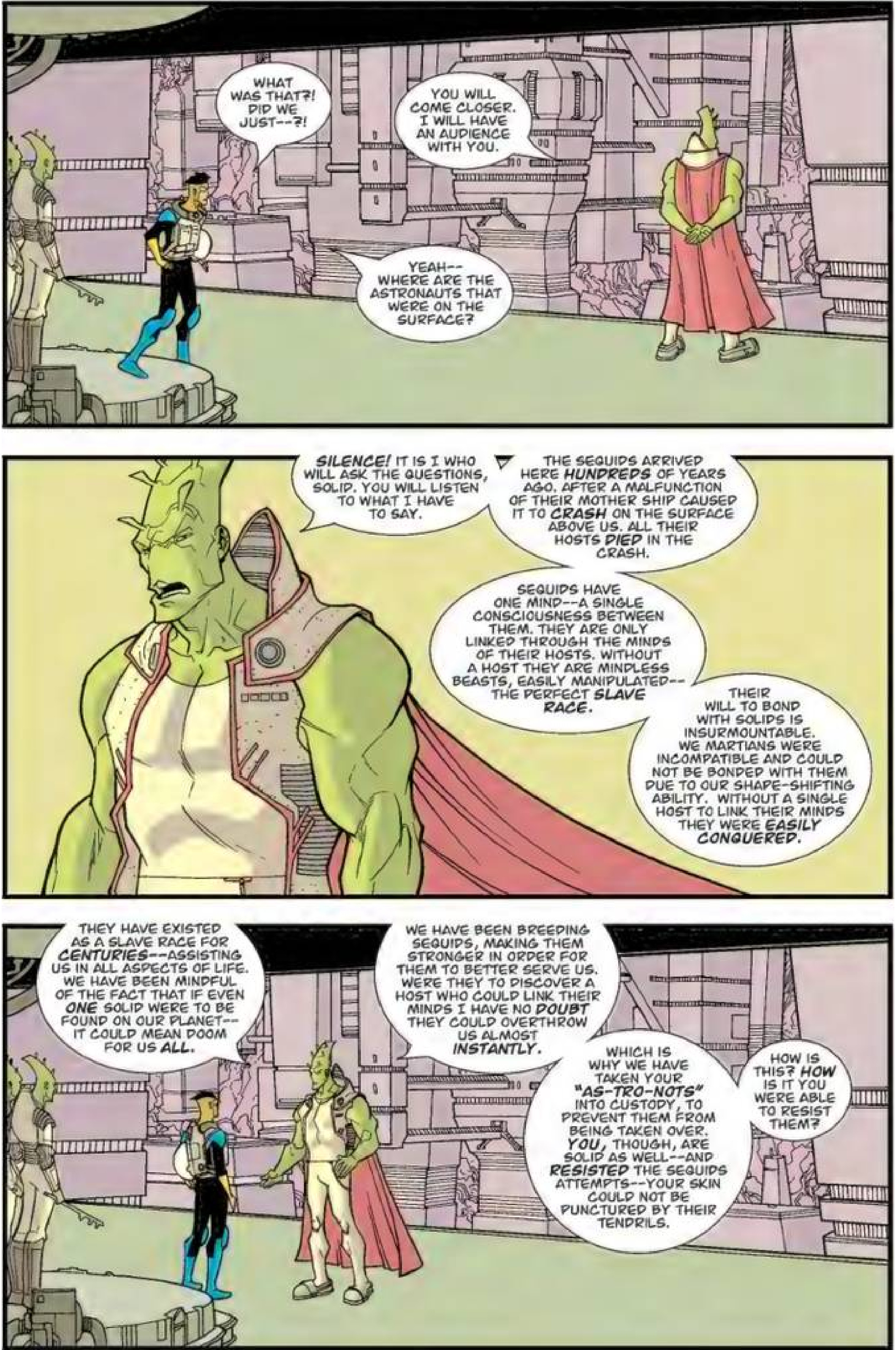

WHAT AM I? THIRD? NOBODY GIVES A CRAP ABOUT THE THIRD GUY.
SURE THEY DO... THE THIRD GUY IS STILL FAMOUS.
NAME THE THIRD GUY TO STEP OUT ONTO THE MOON. GO AHEAD--SAY HIS NAME.
...
THAT'S WHAT I THOUGHT. YOU CAN'T.
NASA
THIS SUCKS.
JESUS! WILL YOU GET TO WORK ALREADY! WE'RE GOING TO RUN OUT OF AIR!
UH... GUYS.
THERE'S SOMETHING ON THE--!!
WHAT IS IT? WHAT'S GOING ON?
I COULD HAVE SWORN I SAW A MAN--STANDING ON THE SHUTTLE.
NASA
GET IT TOGETHER, MAN. YOU KNOW WE'RE ALL ALONE UP HERE.
I KNOW GUYS--IT'S JUST THAT--

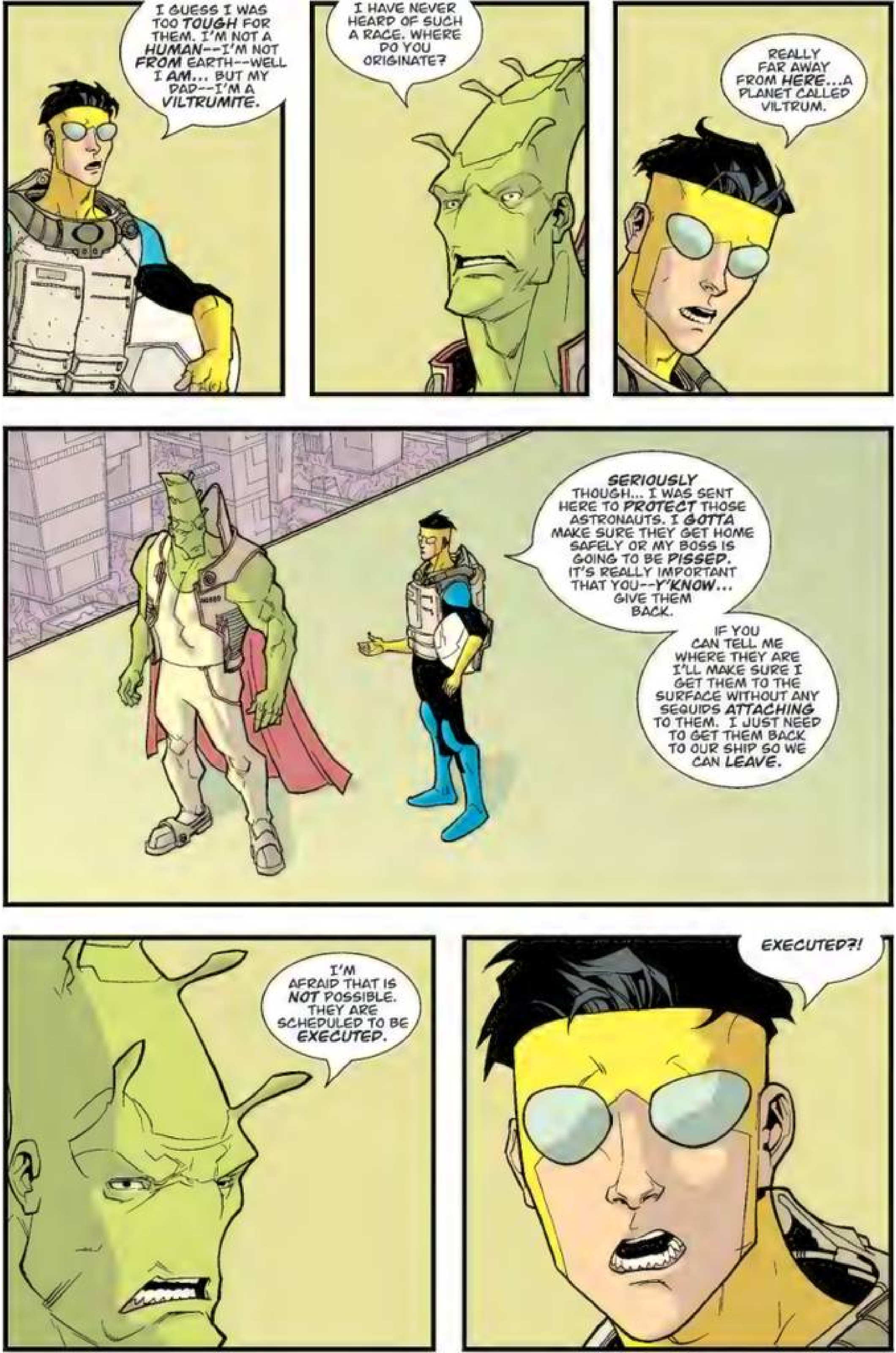

YOU WILL ALL COME WITH ME.

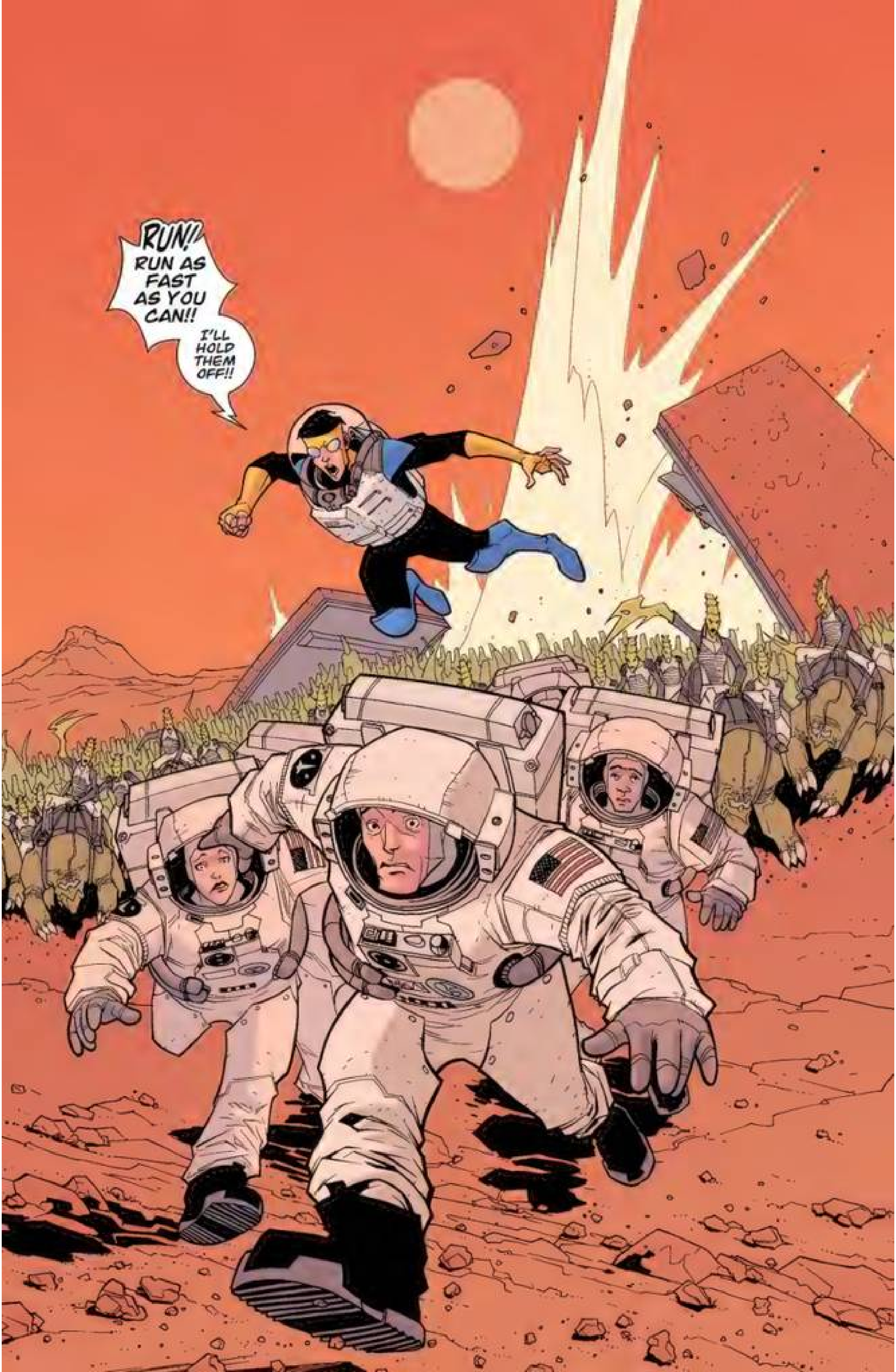

OH CRAP! WHERE DID THEY GO?
I WAS GONE FOR TWO SECONDS! WHAT COULD HAVE--?!
WHAT IS THAT?
THEY MUST HAVE GONE IN HERE!
AH-HA!
GAH!!

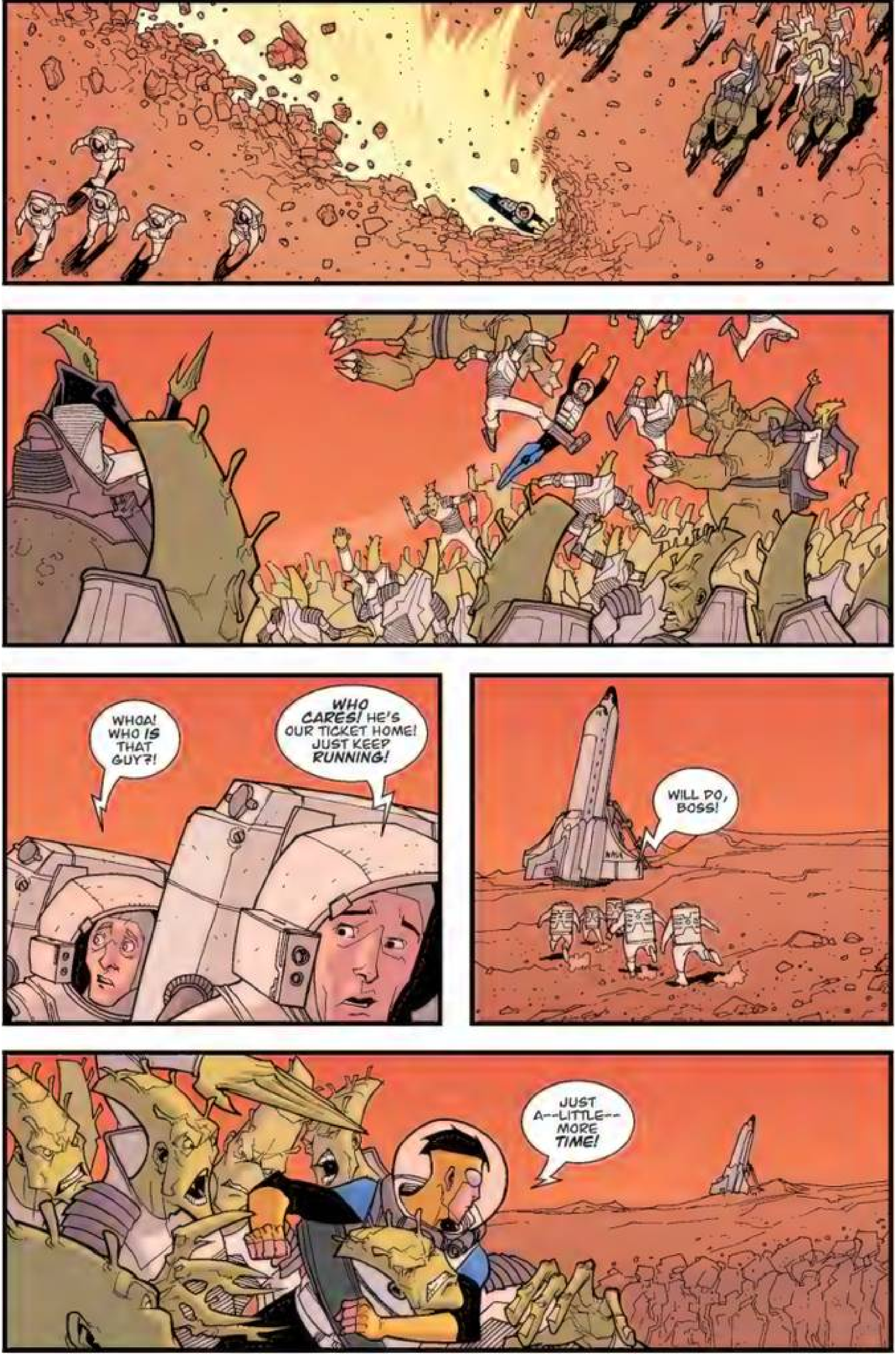

WHAT THE--?!
WHY ARE THESE THINGS--
--POKING AT ME?!
YOU WILL COME WITH US.
SURE-- WHATEVER.
CRAP.

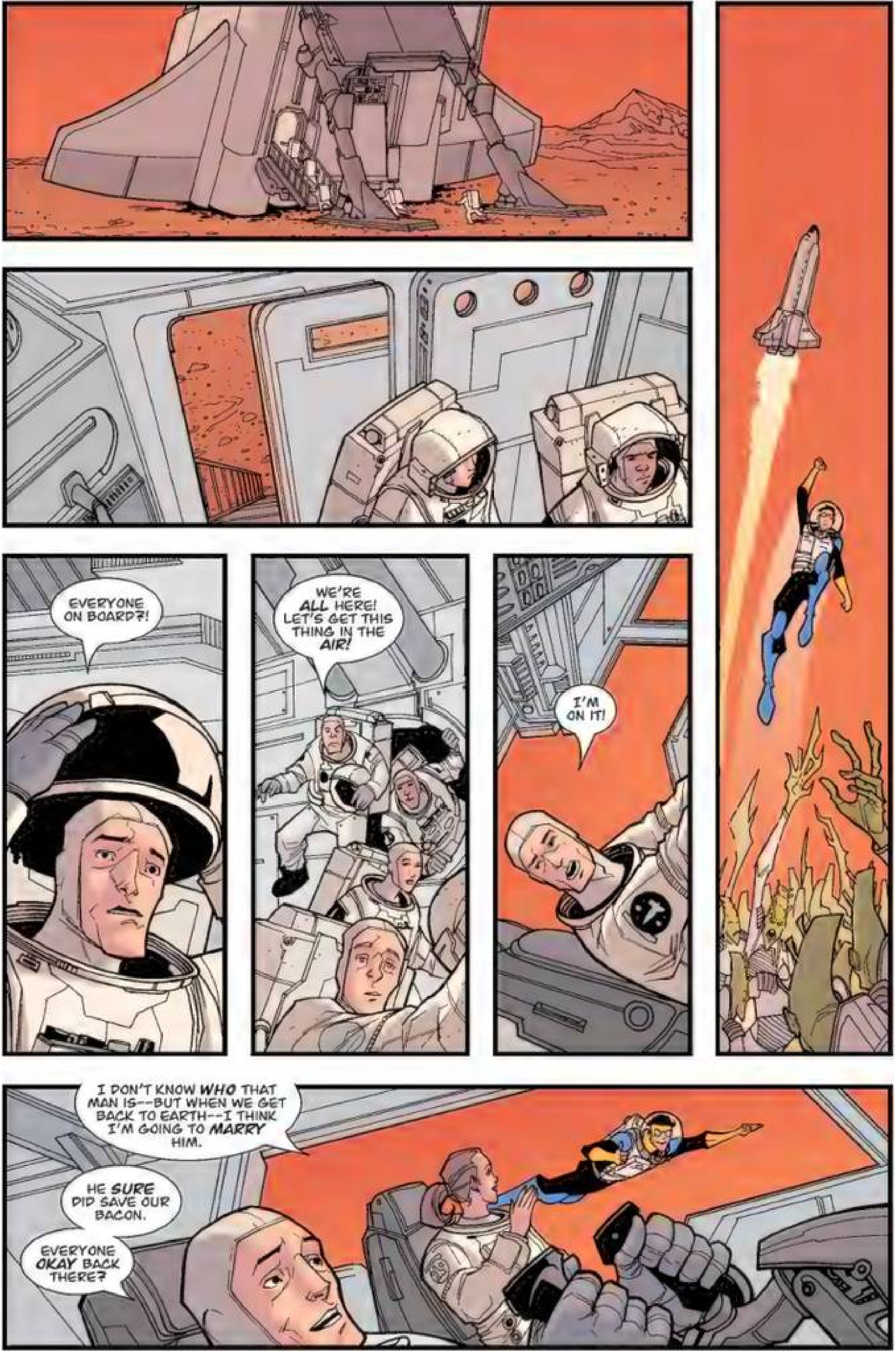

I APOLOGIZE FOR THE ATTACK. THE SEQUIDS HAVE BEEN IN A FRENZY SINCE WE BROUGHT THE SOLIDS THROUGH HERE.
SOLIDS?
THE MEN WHO ARRIVED IN THAT SHIP. WE'VE TAKEN THEM INTO CUSTODY.
THOSE PEOPLE ARE UNDER MY PROTECTION. WHAT HAVE YOU DONE WITH THEM?
YOUR RESISTANCE TO THE SEQUID ATTACK HAS EARNED YOU AN AUDIENCE WITH MONARCH PRIME. HE WILL ANSWER YOUR QUESTIONS, OR HE WILL NOT.
SUCH IS HIS RIGHT.
FINE, TAKE ME TO HIM. I'LL ASK HIM IF I HAVE TO.
WAIT A MINUTE! ARE YOU GUYS SPEAKING ENGLISH?!
NO. WHAT'S ENGLISH?
UM... NEVER MIND.

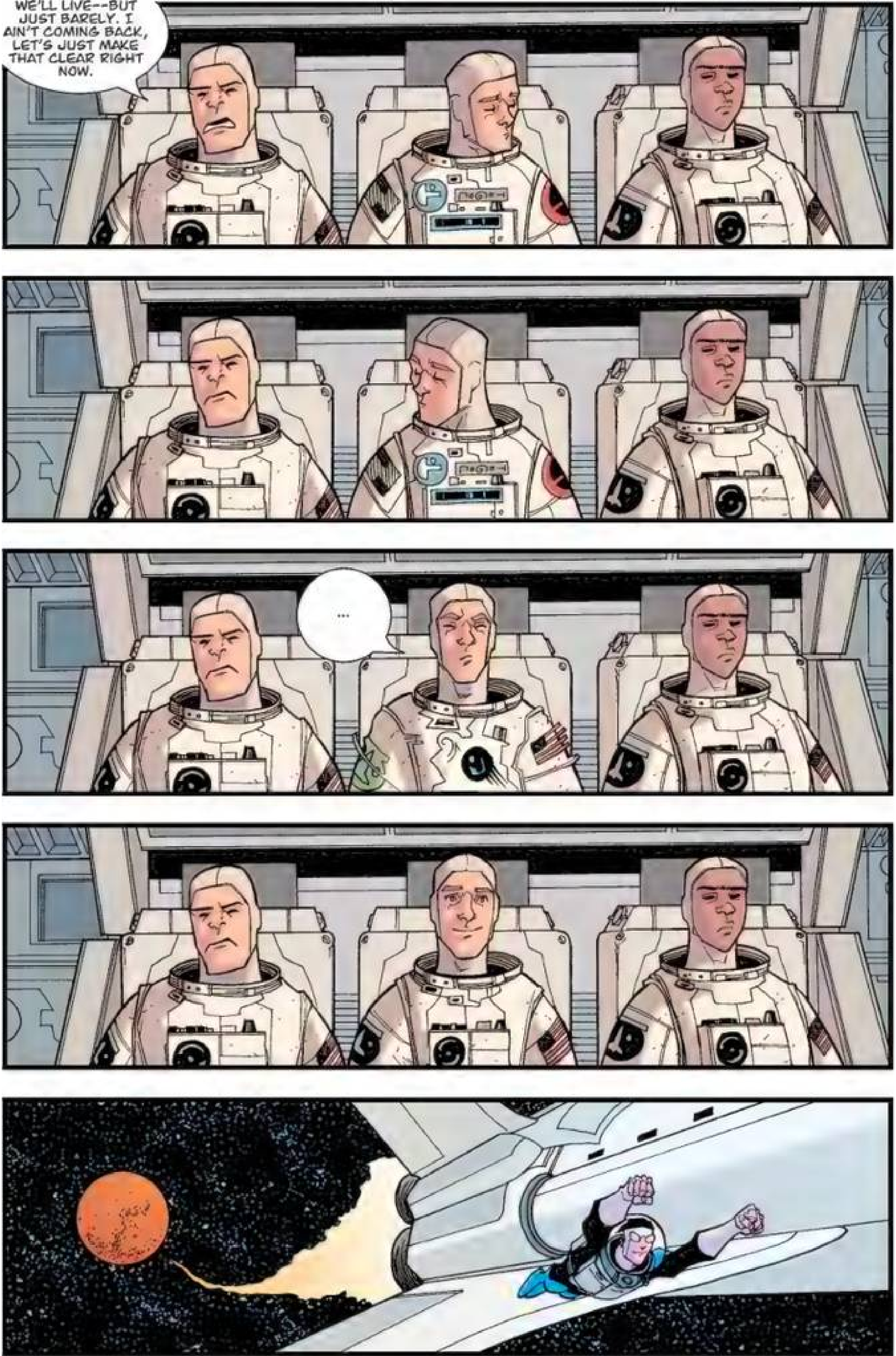

WHAT WAS THAT?! DID WE JUST--?!
YOU WILL COME CLOSER. I WILL HAVE AN AUDIENCE WITH YOU.
YEAH-- WHERE ARE THE ASTRONAUTS THAT WERE ON THE SURFACE?
SILENCE! IT IS I WHO WILL ASK THE QUESTIONS, SOLID. YOU WILL LISTEN TO WHAT I HAVE TO SAY.
THE SEQUIDS ARRIVED HERE HUNDREDS OF YEARS AGO. AFTER A MALFUNCTION OF THEIR MOTHER SHIP CAUSED IT TO CRASH ON THE SURFACE ABOVE US. ALL THEIR HOSTS DIED IN THE CRASH.
SEQUIDS HAVE ONE MIND--A SINGLE CONSCIOUSNESS BETWEEN THEM. THEY ARE ONLY LINKED THROUGH THE MINDS OF THEIR HOSTS. WITHOUT A HOST THEY ARE MINDLESS BEASTS, EASILY MANIPULATED-- THE PERFECT SLAVE RACE.
THEIR WILL TO BOND WITH SOLIDS IS INSURMOUNTABLE. WE MARTIANS WERE INCOMPATIBLE AND COULD NOT BE BONDED WITH THEM DUE TO OUR SHAPE-SHIFTING ABILITY. WITHOUT A SINGLE HOST TO LINK THEIR MINDS THEY WERE EASILY CONQUERED.
THEY HAVE EXISTED AS A SLAVE RACE FOR CENTURIES--ASSISTING US IN ALL ASPECTS OF LIFE. WE HAVE BEEN MINDFUL OF THE FACT THAT IF EVEN ONE SOLID WERE TO BE FOUND ON OUR PLANET-- IT COULD MEAN DOOM FOR US ALL.
WE HAVE BEEN BREEDING SEQUIDS, MAKING THEM STRONGER IN ORDER FOR THEM TO BETTER SERVE US. WERE THEY TO DISCOVER A HOST WHO COULD LINK THEIR MINDS I HAVE NO DOUBT THEY COULD OVERTHROW US ALMOST INSTANTLY.
WHICH IS WHY WE HAVE TAKEN YOUR "AS-TRO-NOTS" INTO CUSTODY, TO PREVENT THEM FROM BEING TAKEN OVER. YOU, THOUGH, ARE SOLID AS WELL--AND RESISTED THE SEQUIDS ATTEMPTS--YOUR SKIN COULD NOT BE PUNCTURED BY THEIR TENDRILS.
HOW IS THIS? HOW IS IT YOU WERE ABLE TO RESIST THEM?

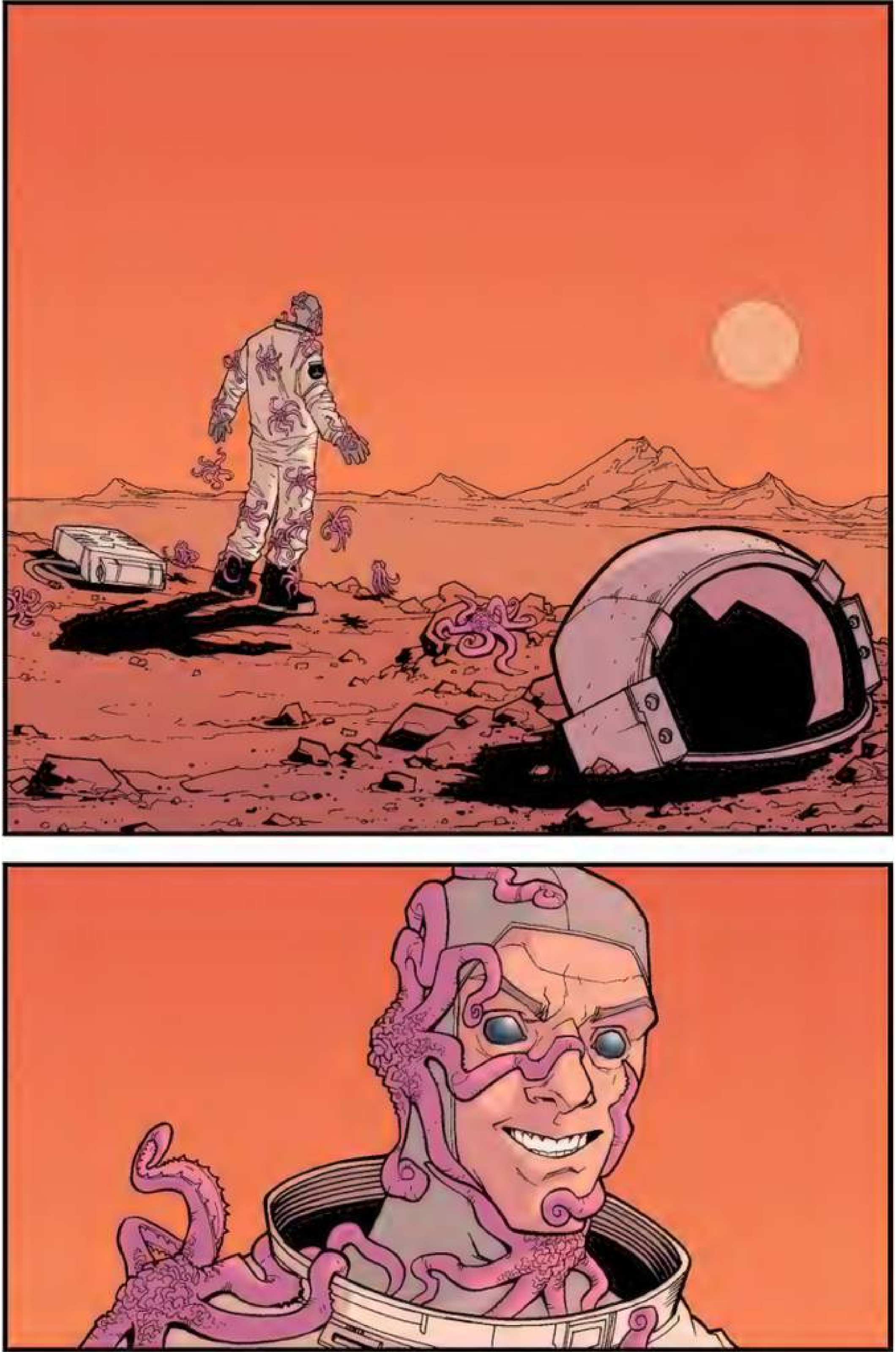

I GUESS I WAS TOO TOUGH FOR THEM. I'M NOT A HUMAN--I'M NOT FROM EARTH--WELL I AM... BUT MY DAD--I'M A VILTRUMITE.
I HAVE NEVER HEARD OF SUCH A RACE. WHERE DO YOU ORIGINATE?
REALLY FAR AWAY FROM HERE...A PLANET CALLED VILTRUM.
SERIOUSLY THOUGH... I WAS SENT HERE TO PROTECT THOSE ASTRONAUTS. I GOTTA MAKE SURE THEY GET HOME SAFELY OR MY BOSS IS GOING TO BE PISSED. IT'S REALLY IMPORTANT THAT YOU--Y'KNOW... GIVE THEM BACK.
IF YOU CAN TELL ME WHERE THEY ARE I'LL MAKE SURE I GET THEM TO THE SURFACE WITHOUT ANY SEQUIDS ATTACHING TO THEM. I JUST NEED TO GET THEM BACK TO OUR SHIP SO WE CAN LEAVE.
I'M AFRAID THAT IS NOT POSSIBLE. THEY ARE SCHEDULED TO BE EXECUTED.
EXECUTED?!

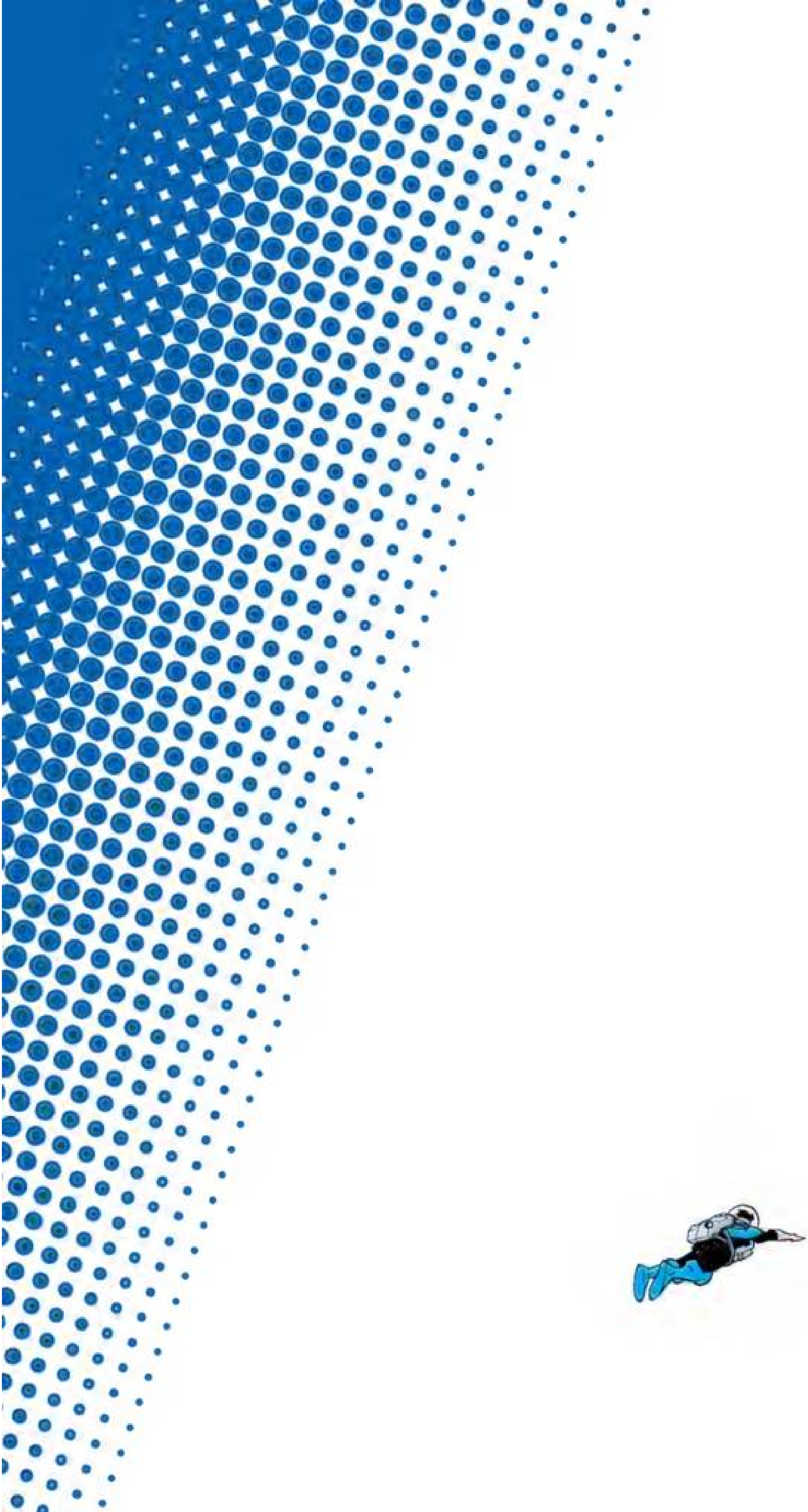

RUN!! RUN AS FAST AS YOU CAN!!
I'LL HOLD THEM OFF!!


WHOA! WHO *IS* THAT GUY?!
WHO CARES! HE'S OUR TICKET HOME! JUST KEEP *RUNNING!*
WILL DO, BOSS!
JUST A--LITTLE-- MORE *TIME!*

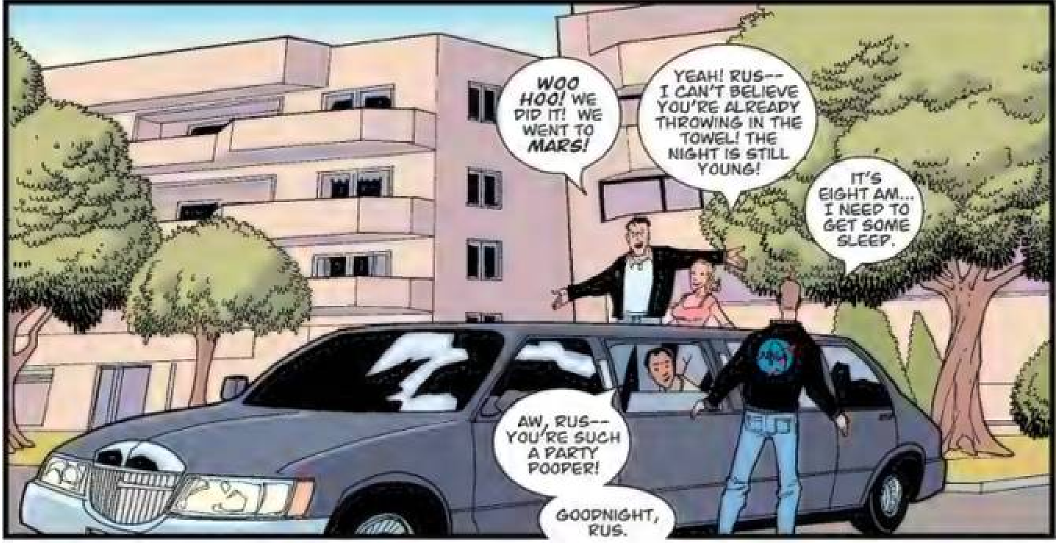

EVERYONE ON BOARD?!
WE'RE ALL HERE! LET'S GET THIS THING IN THE AIR!
I'M ON IT!
I DON'T KNOW WHO THAT MAN IS--BUT WHEN WE GET BACK TO EARTH--I THINK I'M GOING TO MARRY HIM.
HE SURE DID SAVE OUR BACON.
EVERYONE OKAY BACK THERE?

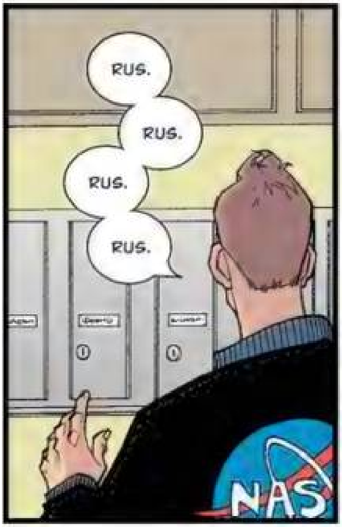

WE'LL LIVE--BUT JUST BARELY. I AIN'T COMING BACK, LET'S JUST MAKE THAT CLEAR RIGHT NOW.
...

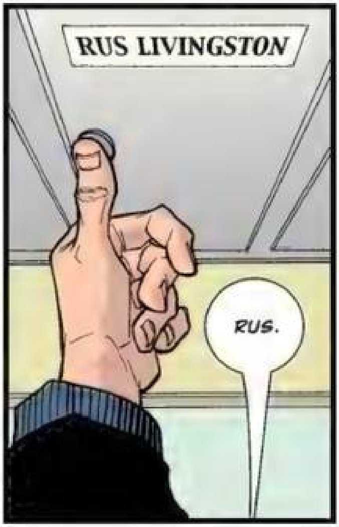


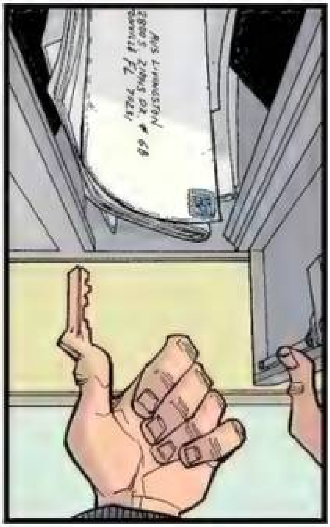


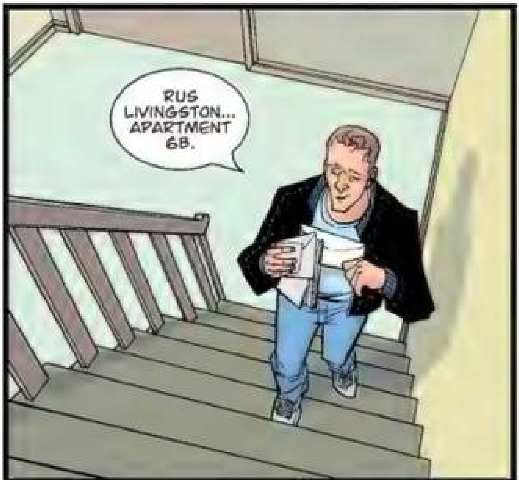
ISSUE NINETEEN

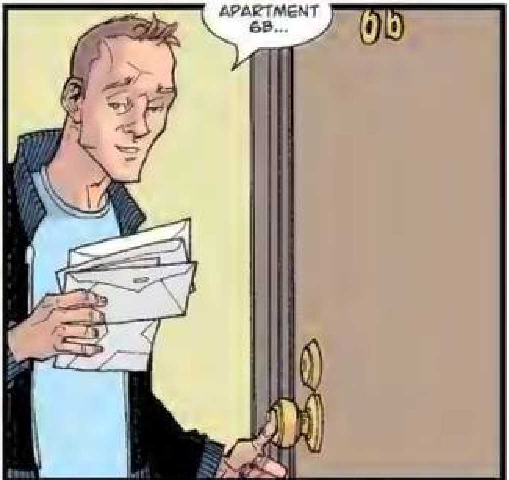

WOO HOO! WE DID IT! WE WENT TO MARS!
YEAH! RUS-- I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU'RE ALREADY THROWING IN THE TOWEL! THE NIGHT IS STILL YOUNG!
IT'S EIGHT AM... I NEED TO GET SOME SLEEP.
AW, RUS-- YOU'RE SUCH A PARTY POOPER!
GOODNIGHT, RUS.

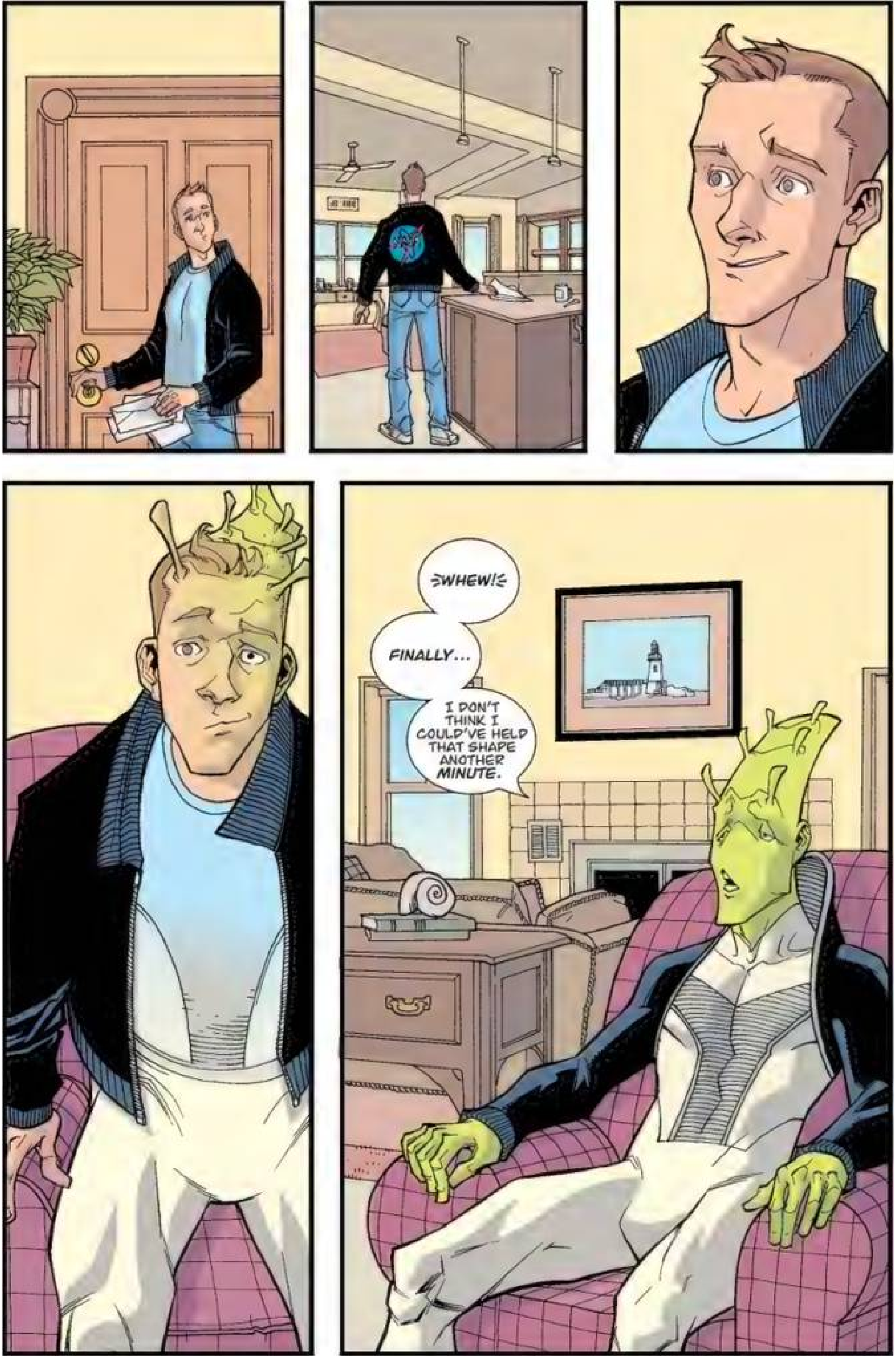

RUS.
RUS.
RUS.
RUS.
NAS

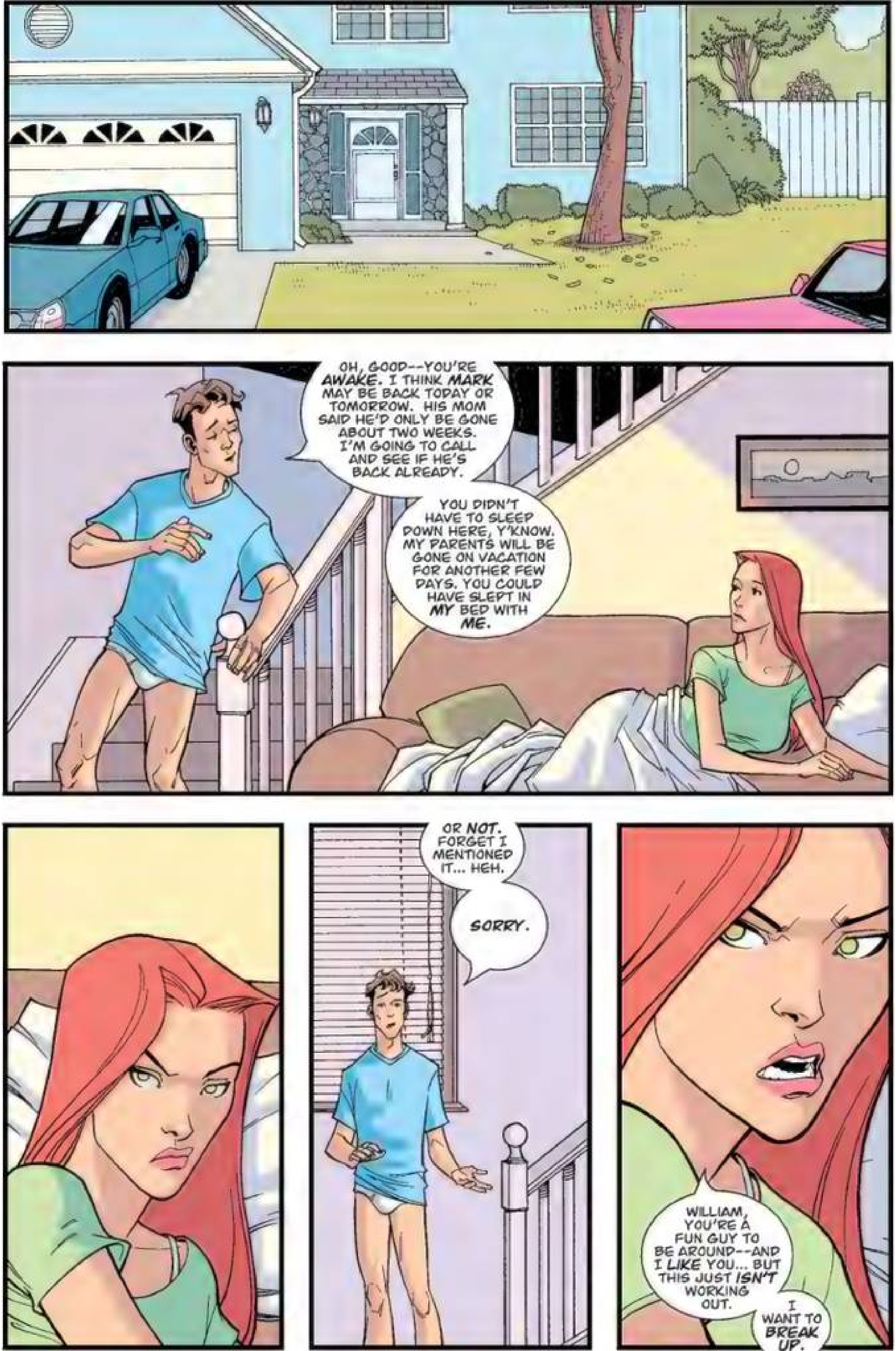

RUS LIVINGSTON
RUS.

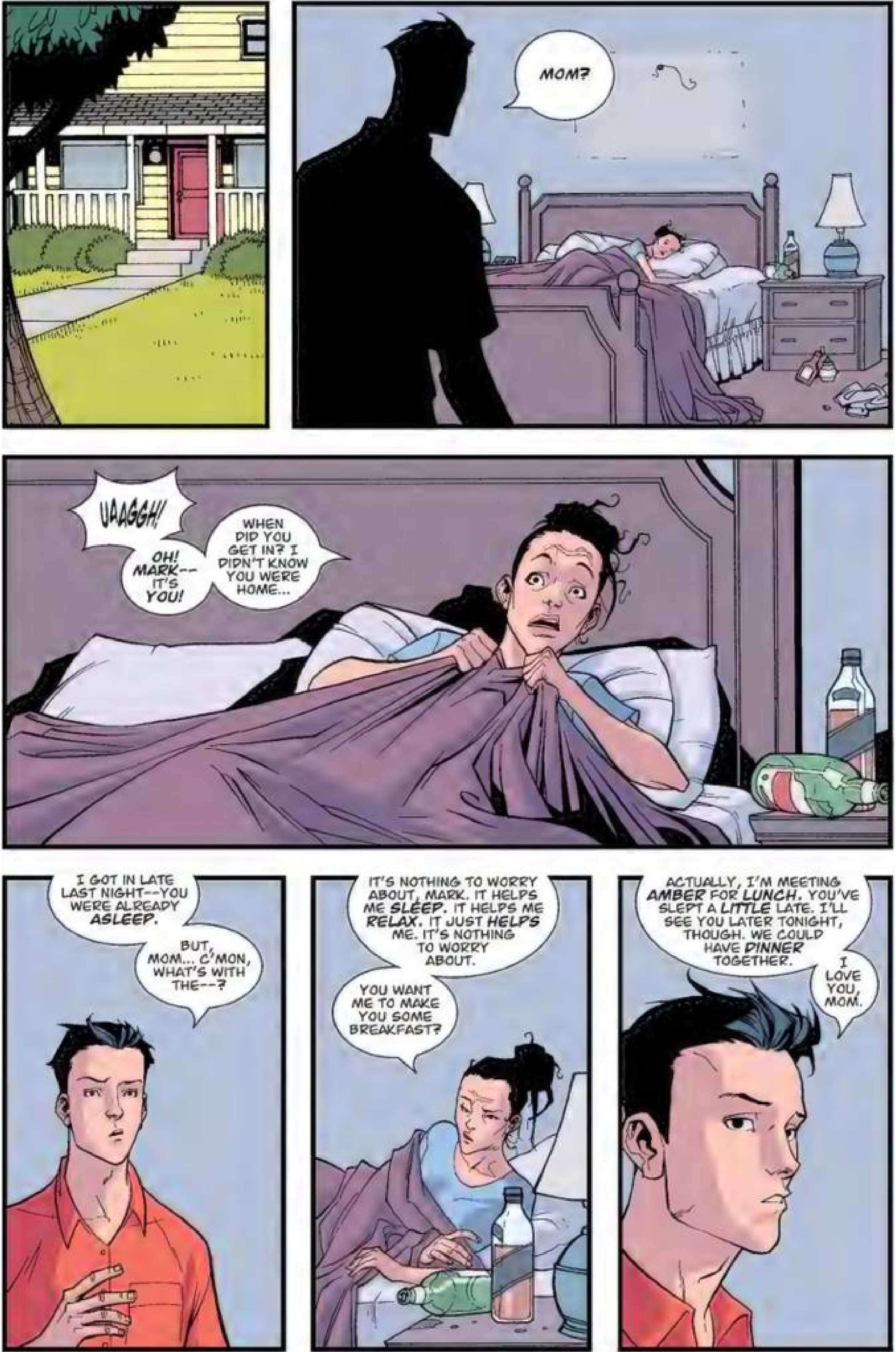

RUS LIVINGSTON

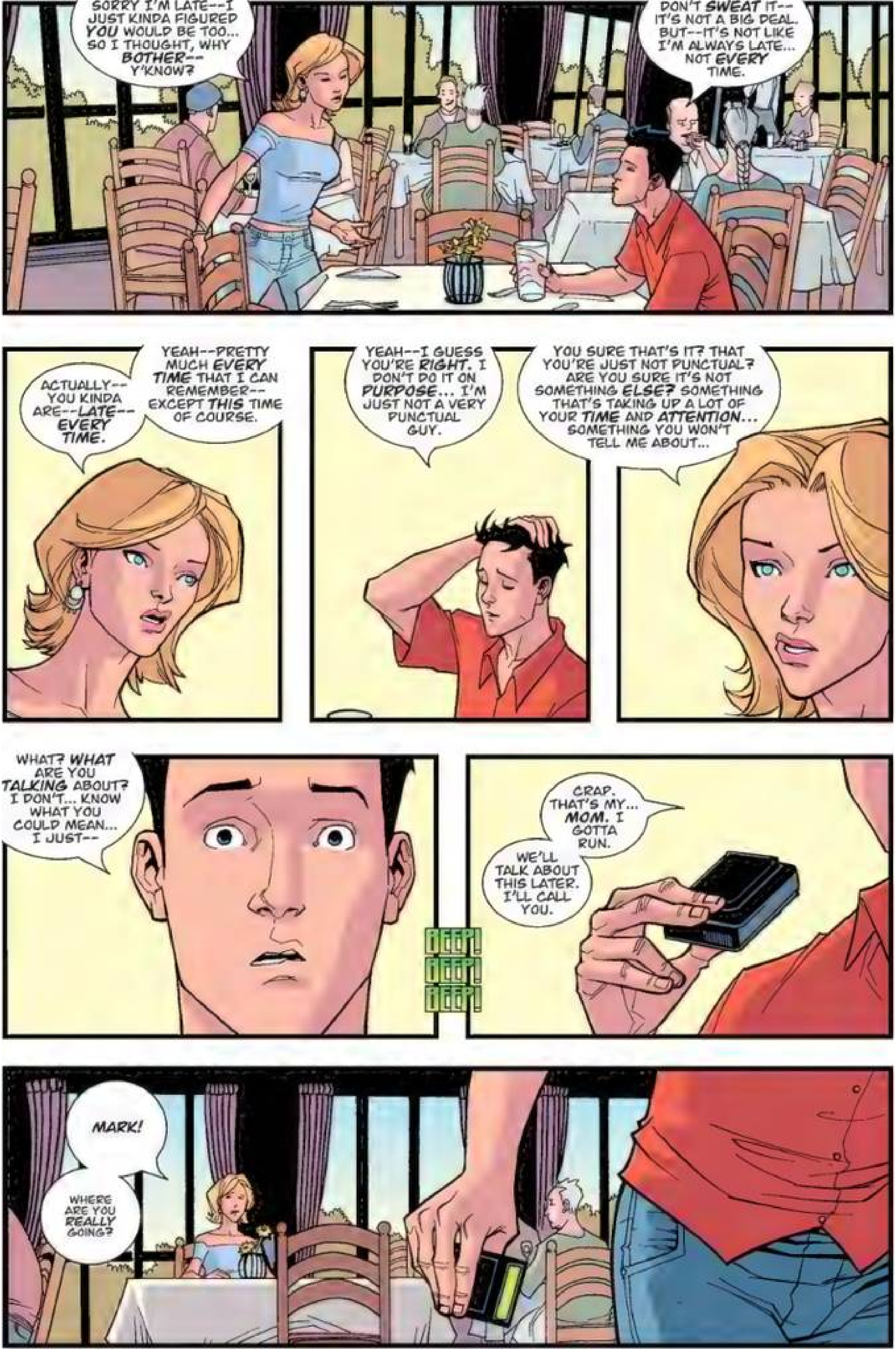

RUS LIVINGSTON... APARTMENT 6B.

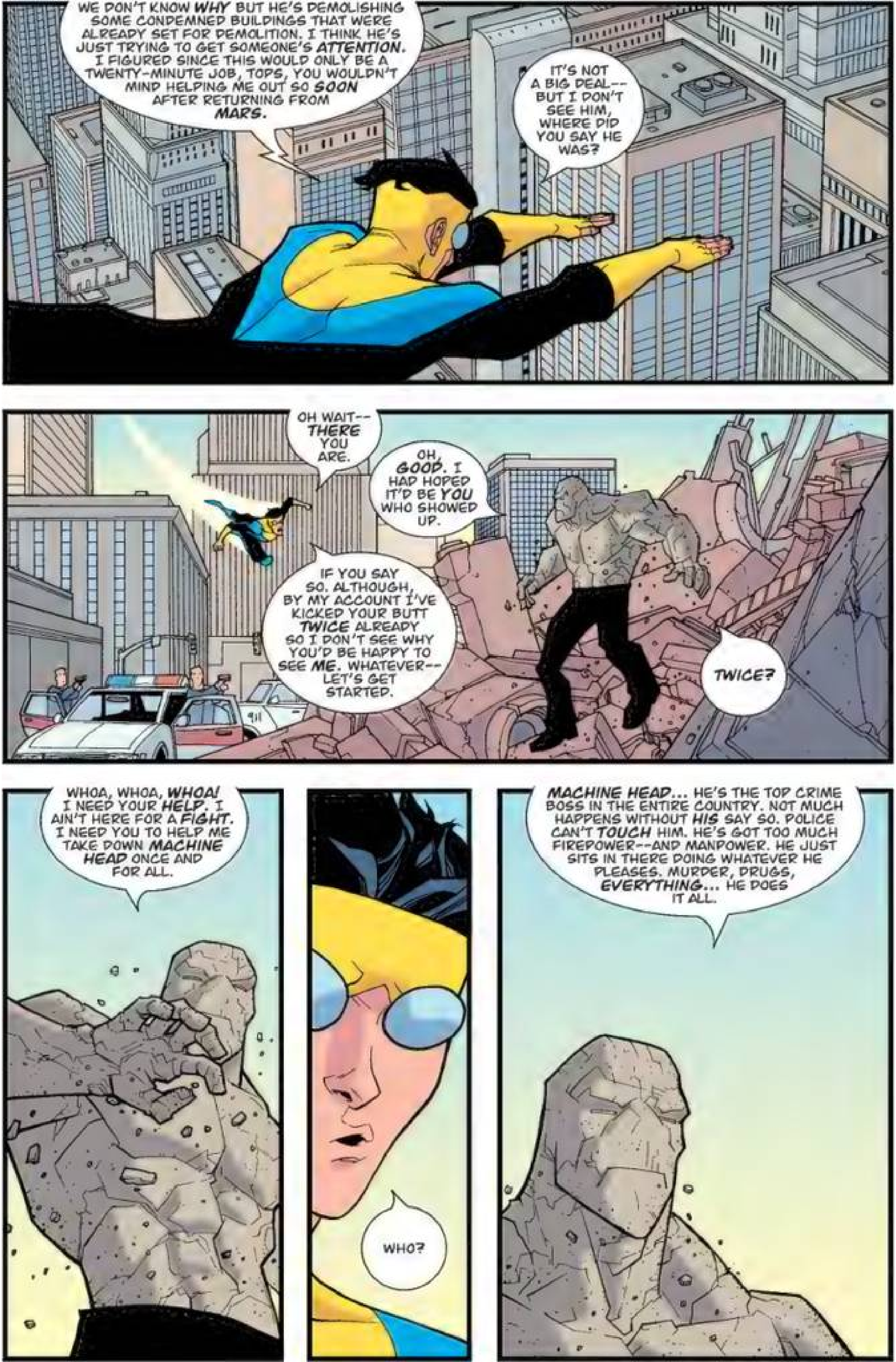

APARTMENT 6B...
6B

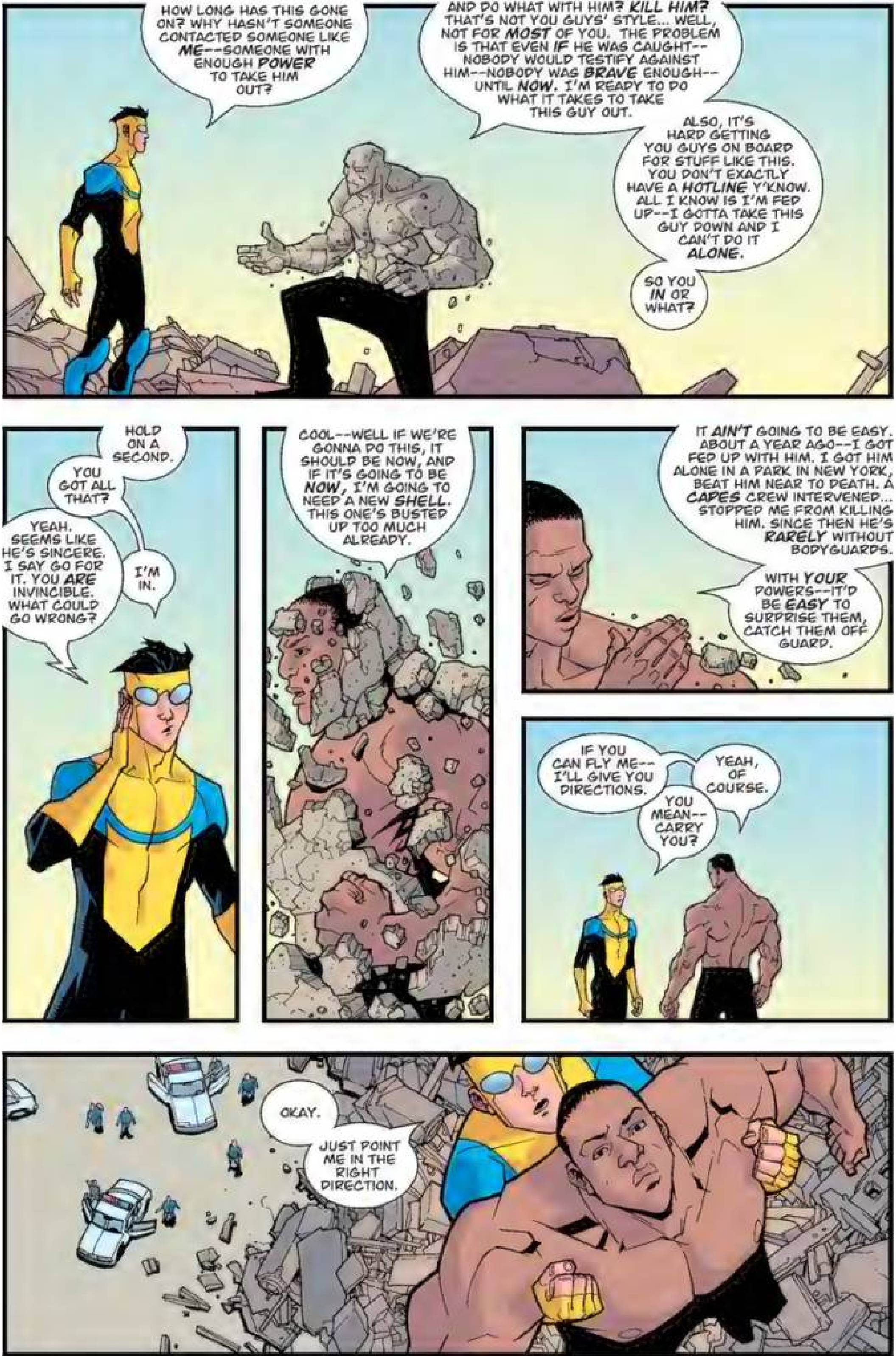

WHEW!
FINALLY...
I DON'T THINK I COULD'VE HELD THAT SHAPE ANOTHER MINUTE.

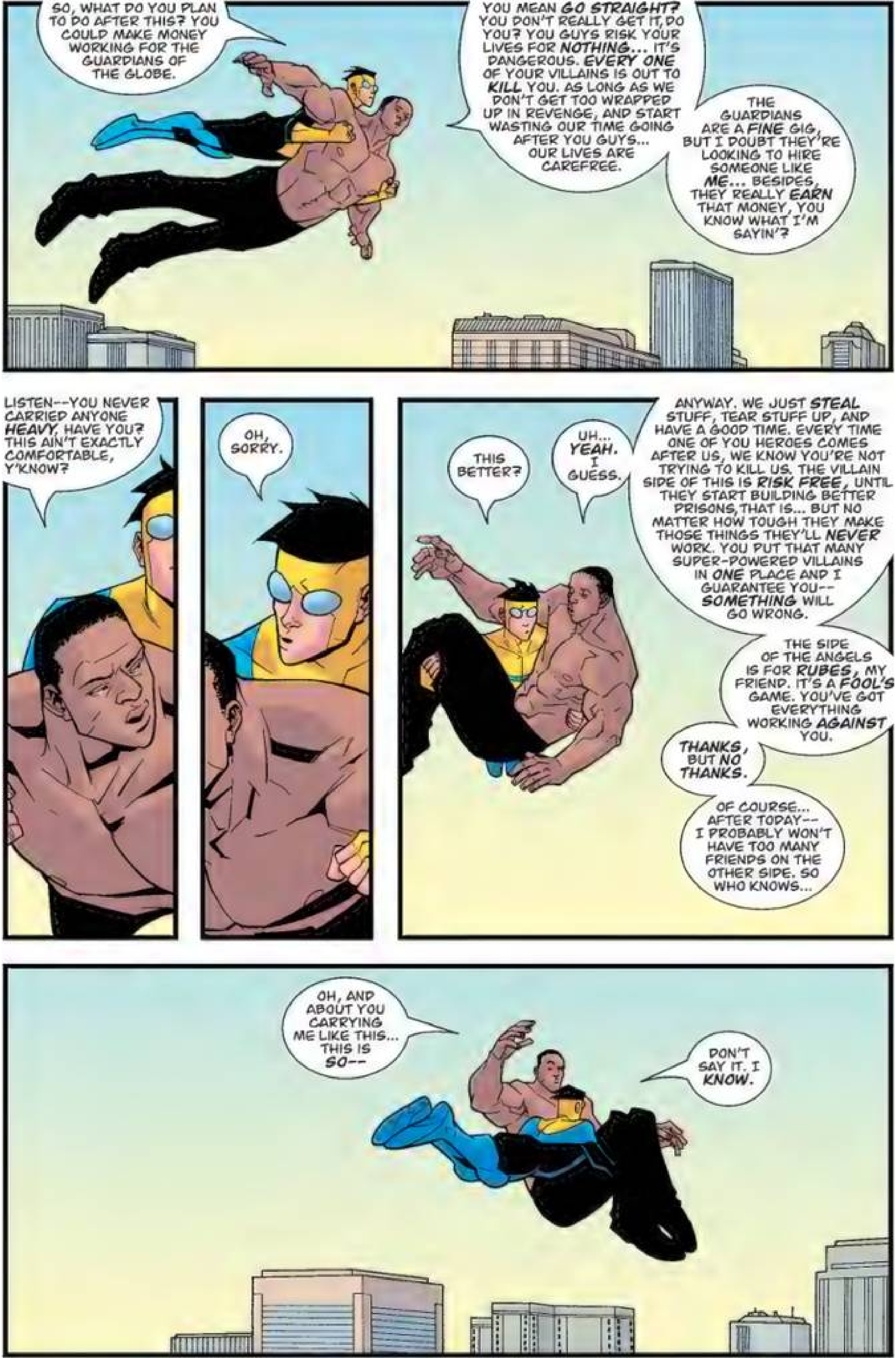

OH, GOOD--YOU'RE **AWAKE.** I THINK **MARK** MAY BE BACK TODAY OR TOMORROW. HIS MOM SAID HE'D ONLY BE GONE ABOUT TWO WEEKS. I'M GOING TO CALL AND SEE IF HE'S BACK ALREADY.
YOU DIDN'T HAVE TO SLEEP DOWN HERE, Y'KNOW. MY PARENTS WILL BE GONE ON VACATION FOR ANOTHER FEW DAYS. YOU COULD HAVE SLEPT IN **MY** BED WITH **ME.**
OR **NOT.** FORGET I MENTIONED IT... HEH.
SORRY.
WILLIAM, YOU'RE A FUN GUY TO BE AROUND--AND I **LIKE** YOU... BUT THIS JUST **ISN'T** WORKING OUT.
I WANT TO **BREAK UP.**

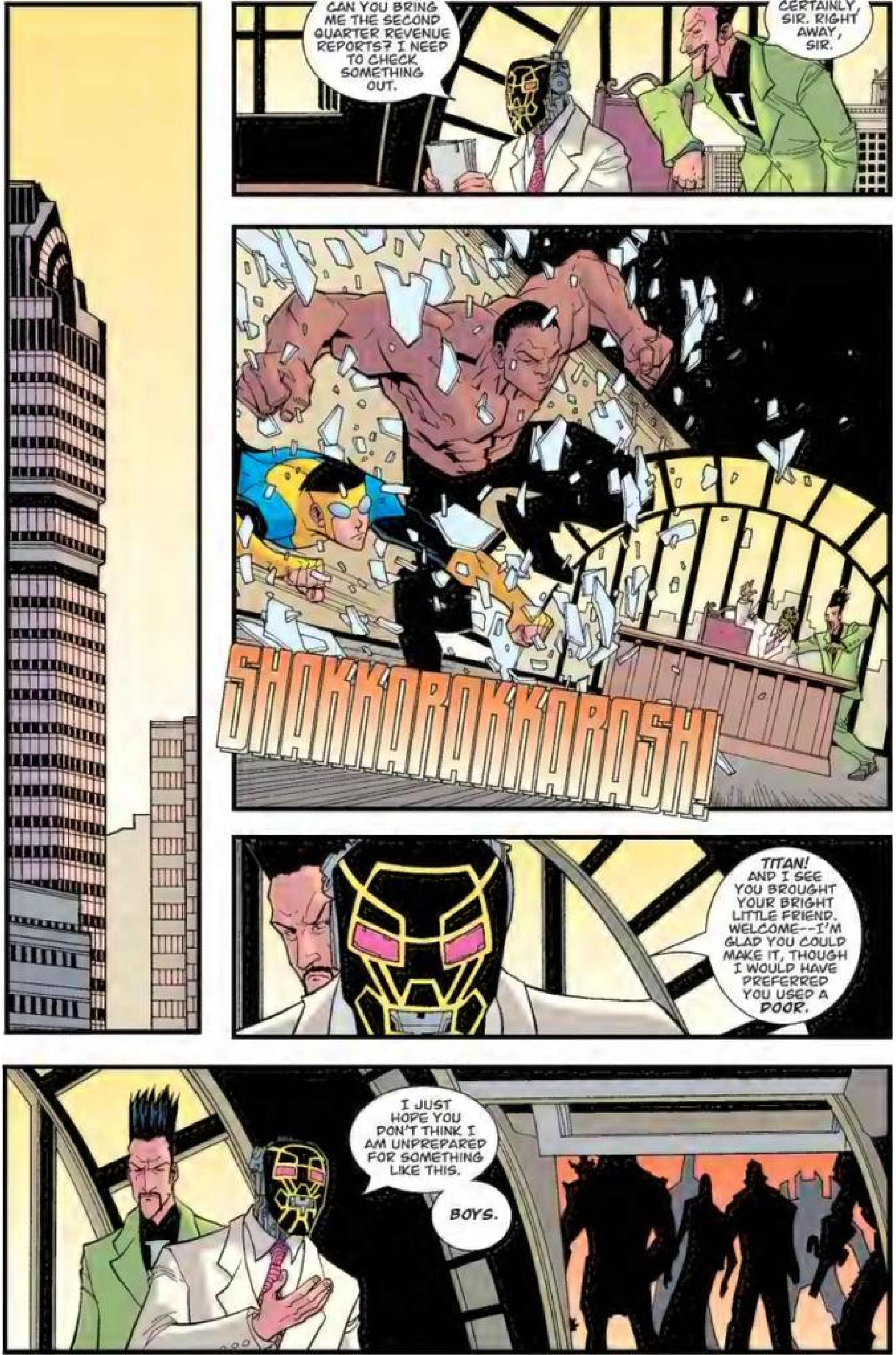

MOM?
UAAGGH!
OH! MARK-- IT'S YOU!
WHEN DID YOU GET IN? I DIDN'T KNOW YOU WERE HOME...
I GOT IN LATE LAST NIGHT--YOU WERE ALREADY ASLEEP.
BUT, MOM... C'MON, WHAT'S WITH THE--?
IT'S NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT, MARK. IT HELPS ME SLEEP. IT HELPS ME RELAX. IT JUST HELPS ME. IT'S NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT.
YOU WANT ME TO MAKE YOU SOME BREAKFAST?
ACTUALLY, I'M MEETING AMBER FOR LUNCH. YOU'VE SLEPT A LITTLE LATE. I'LL SEE YOU LATER TONIGHT, THOUGH. WE COULD HAVE DINNER TOGETHER.
I LOVE YOU, MOM.

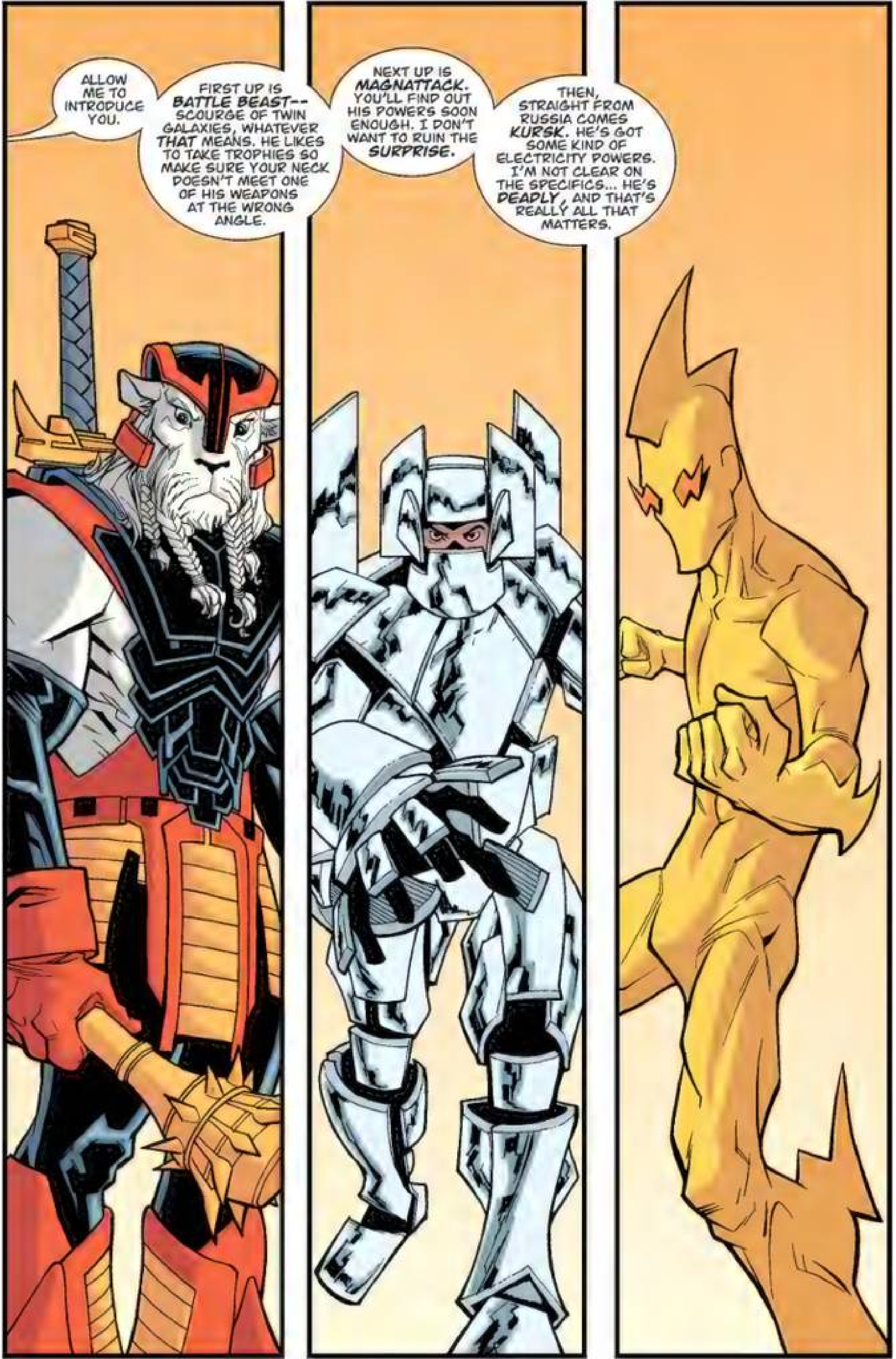

SORRY I'M LATE--I JUST KINDA FIGURED YOU WOULD BE TOO... SO I THOUGHT, WHY BOTHER-- Y'KNOW?
DON'T SWEAT IT-- IT'S NOT A BIG DEAL. BUT--IT'S NOT LIKE I'M ALWAYS LATE... NOT EVERY TIME.
ACTUALLY-- YOU KINDA ARE--LATE-- EVERY TIME.
YEAH--PRETTY MUCH EVERY TIME THAT I CAN REMEMBER-- EXCEPT THIS TIME OF COURSE.
YEAH--I GUESS YOU'RE RIGHT. I DON'T DO IT ON PURPOSE... I'M JUST NOT A VERY PUNCTUAL GUY.
YOU SURE THAT'S IT? THAT YOU'RE JUST NOT PUNCTUAL? ARE YOU SURE IT'S NOT SOMETHING ELSE? SOMETHING THAT'S TAKING UP A LOT OF YOUR TIME AND ATTENTION... SOMETHING YOU WON'T TELL ME ABOUT...
WHAT? WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? I DON'T... KNOW WHAT YOU COULD MEAN... I JUST--
BEEP! BEEP! BEEP!
CRAP. THAT'S MY... MOM. I GOTTA RUN.
WE'LL TALK ABOUT THIS LATER. I'LL CALL YOU.
MARK!
WHERE ARE YOU REALLY GOING?

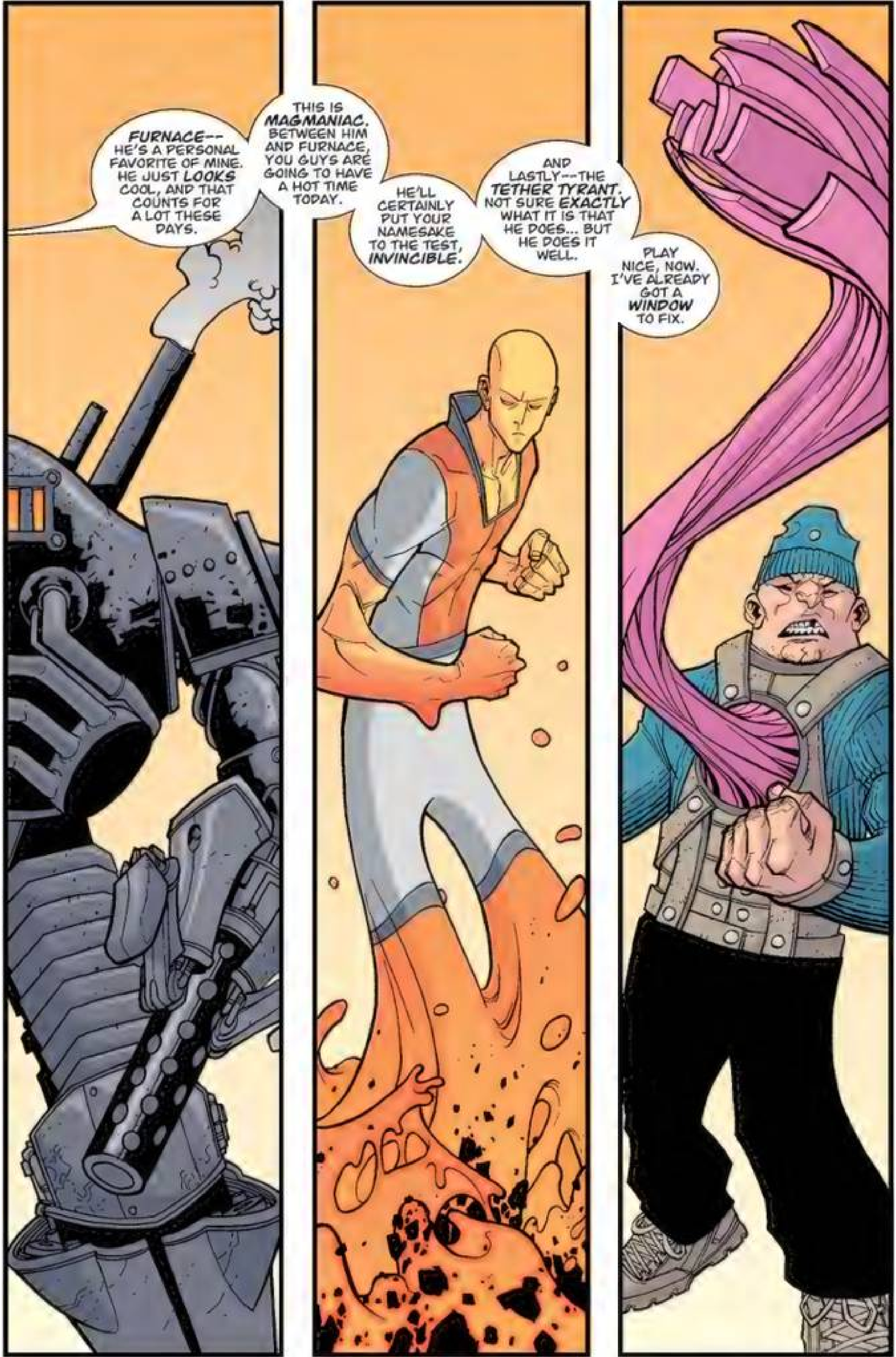

WE DON'T KNOW WHY BUT HE'S DEMOLISHING SOME CONDEMNED BUILDINGS THAT WERE ALREADY SET FOR DEMOLITION. I THINK HE'S JUST TRYING TO GET SOMEONE'S ATTENTION. I FIGURED SINCE THIS WOULD ONLY BE A TWENTY-MINUTE JOB, TOPS, YOU WOULDN'T MIND HELPING ME OUT SO SOON AFTER RETURNING FROM MARS.
IT'S NOT A BIG DEAL-- BUT I DON'T SEE HIM, WHERE DID YOU SAY HE WAS?
OH WAIT-- THERE YOU ARE.
OH, GOOD. I HAD HOPED IT'D BE YOU WHO SHOWED UP.
IF YOU SAY SO. ALTHOUGH, BY MY ACCOUNT I'VE KICKED YOUR BUTT TWICE ALREADY SO I DON'T SEE WHY YOU'D BE HAPPY TO SEE ME. WHATEVER-- LET'S GET STARTED.
TWICE?
911
WHOA, WHOA, WHOA! I NEED YOUR HELP. I AIN'T HERE FOR A FIGHT. I NEED YOU TO HELP ME TAKE DOWN MACHINE HEAD ONCE AND FOR ALL.
WHO?
MACHINE HEAD... HE'S THE TOP CRIME BOSS IN THE ENTIRE COUNTRY. NOT MUCH HAPPENS WITHOUT HIS SAY SO. POLICE CAN'T TOUCH HIM. HE'S GOT TOO MUCH FIREPOWER--AND MANPOWER. HE JUST SITS IN THERE DOING WHATEVER HE PLEASES. MURDER, DRUGS, EVERYTHING... HE DOES IT ALL.

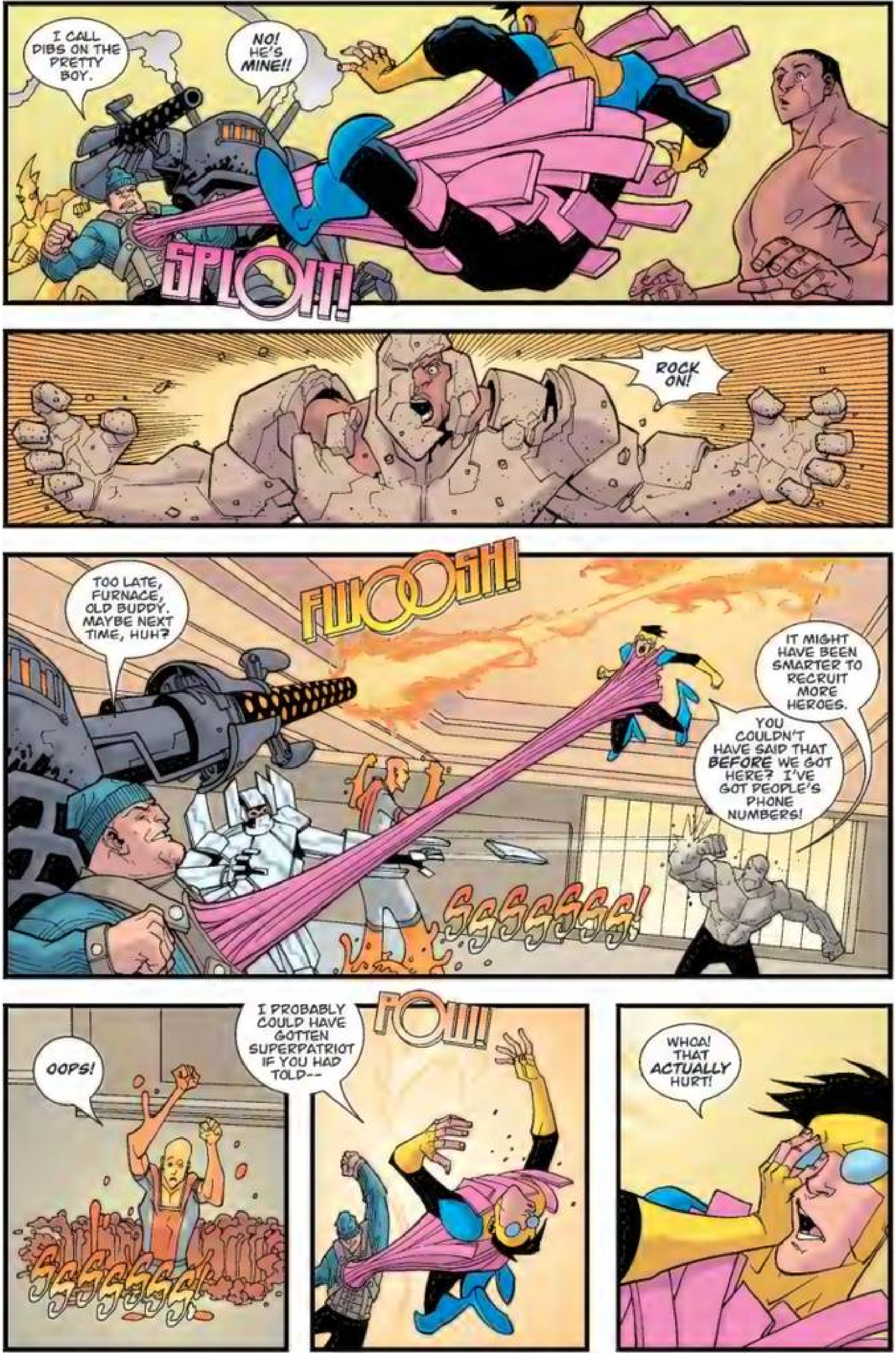

HOW LONG HAS THIS GONE ON? WHY HASN'T SOMEONE CONTACTED SOMEONE LIKE ME--SOMEONE WITH ENOUGH POWER TO TAKE HIM OUT?
AND DO WHAT WITH HIM? KILL HIM? THAT'S NOT YOU GUYS' STYLE... WELL, NOT FOR MOST OF YOU. THE PROBLEM IS THAT EVEN IF HE WAS CAUGHT-- NOBODY WOULD TESTIFY AGAINST HIM--NOBODY WAS BRAVE ENOUGH-- UNTIL NOW. I'M READY TO DO WHAT IT TAKES TO TAKE THIS GUY OUT.
ALSO, IT'S HARD GETTING YOU GUYS ON BOARD FOR STUFF LIKE THIS. YOU DON'T EXACTLY HAVE A HOTLINE Y'KNOW. ALL I KNOW IS I'M FED UP--I GOTTA TAKE THIS GUY DOWN AND I CAN'T DO IT ALONE.
SO YOU IN OR WHAT?
HOLD ON A SECOND.
YOU GOT ALL THAT?
YEAH. SEEMS LIKE HE'S SINCERE. I SAY GO FOR IT. YOU ARE INVINCIBLE. WHAT COULD GO WRONG?
I'M IN.
COOL--WELL IF WE'RE GONNA DO THIS, IT SHOULD BE NOW, AND IF IT'S GOING TO BE NOW, I'M GOING TO NEED A NEW SHELL. THIS ONE'S BUSTED UP TOO MUCH ALREADY.
IT AIN'T GOING TO BE EASY. ABOUT A YEAR AGO--I GOT FED UP WITH HIM. I GOT HIM ALONE IN A PARK IN NEW YORK, BEAT HIM NEAR TO DEATH. A CAPES CREW INTERVENED... STOPPED ME FROM KILLING HIM. SINCE THEN HE'S RARELY WITHOUT BODYGUARDS.
WITH YOUR POWERS--IT'D BE EASY TO SURPRISE THEM, CATCH THEM OFF GUARD.
IF YOU CAN FLY ME-- I'LL GIVE YOU DIRECTIONS.
YOU MEAN-- CARRY YOU?
YEAH, OF COURSE.
OKAY.
JUST POINT ME IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION.

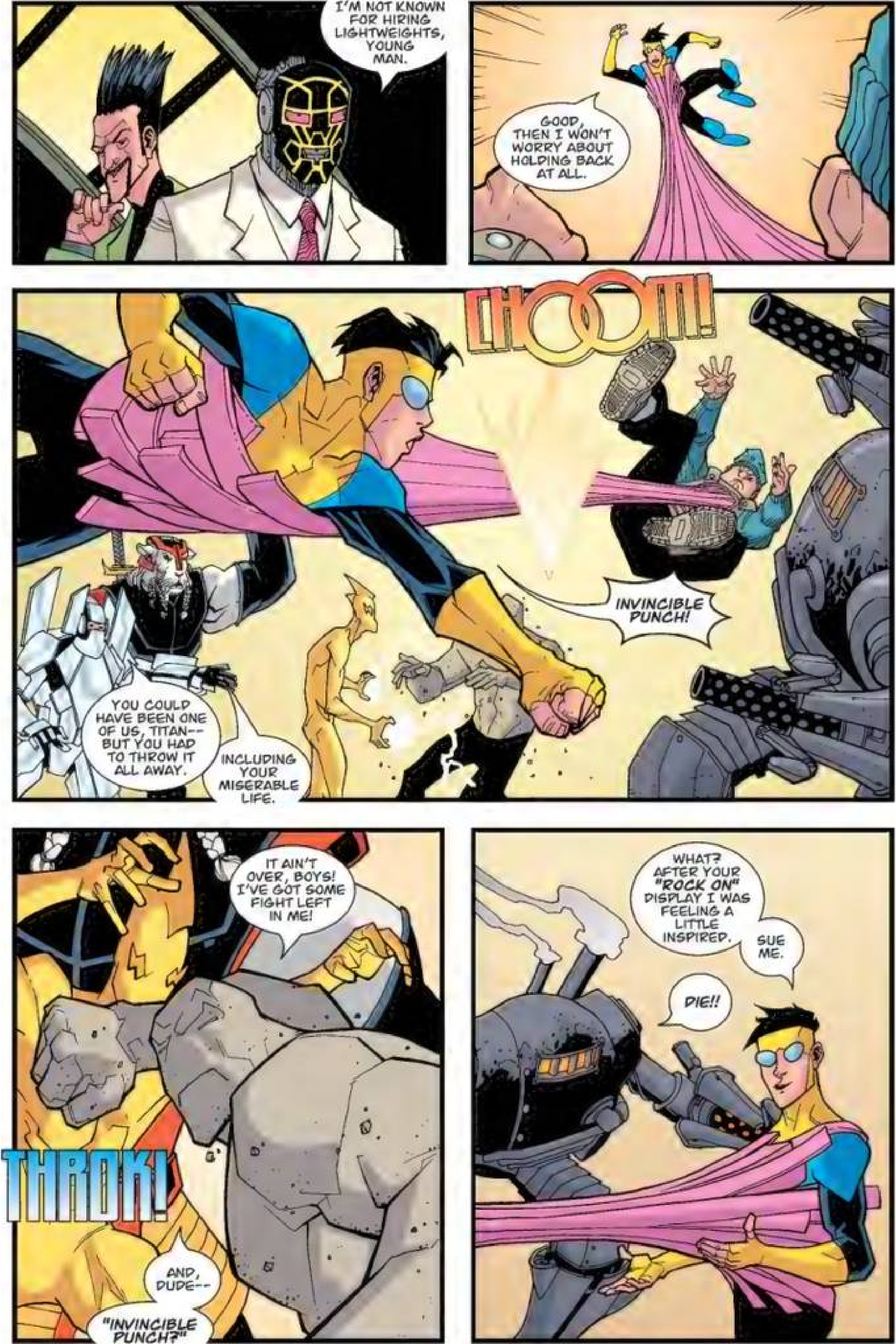

SO, WHAT DO YOU PLAN TO DO AFTER THIS? YOU COULD MAKE MONEY WORKING FOR THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE.
YOU MEAN GO STRAIGHT? YOU DON'T REALLY GET IT, DO YOU? YOU GUYS RISK YOUR LIVES FOR NOTHING... IT'S DANGEROUS. EVERY ONE OF YOUR VILLAINS IS OUT TO KILL YOU. AS LONG AS WE DON'T GET TOO WRAPPED UP IN REVENGE, AND START WASTING OUR TIME GOING AFTER YOU GUYS... OUR LIVES ARE CAREFREE.
THE GUARDIANS ARE A FINE GIG, BUT I DOUBT THEY'RE LOOKING TO HIRE SOMEONE LIKE ME... BESIDES, THEY REALLY EARN THAT MONEY, YOU KNOW WHAT I'M SAYIN'?
LISTEN--YOU NEVER CARRIED ANYONE HEAVY, HAVE YOU? THIS AIN'T EXACTLY COMFORTABLE, Y'KNOW?
OH, SORRY.
THIS BETTER?
UH... YEAH. I GUESS.
ANYWAY, WE JUST STEAL STUFF, TEAR STUFF UP, AND HAVE A GOOD TIME. EVERY TIME ONE OF YOU HEROES COMES AFTER US, WE KNOW YOU'RE NOT TRYING TO KILL US. THE VILLAIN SIDE OF THIS IS RISK FREE, UNTIL THEY START BUILDING BETTER PRISONS, THAT IS... BUT NO MATTER HOW TOUGH THEY MAKE THOSE THINGS THEY'LL NEVER WORK. YOU PUT THAT MANY SUPER-POWERED VILLAINS IN ONE PLACE AND I GUARANTEE YOU-- SOMETHING WILL GO WRONG.
THE SIDE OF THE ANGELS IS FOR RUBES, MY FRIEND. IT'S A FOOL'S GAME. YOU'VE GOT EVERYTHING WORKING AGAINST YOU.
THANKS, BUT NO THANKS.
OF COURSE... AFTER TODAY-- I PROBABLY WON'T HAVE TOO MANY FRIENDS ON THE OTHER SIDE. SO WHO KNOWS...
OH, AND ABOUT YOU CARRYING ME LIKE THIS... THIS IS SO--
DON'T SAY IT. I KNOW.

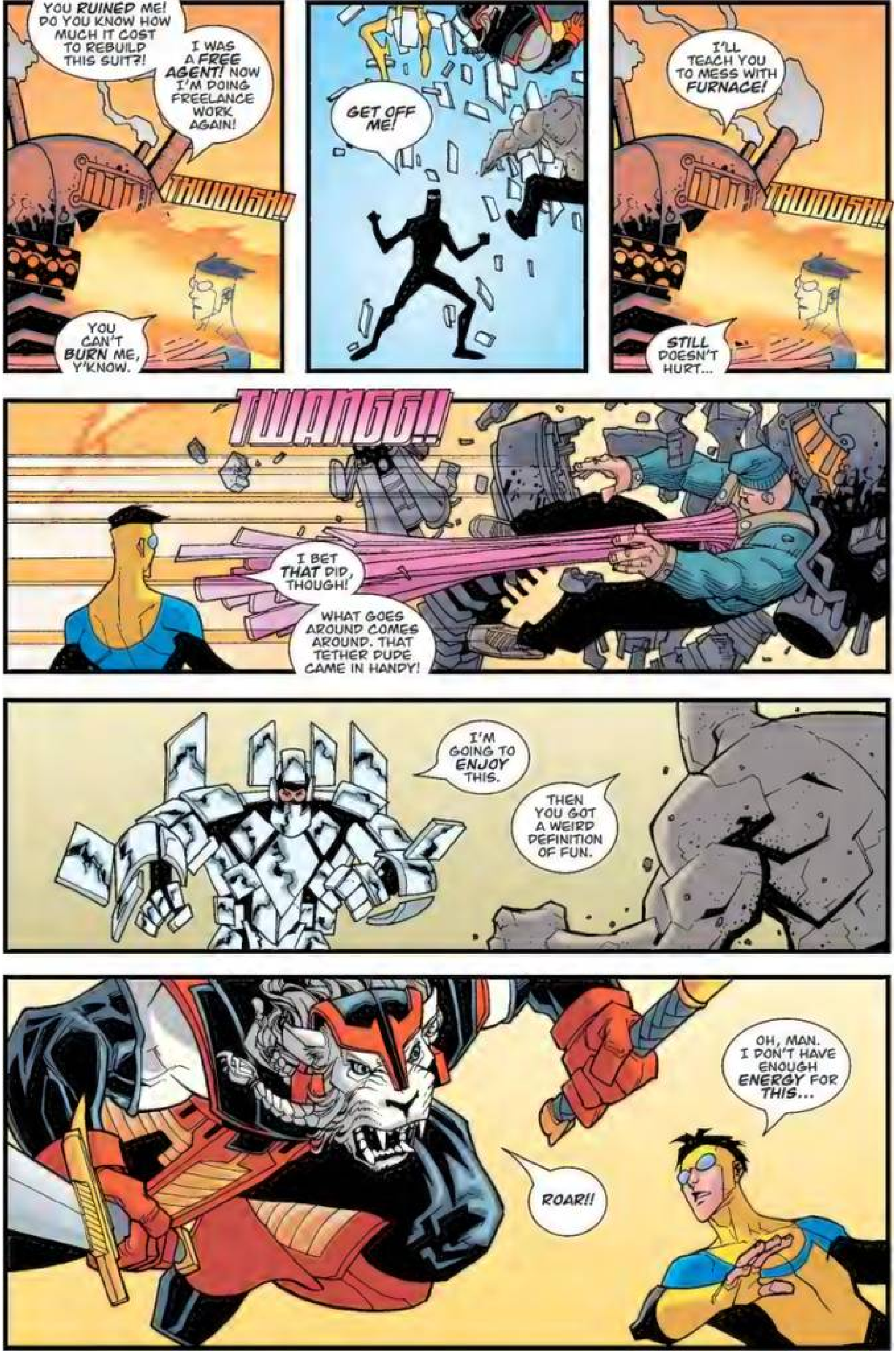

CAN YOU BRING ME THE SECOND QUARTER REVENUE REPORTS? I NEED TO CHECK SOMETHING OUT.
CERTAINLY, SIR. RIGHT AWAY, SIR.
SHAKKAROKKAROSH!
TITAN! AND I SEE YOU BROUGHT YOUR BRIGHT LITTLE FRIEND. WELCOME--I'M GLAD YOU COULD MAKE IT, THOUGH I WOULD HAVE PREFERRED YOU USED A *DOOR*.
I JUST HOPE YOU DON'T THINK I AM UNPREPARED FOR SOMETHING LIKE THIS.
BOYS.

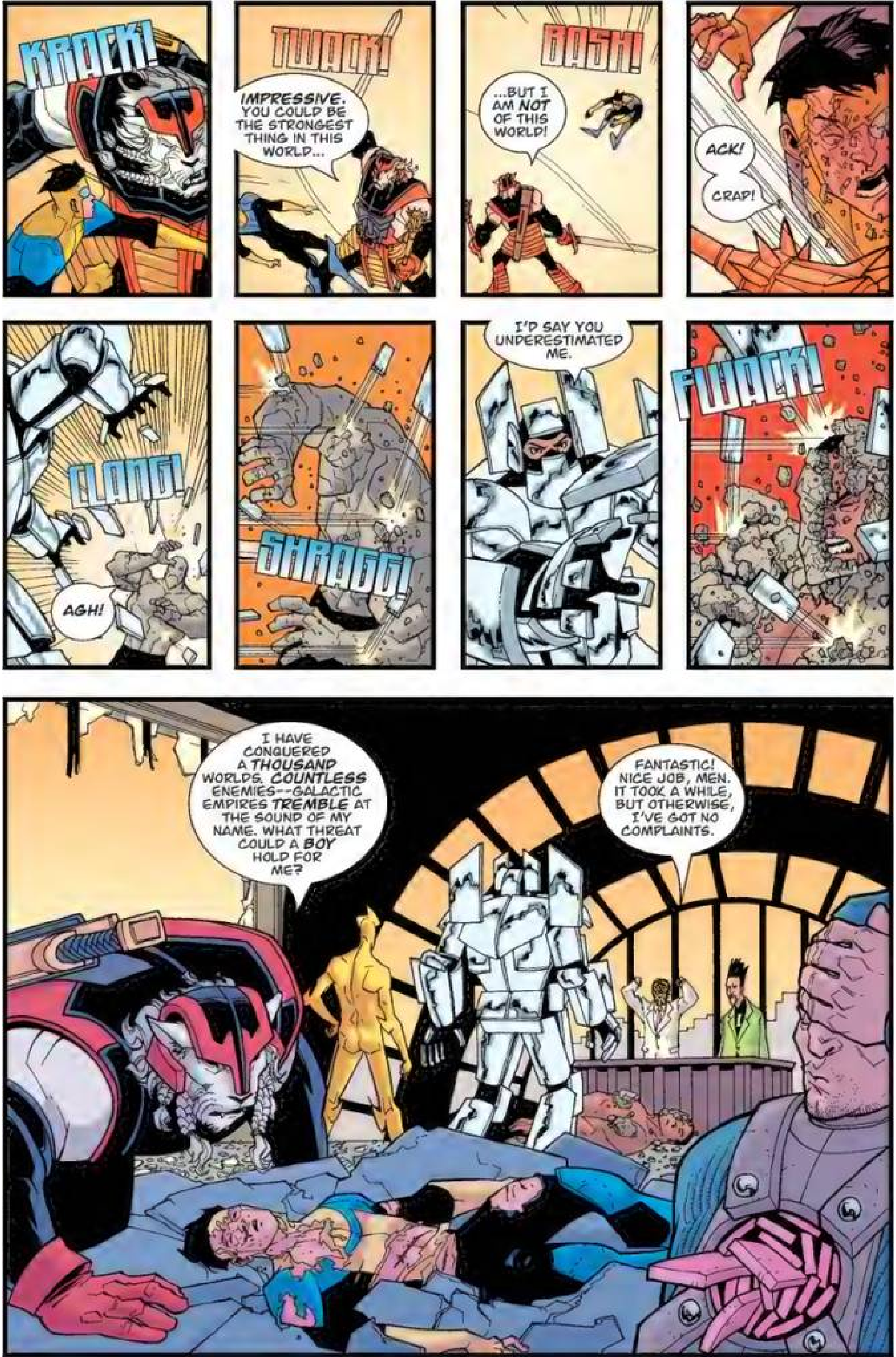

ALLOW ME TO INTRODUCE YOU.
FIRST UP IS **BATTLE BEAST**-- SCOURGE OF TWIN GALAXIES, WHATEVER **THAT** MEANS. HE LIKES TO TAKE TROPHIES SO MAKE SURE YOUR NECK DOESN'T MEET ONE OF HIS WEAPONS AT THE WRONG ANGLE.
NEXT UP IS **MAGNATTACK**. YOU'LL FIND OUT HIS POWERS SOON ENOUGH. I DON'T WANT TO RUIN THE **SURPRISE**.
THEN, STRAIGHT FROM RUSSIA COMES **KURSK**. HE'S GOT SOME KIND OF ELECTRICITY POWERS. I'M NOT CLEAR ON THE SPECIFICS... HE'S **DEADLY**, AND THAT'S REALLY ALL THAT MATTERS.

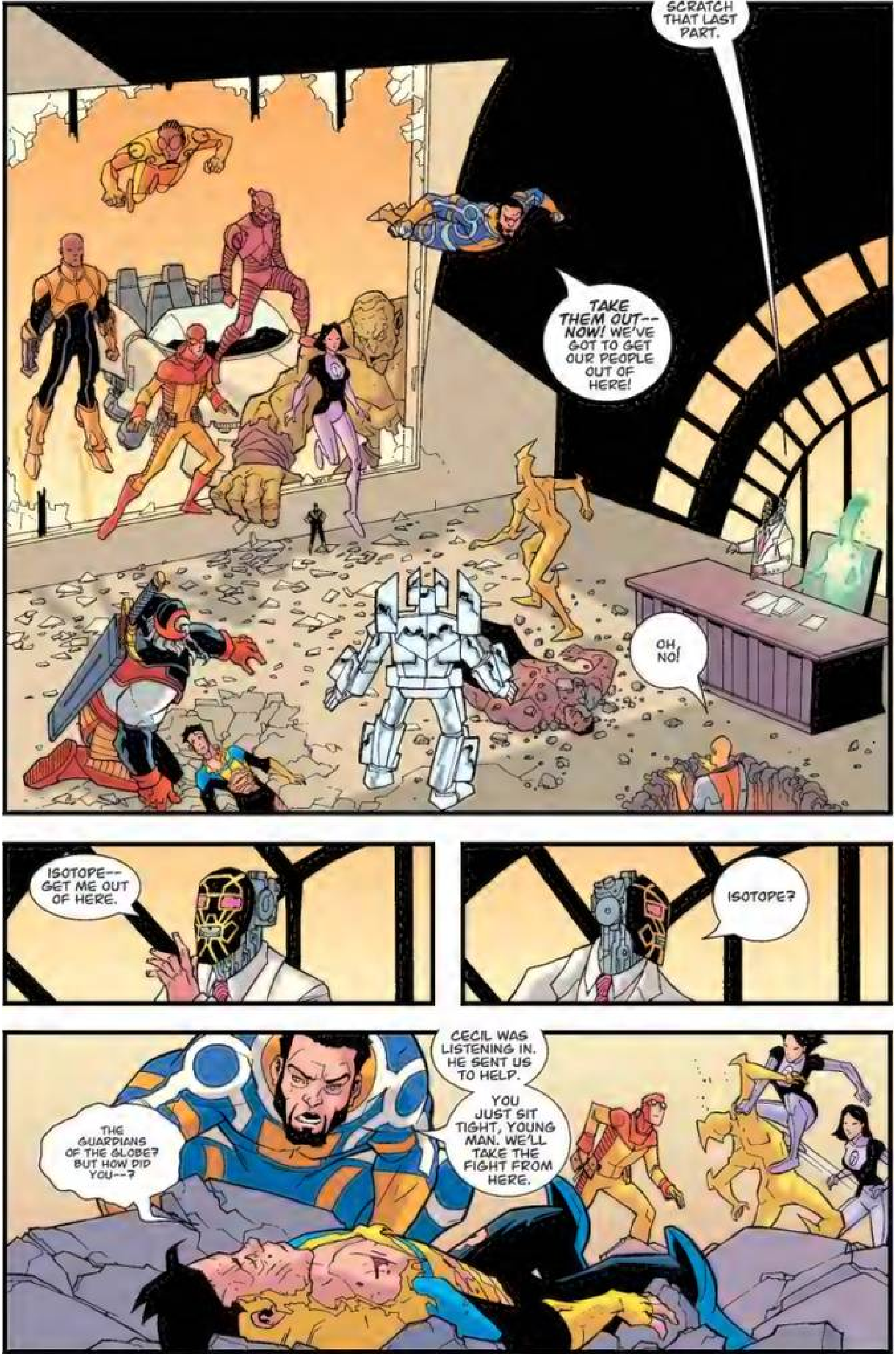

FURNACE-- HE'S A PERSONAL FAVORITE OF MINE. HE JUST LOOKS COOL, AND THAT COUNTS FOR A LOT THESE DAYS.
THIS IS MAGMANIAC. BETWEEN HIM AND FURNACE, YOU GUYS ARE GOING TO HAVE A HOT TIME TODAY.
HE'LL CERTAINLY PUT YOUR NAMESAKE TO THE TEST, INVINCIBLE.
AND LASTLY--THE TETHER TYRANT. NOT SURE EXACTLY WHAT IT IS THAT HE DOES... BUT HE DOES IT WELL.
PLAY NICE, NOW. I'VE ALREADY GOT A WINDOW TO FIX.

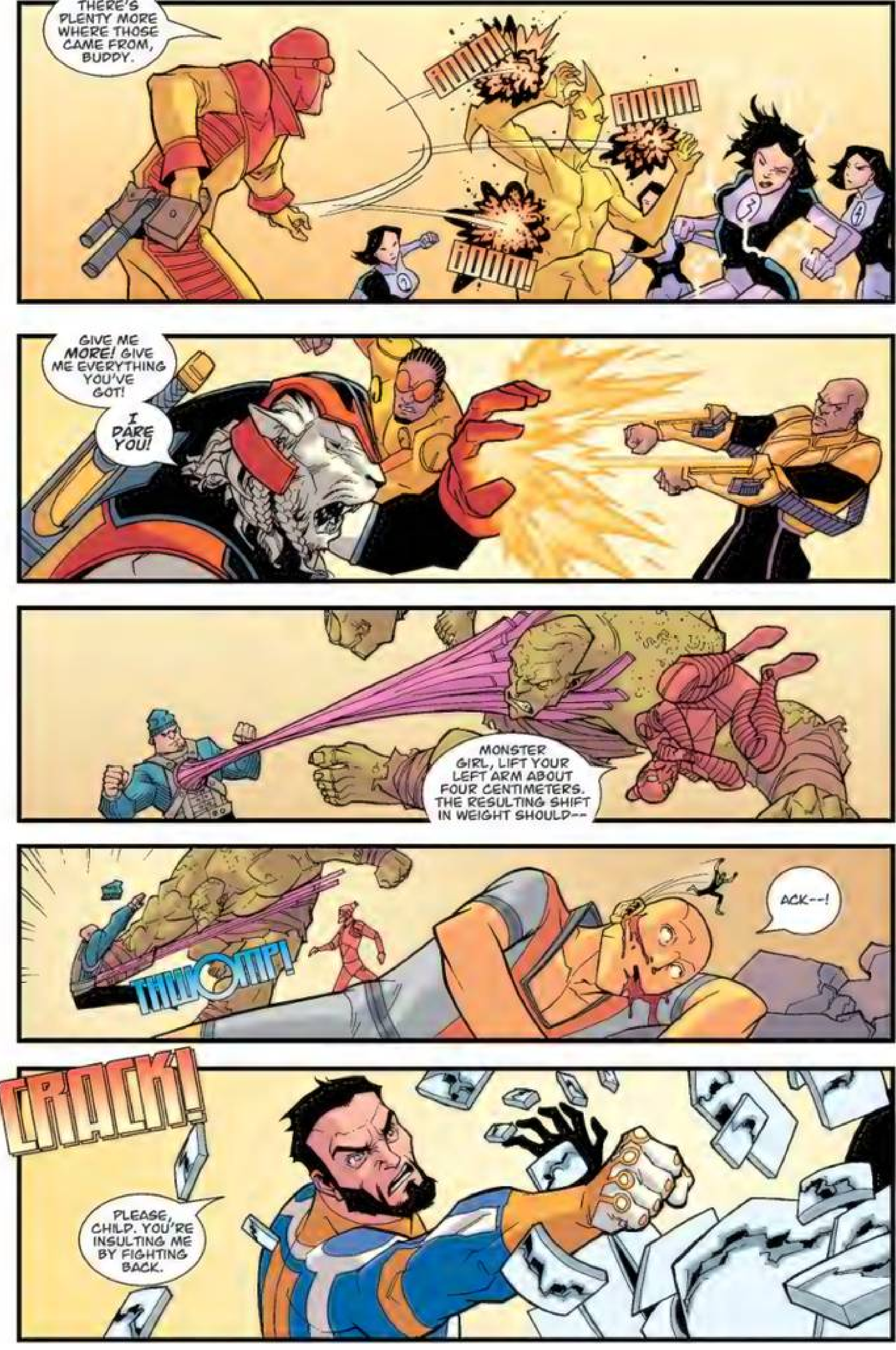

I CALL DIBS ON THE PRETTY BOY.
NO! HE'S MINE!!
SPLOIT!
ROCK ON!
TOO LATE, FURNACE, OLD BUDDY. MAYBE NEXT TIME, HUH?
FWOOSH!
IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN SMARTER TO RECRUIT MORE HEROES.
YOU COULDN'T HAVE SAID THAT BEFORE WE GOT HERE? I'VE GOT PEOPLE'S PHONE NUMBERS!
SSSSSSS!
OOPS!
SSSSSSS!
I PROBABLY COULD HAVE GOTTEN SUPERPATRIOT IF YOU HAD TOLD--
POW!
WHOA! THAT ACTUALLY HURT!

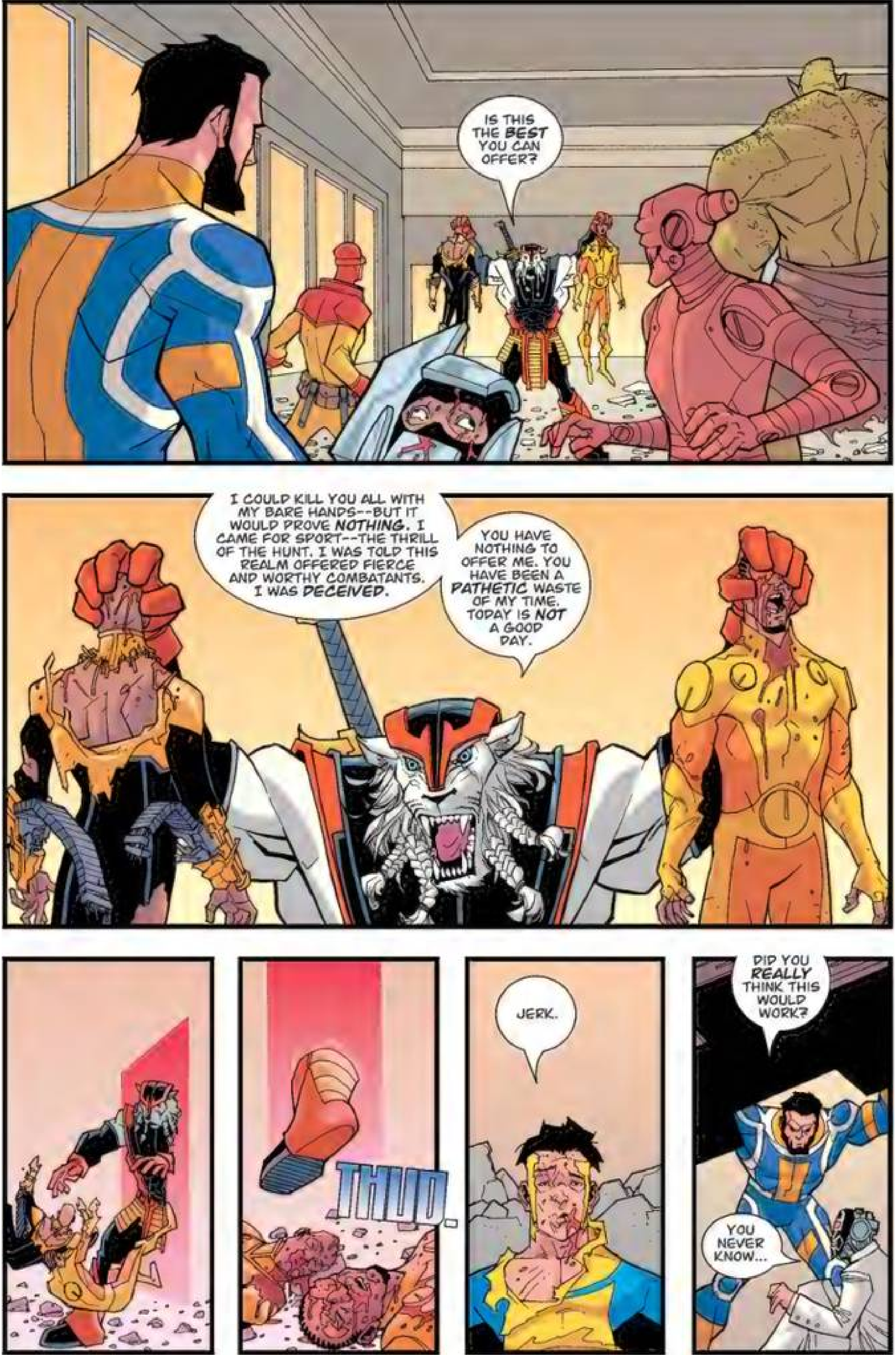

I'M NOT KNOWN FOR HIRING LIGHTWEIGHTS, YOUNG MAN.
GOOD, THEN I WON'T WORRY ABOUT HOLDING BACK AT ALL.
CHOOM!
INVINCIBLE PUNCH!
YOU COULD HAVE BEEN ONE OF US, TITAN-- BUT YOU HAD TO THROW IT ALL AWAY.
INCLUDING YOUR MISERABLE LIFE.
IT AIN'T OVER, BOYS! I'VE GOT SOME FIGHT LEFT IN ME!
THROK!
AND, DUDE--
"INVINCIBLE PUNCH?"
WHAT? AFTER YOUR "ROCK ON" DISPLAY I WAS FEELING A LITTLE INSPIRED.
SUE ME.
DIE!!

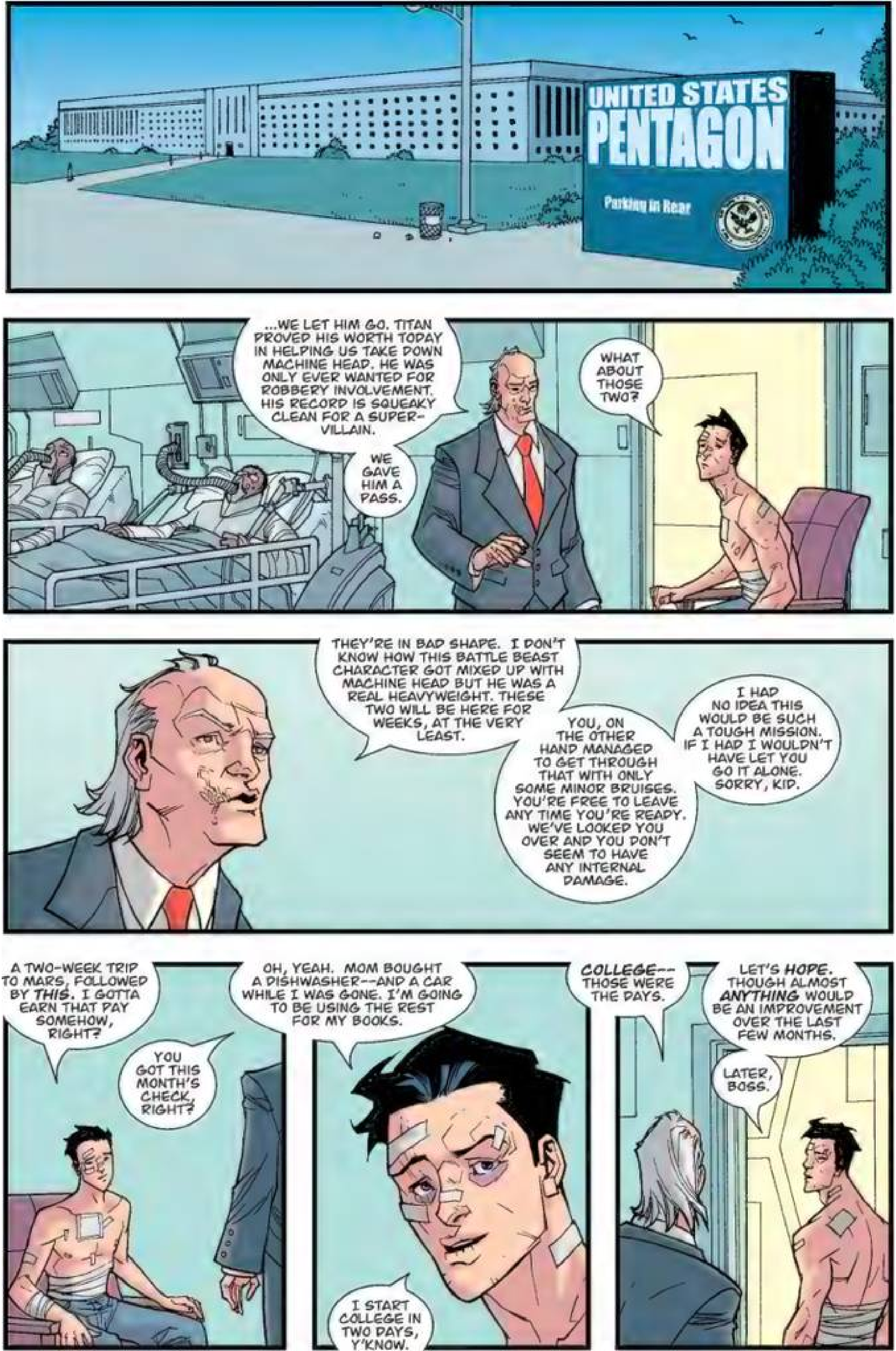

YOU RUINED ME! DO YOU KNOW HOW MUCH IT COST TO REBUILD THIS SUIT?!
I WAS A FREE AGENT! NOW I'M DOING FREELANCE WORK AGAIN!
THWOOSH!!
YOU CAN'T BURN ME, Y'KNOW.
GET OFF ME!
I'LL TEACH YOU TO MESS WITH FURNACE!
THWOOSH!!
STILL DOESN'T HURT...
TWANGG!!
I BET THAT DID, THOUGH!
WHAT GOES AROUND COMES AROUND. THAT TETHER DUDE CAME IN HANDY!
I'M GOING TO ENJOY THIS.
THEN YOU GOT A WEIRD DEFINITION OF FUN.
OH, MAN. I DON'T HAVE ENOUGH ENERGY FOR THIS...
ROAR!!

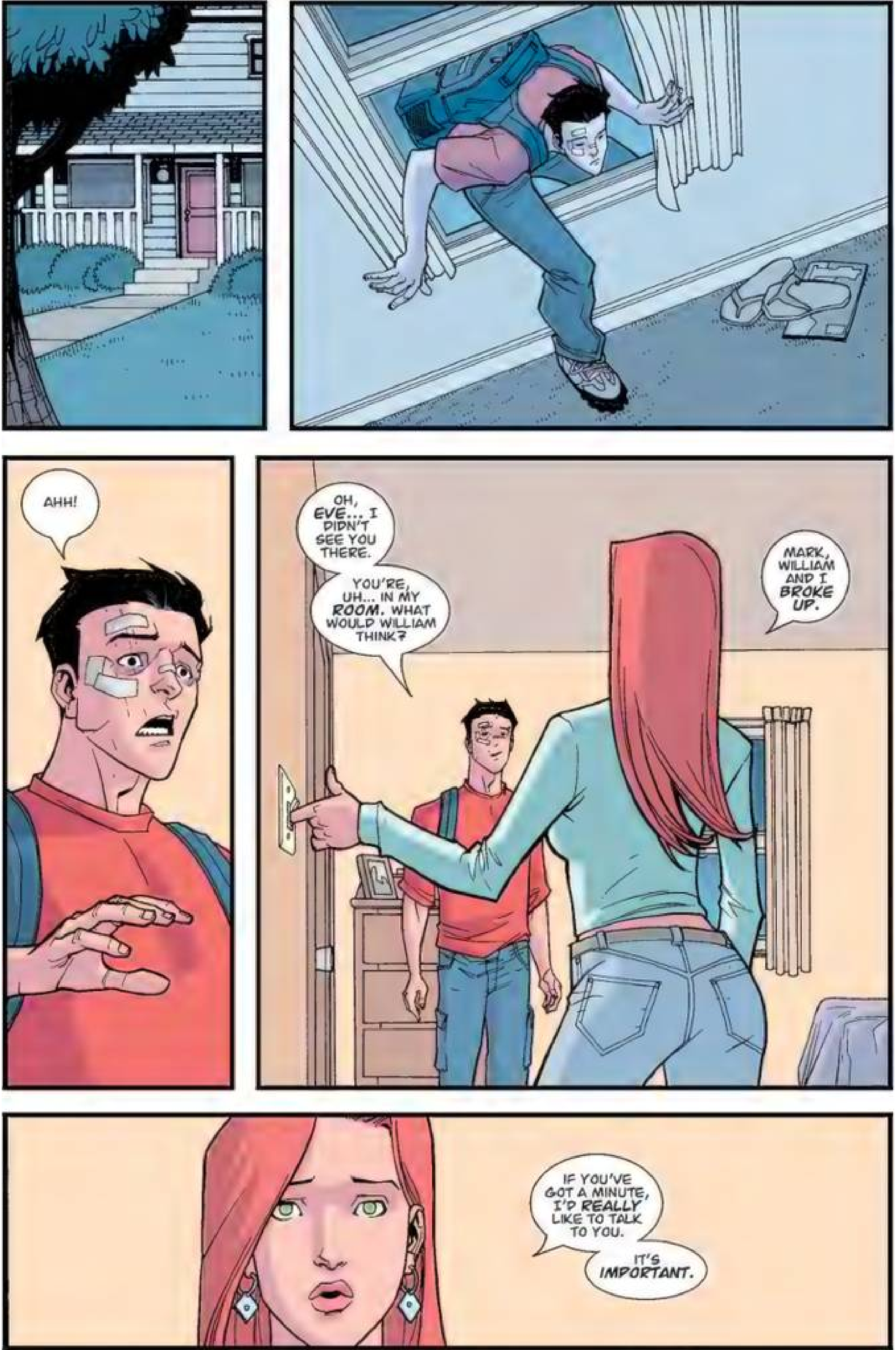

KRACK!
TWACK!
IMPRESSIVE. YOU COULD BE THE STRONGEST THING IN THIS WORLD...
BASH!
...BUT I AM NOT OF THIS WORLD!
ACK!
CRAP!
CLANG!
AGH!
SHRAGG!
I'D SAY YOU UNDERESTIMATED ME.
FWACK!
I HAVE CONQUERED A THOUSAND WORLDS. COUNTLESS ENEMIES--GALACTIC EMPIRES TREMBLE AT THE SOUND OF MY NAME. WHAT THREAT COULD A BOY HOLD FOR ME?
FANTASTIC! NICE JOB, MEN. IT TOOK A WHILE, BUT OTHERWISE, I'VE GOT NO COMPLAINTS.

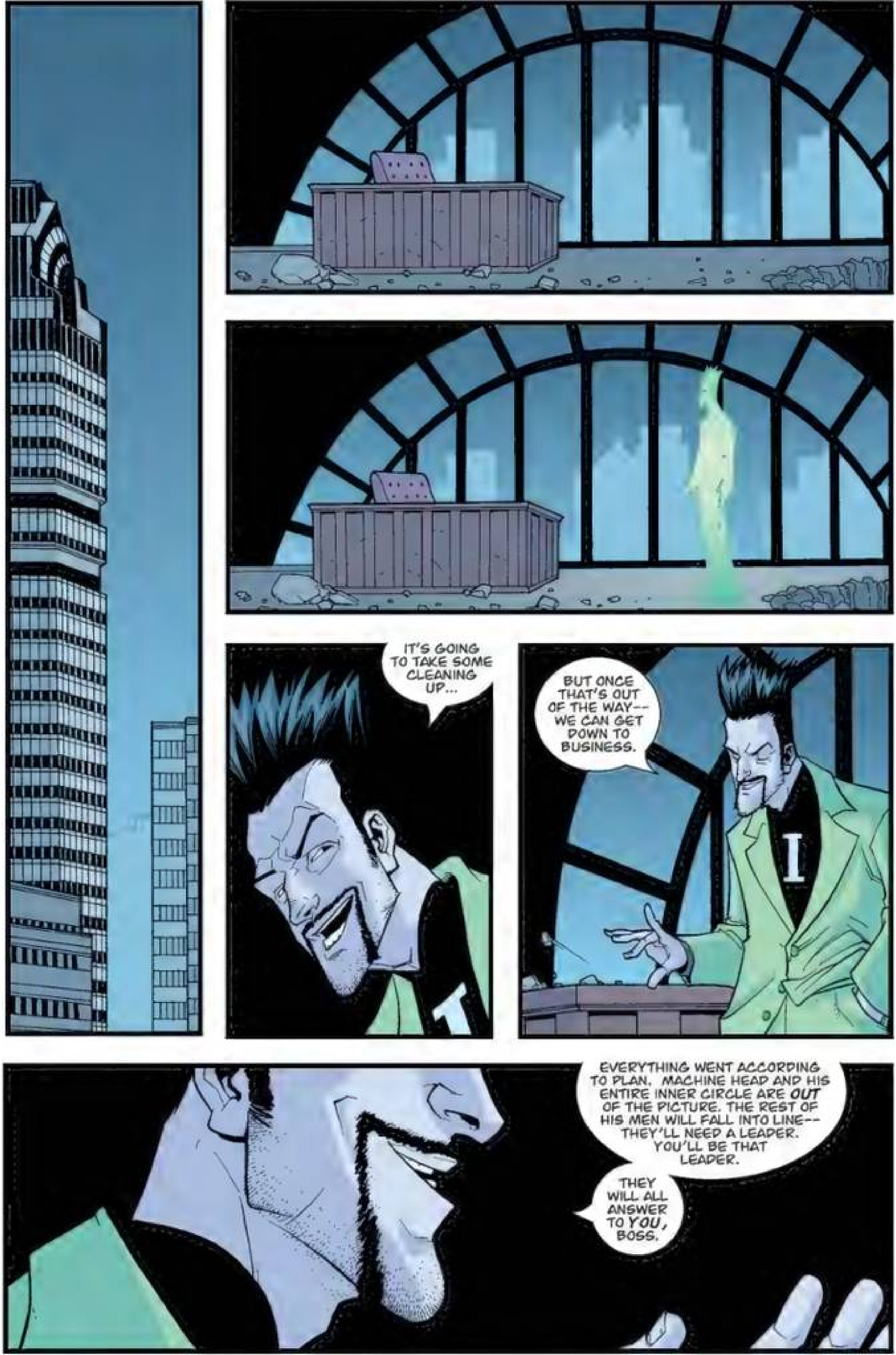

SCRATCH THAT LAST PART.
TAKE THEM OUT-- NOW! WE'VE GOT TO GET OUR PEOPLE OUT OF HERE!
OH, NO!
ISOTOPE-- GET ME OUT OF HERE.
ISOTOPE?
THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE? BUT HOW DID YOU--?
CECIL WAS LISTENING IN. HE SENT US TO HELP.
YOU JUST SIT TIGHT, YOUNG MAN. WE'LL TAKE THE FIGHT FROM HERE.

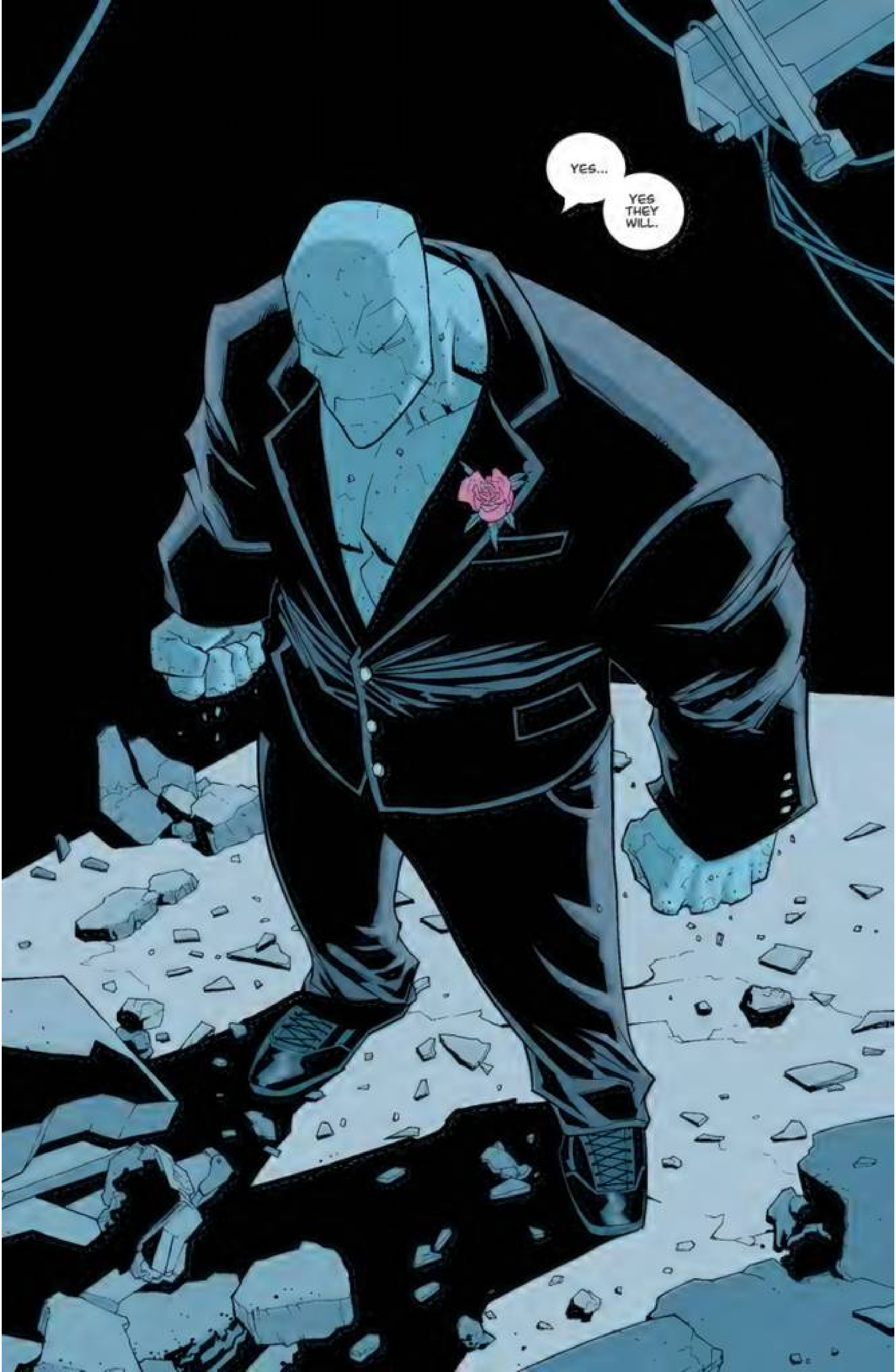

THERE'S PLENTY MORE WHERE THOSE CAME FROM, BUDDY.
BOOM!
BOOM!
BOOM!
GIVE ME MORE! GIVE ME EVERYTHING YOU'VE GOT!
I DARE YOU!
MONSTER GIRL, LIFT YOUR LEFT ARM ABOUT FOUR CENTIMETERS. THE RESULTING SHIFT IN WEIGHT SHOULD--
THUMP!
ACK--!
CRACK!
PLEASE, CHILD. YOU'RE INSULTING ME BY FIGHTING BACK.


IS THIS THE BEST YOU CAN OFFER?
I COULD KILL YOU ALL WITH MY BARE HANDS--BUT IT WOULD PROVE NOTHING. I CAME FOR SPORT--THE THRILL OF THE HUNT. I WAS TOLD THIS REALM OFFERED FIERCE AND WORTHY COMBATANTS. I WAS DECEIVED.
YOU HAVE NOTHING TO OFFER ME. YOU HAVE BEEN A PATHETIC WASTE OF MY TIME. TODAY IS NOT A GOOD DAY.
THUD.
JERK.
DID YOU REALLY THINK THIS WOULD WORK?
YOU NEVER KNOW...

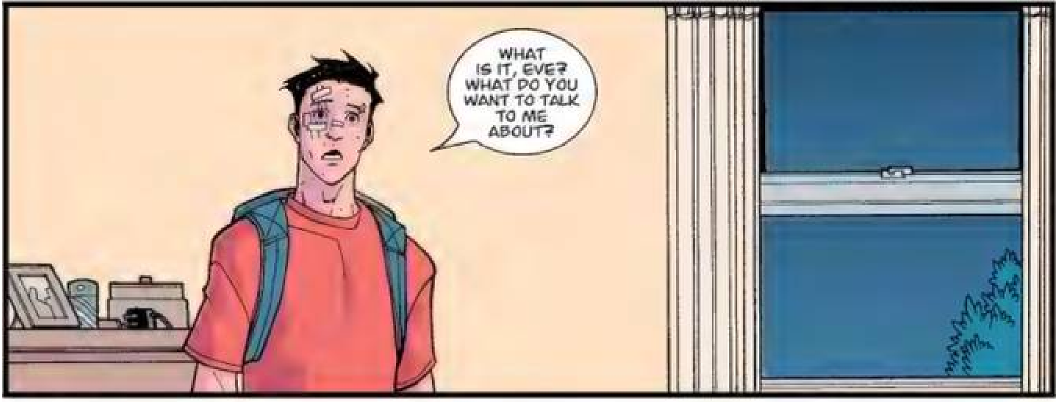

UNITED STATES PENTAGON
Parking in Rear
...WE LET HIM GO. TITAN PROVED HIS WORTH TODAY IN HELPING US TAKE DOWN MACHINE HEAD. HE WAS ONLY EVER WANTED FOR ROBBERY INVOLVEMENT. HIS RECORD IS SQUEAKY CLEAN FOR A SUPER-VILLAIN.
WE GAVE HIM A PASS.
WHAT ABOUT THOSE TWO?
THEY'RE IN BAD SHAPE. I DON'T KNOW HOW THIS BATTLE BEAST CHARACTER GOT MIXED UP WITH MACHINE HEAD BUT HE WAS A REAL HEAVYWEIGHT. THESE TWO WILL BE HERE FOR WEEKS, AT THE VERY LEAST.
YOU, ON THE OTHER HAND MANAGED TO GET THROUGH THAT WITH ONLY SOME MINOR BRUISES. YOU'RE FREE TO LEAVE ANY TIME YOU'RE READY. WE'VE LOOKED YOU OVER AND YOU DON'T SEEM TO HAVE ANY INTERNAL DAMAGE.
I HAD NO IDEA THIS WOULD BE SUCH A TOUGH MISSION. IF I HAD I WOULDN'T HAVE LET YOU GO IT ALONE. SORRY, KID.
A TWO-WEEK TRIP TO MARS, FOLLOWED BY THIS. I GOTTA EARN THAT PAY SOMEHOW, RIGHT?
YOU GOT THIS MONTH'S CHECK, RIGHT?
OH, YEAH. MOM BOUGHT A DISHWASHER--AND A CAR WHILE I WAS GONE. I'M GOING TO BE USING THE REST FOR MY BOOKS.
I START COLLEGE IN TWO DAYS, Y'KNOW.
COLLEGE-- THOSE WERE THE DAYS.
LET'S HOPE. THOUGH ALMOST ANYTHING WOULD BE AN IMPROVEMENT OVER THE LAST FEW MONTHS.
LATER, BOSS.

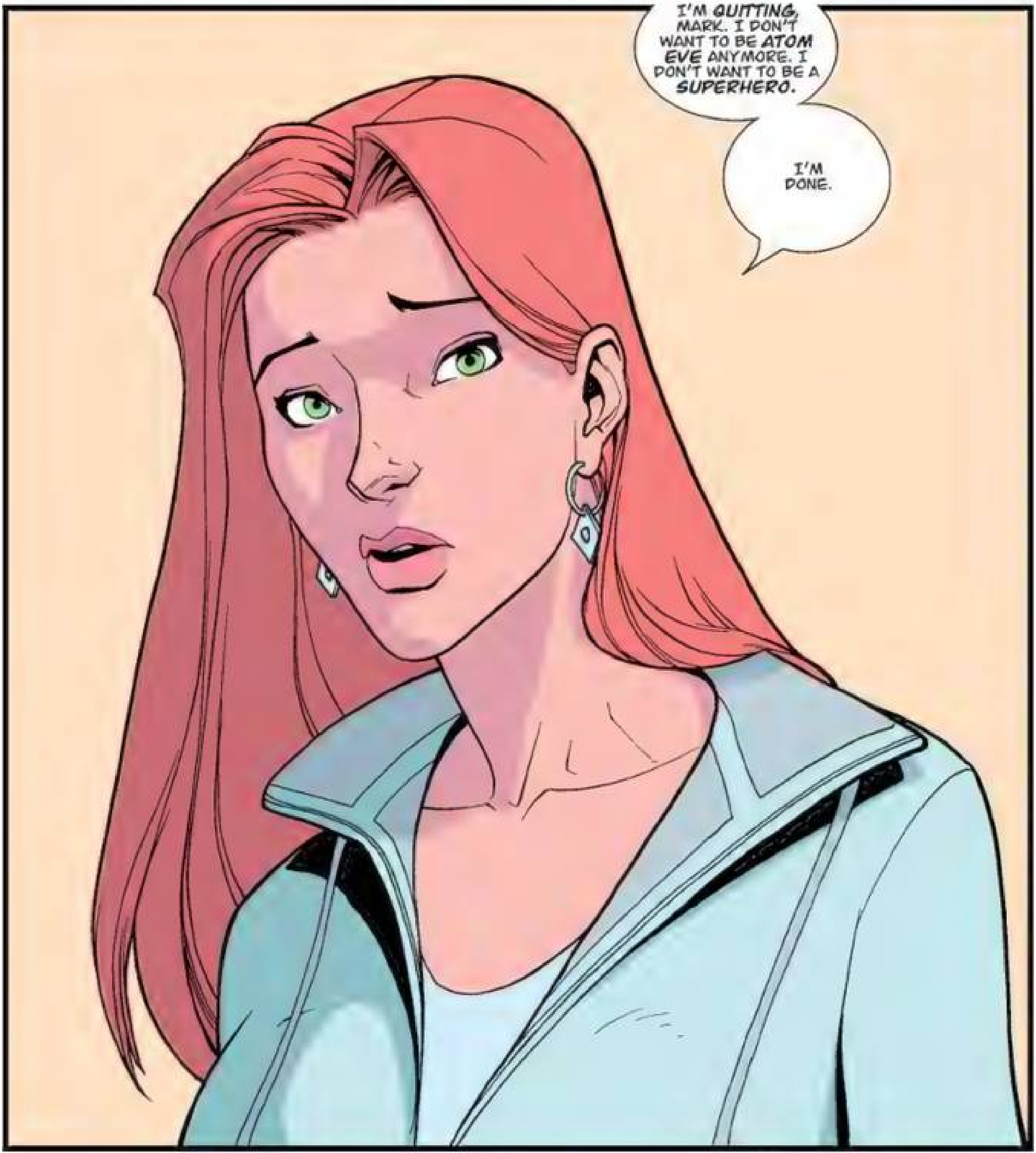

AHH!
OH, EVE... I DIDN'T SEE YOU THERE.
YOU'RE, UH... IN MY ROOM. WHAT WOULD WILLIAM THINK?
MARK, WILLIAM AND I BROKE UP.
IF YOU'VE GOT A MINUTE, I'D REALLY LIKE TO TALK TO YOU.
IT'S IMPORTANT.

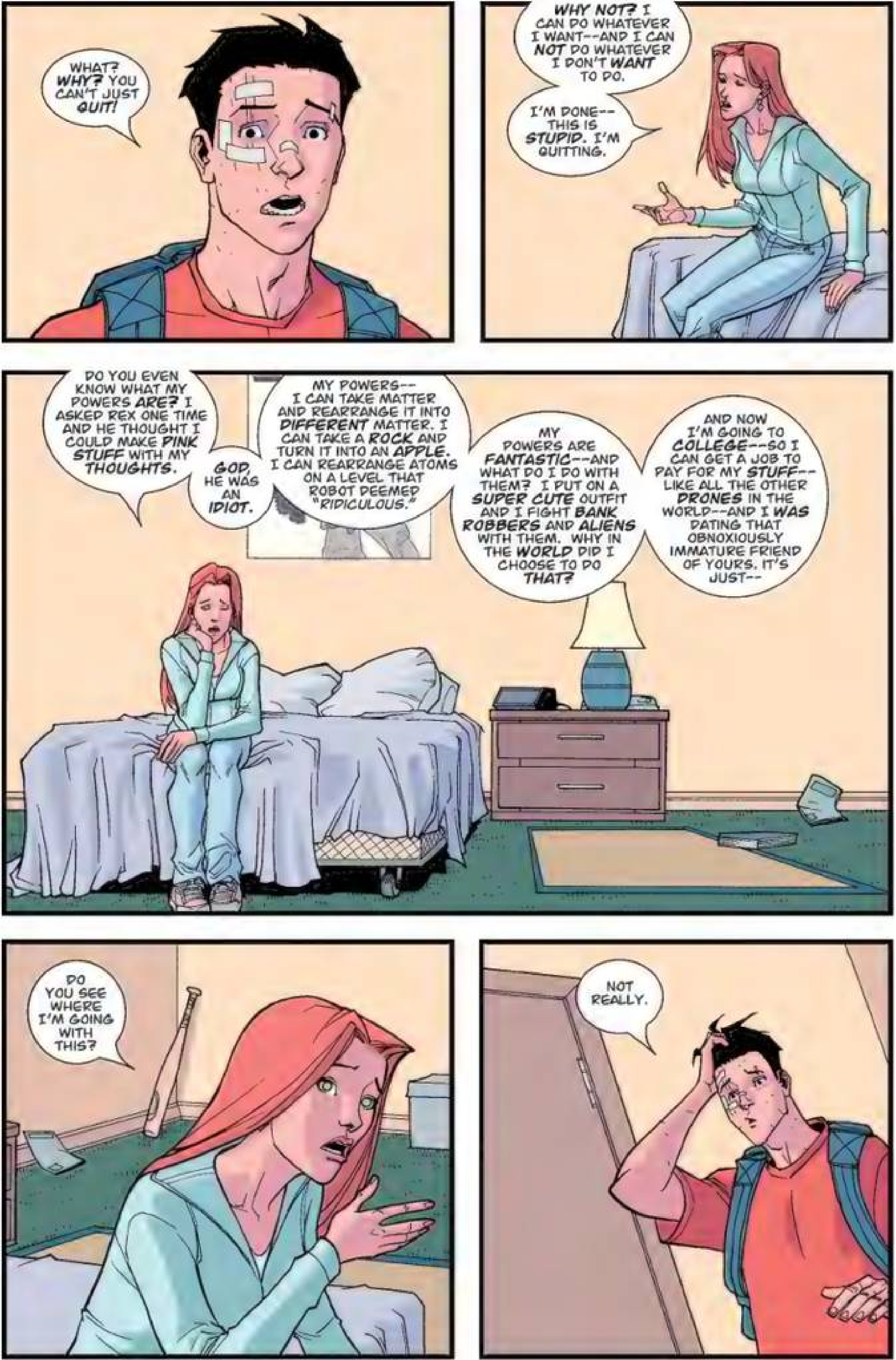

IT'S GOING TO TAKE SOME CLEANING UP...
BUT ONCE THAT'S OUT OF THE WAY-- WE CAN GET DOWN TO BUSINESS.
EVERYTHING WENT ACCORDING TO PLAN. MACHINE HEAD AND HIS ENTIRE INNER CIRCLE ARE *OUT* OF THE PICTURE. THE REST OF HIS MEN WILL FALL INTO LINE-- THEY'LL NEED A LEADER. YOU'LL BE THAT LEADER.
THEY WILL ALL ANSWER TO *YOU*, BOSS.

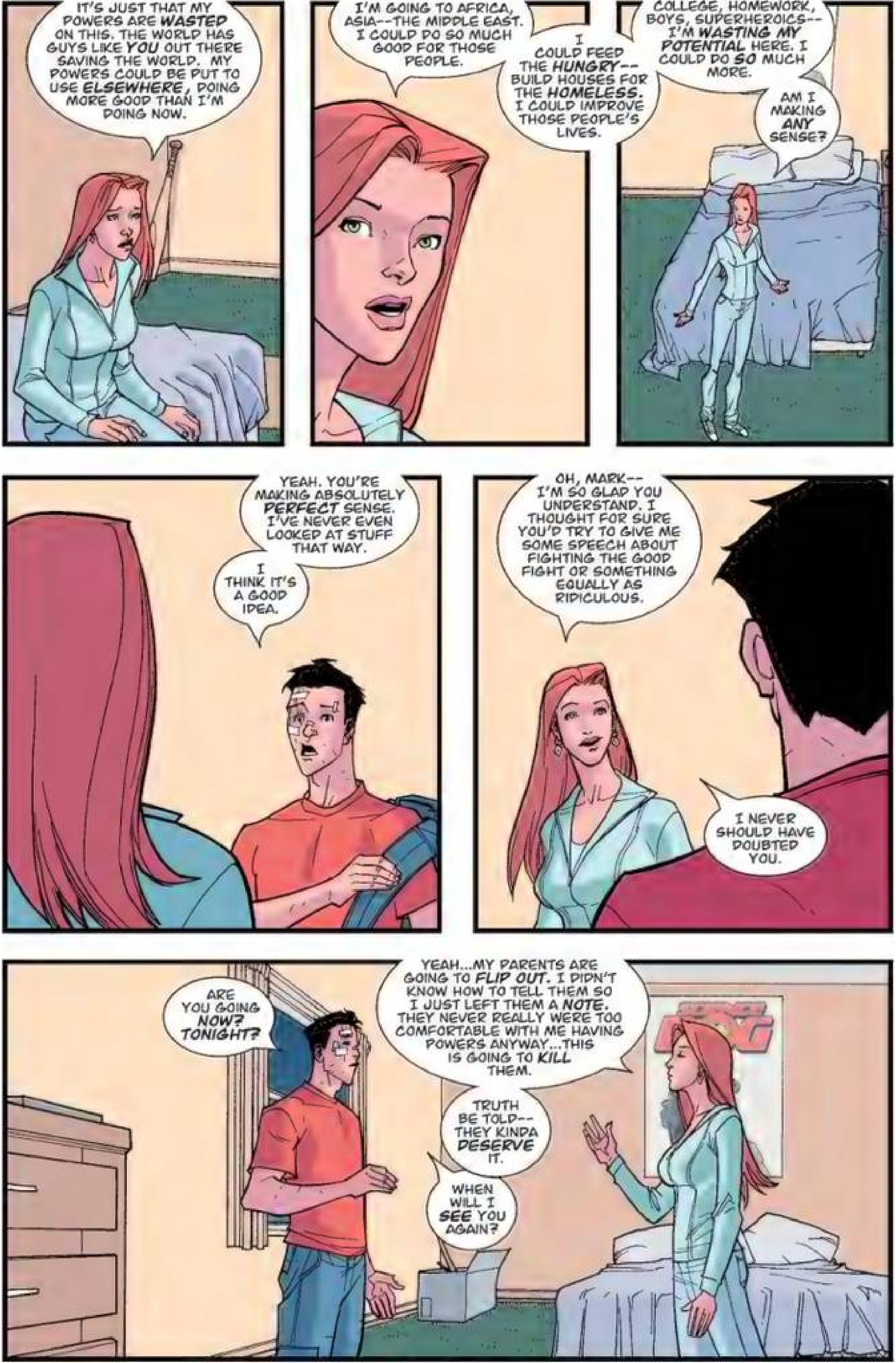

YES...
YES THEY WILL.

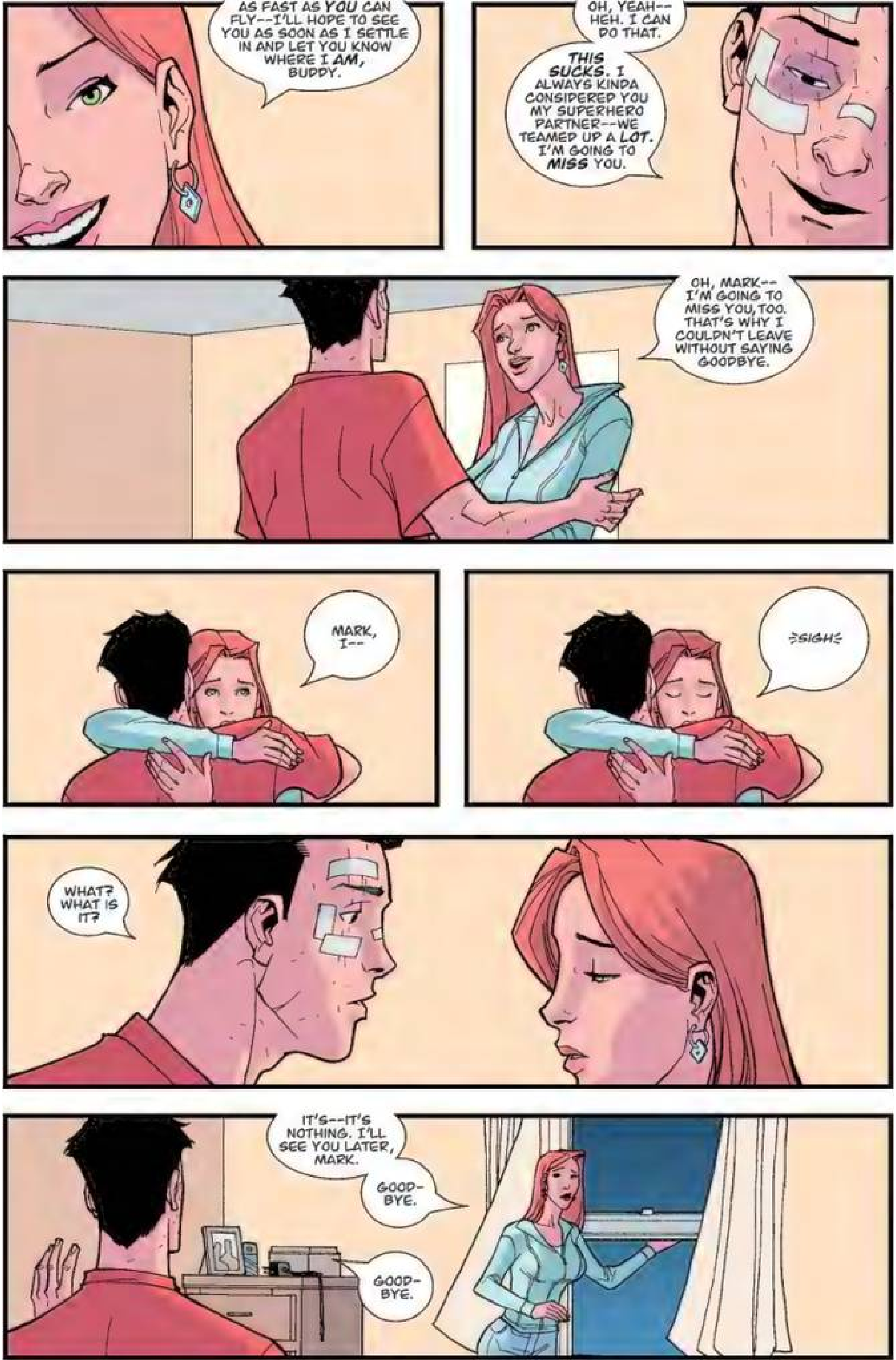
ISSUE TWENTY

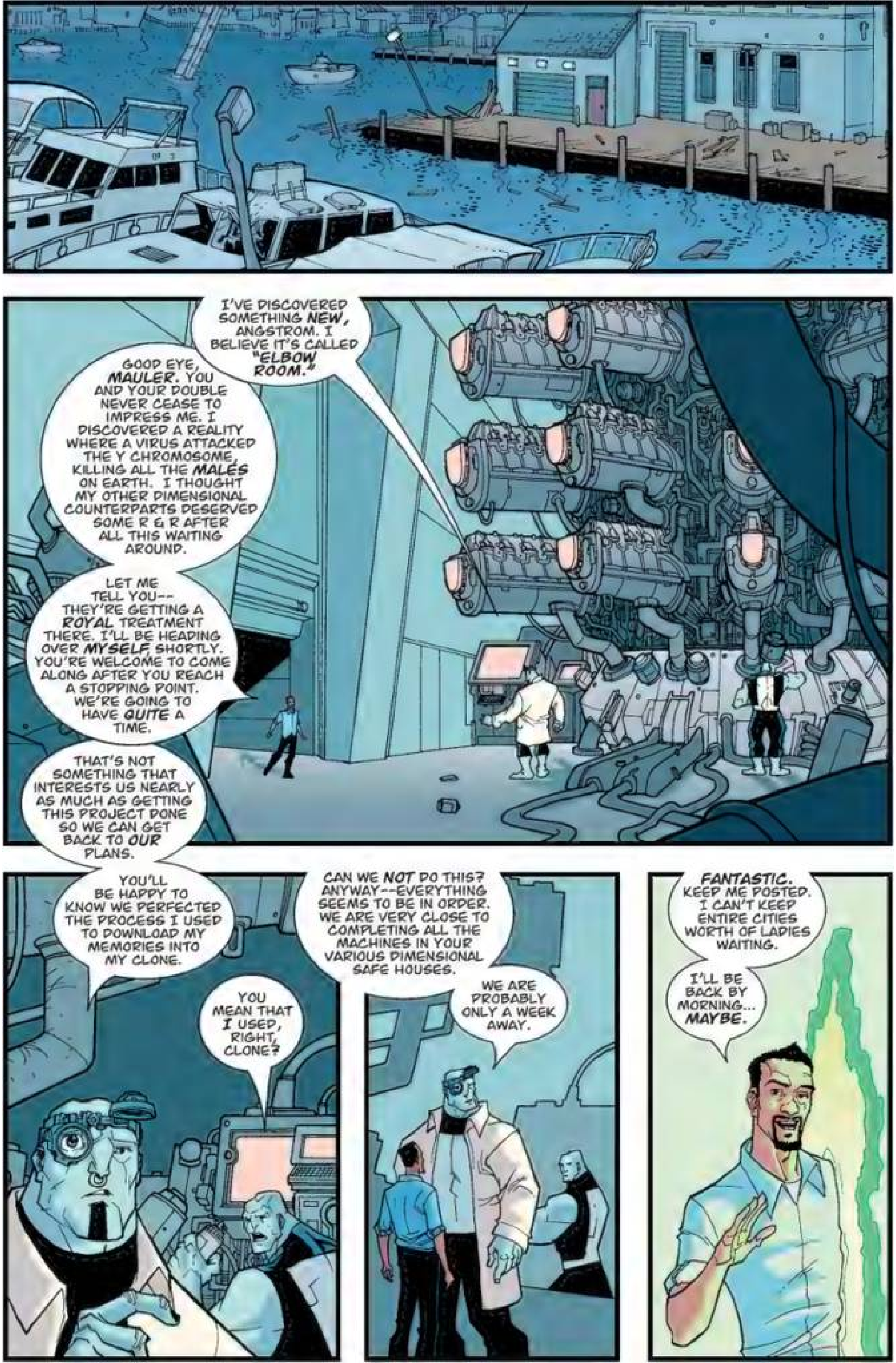

WHAT IS IT, EVE? WHAT DO YOU WANT TO TALK TO ME ABOUT?

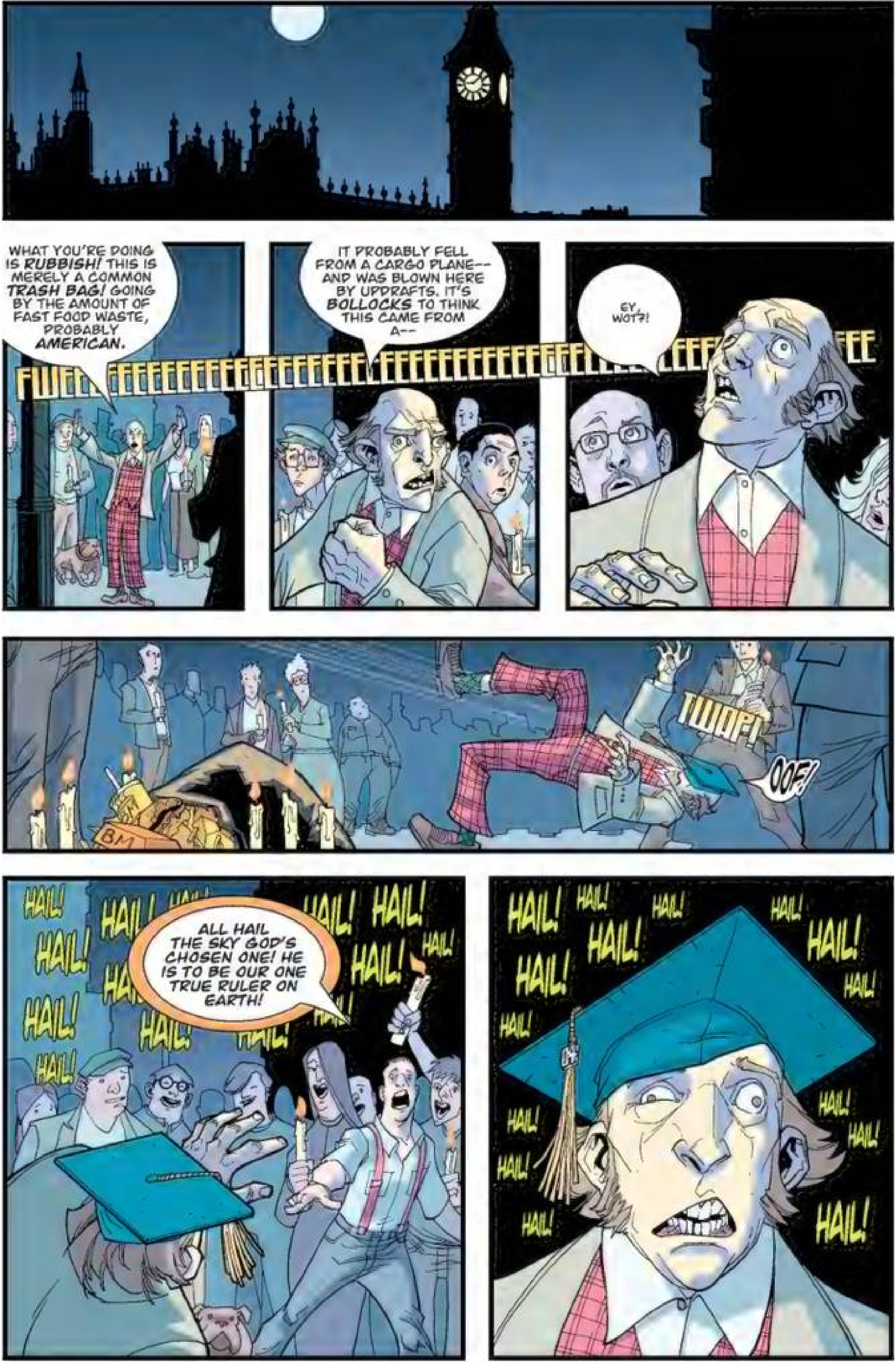

I'M QUITTING, MARK. I DON'T WANT TO BE ATOM EVE ANYMORE. I DON'T WANT TO BE A SUPERHERO.
I'M DONE.

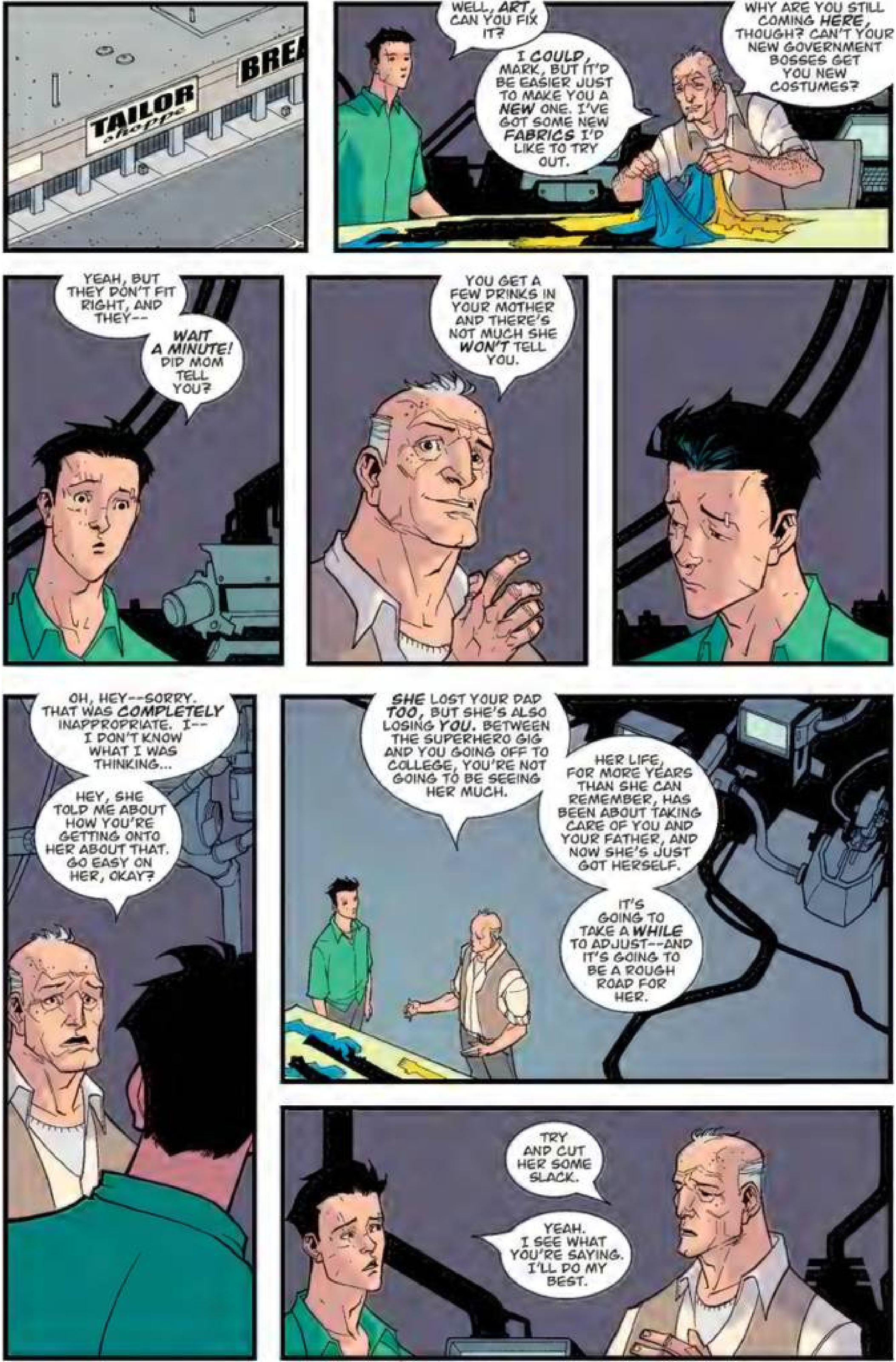

WHAT? WHY? YOU CAN'T JUST QUIT!
WHY NOT? I CAN DO WHATEVER I WANT--AND I CAN NOT DO WHATEVER I DON'T WANT TO DO.
I'M DONE-- THIS IS STUPID. I'M QUITTING.
DO YOU EVEN KNOW WHAT MY POWERS ARE? I ASKED REX ONE TIME AND HE THOUGHT I COULD MAKE PINK STUFF WITH MY THOUGHTS.
GOD, HE WAS AN IDIOT.
MY POWERS-- I CAN TAKE MATTER AND REARRANGE IT INTO DIFFERENT MATTER. I CAN TAKE A ROCK AND TURN IT INTO AN APPLE. I CAN REARRANGE ATOMS ON A LEVEL THAT ROBOT DEEMED "RIDICULOUS."
MY POWERS ARE FANTASTIC--AND WHAT DO I DO WITH THEM? I PUT ON A SUPER CUTE OUTFIT AND I FIGHT BANK ROBBERS AND ALIENS WITH THEM. WHY IN THE WORLD DID I CHOOSE TO DO THAT?
AND NOW I'M GOING TO COLLEGE--SO I CAN GET A JOB TO PAY FOR MY STUFF-- LIKE ALL THE OTHER DRONES IN THE WORLD--AND I WAS DATING THAT OBNOXIOUSLY IMMATURE FRIEND OF YOURS. IT'S JUST--
DO YOU SEE WHERE I'M GOING WITH THIS?
NOT REALLY.

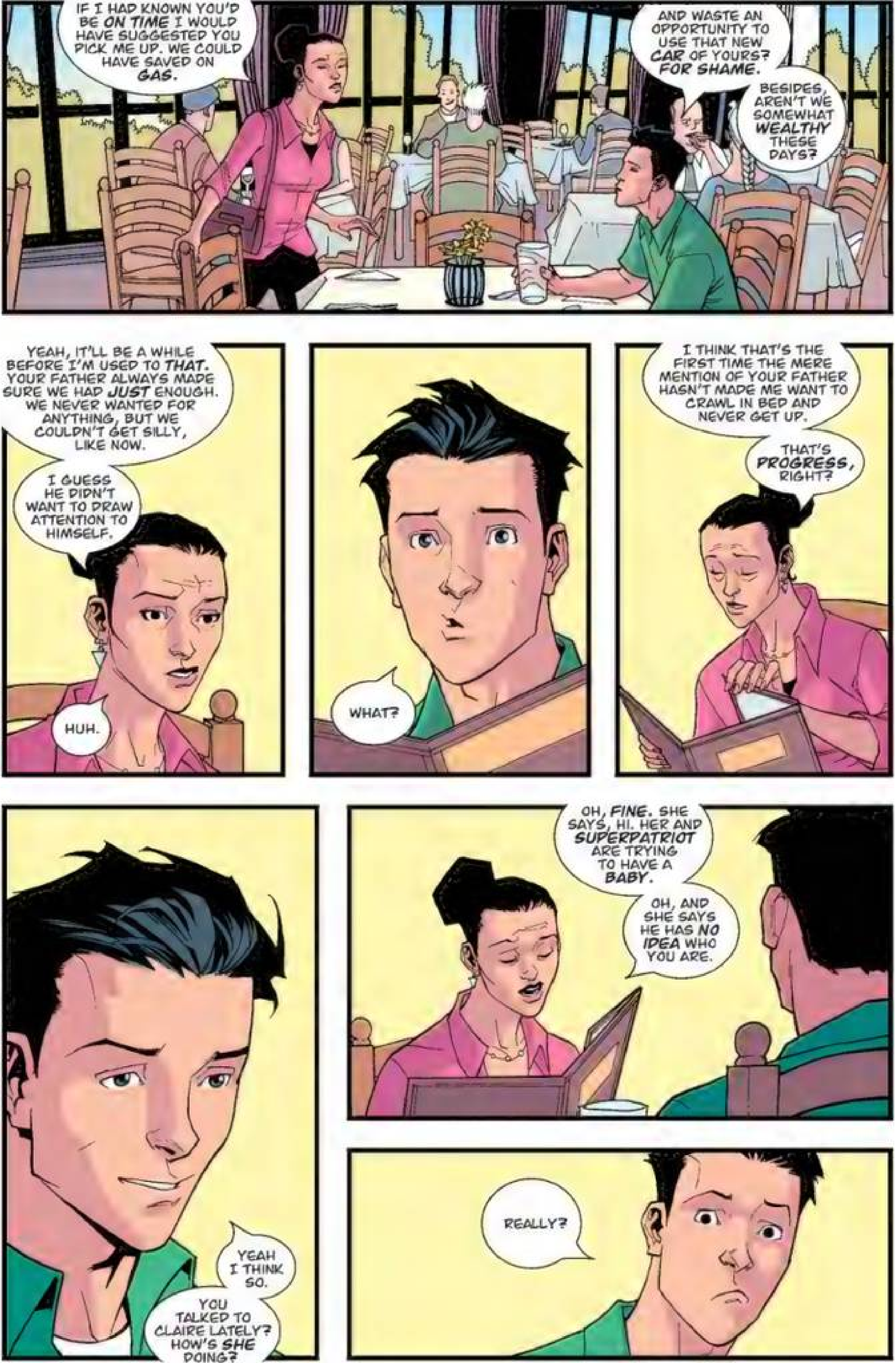

IT'S JUST THAT MY POWERS ARE **WASTED** ON THIS. THE WORLD HAS GUYS LIKE **YOU** OUT THERE SAVING THE WORLD. MY POWERS COULD BE PUT TO USE **ELSEWHERE**, DOING MORE GOOD THAN I'M DOING NOW.
I'M GOING TO AFRICA, ASIA--THE MIDDLE EAST. I COULD DO SO MUCH GOOD FOR THOSE PEOPLE.
I COULD FEED THE **HUNGRY**-- BUILD HOUSES FOR THE **HOMELESS.** I COULD IMPROVE THOSE PEOPLE'S LIVES.
COLLEGE, HOMEWORK, BOYS, SUPERHEROICS-- I'M **WASTING MY POTENTIAL** HERE. I COULD DO **SO** MUCH MORE.
AM I MAKING **ANY** SENSE?
YEAH. YOU'RE MAKING ABSOLUTELY **PERFECT** SENSE. I'VE NEVER EVEN LOOKED AT STUFF THAT WAY.
I THINK IT'S A GOOD IDEA.
OH, MARK-- I'M SO GLAD YOU UNDERSTAND. I THOUGHT FOR SURE YOU'D TRY TO GIVE ME SOME SPEECH ABOUT FIGHTING THE GOOD FIGHT OR SOMETHING EQUALLY AS RIDICULOUS.
I NEVER SHOULD HAVE DOUBTED YOU.
ARE YOU GOING **NOW? TONIGHT?**
YEAH...MY PARENTS ARE GOING TO **FLIP OUT.** I DIDN'T KNOW HOW TO TELL THEM SO I JUST LEFT THEM A **NOTE.** THEY NEVER REALLY WERE TOO COMFORTABLE WITH ME HAVING POWERS ANYWAY....THIS IS GOING TO **KILL** THEM.
TRUTH BE TOLD-- THEY KINDA **DESERVE** IT.
WHEN WILL I **SEE** YOU AGAIN?

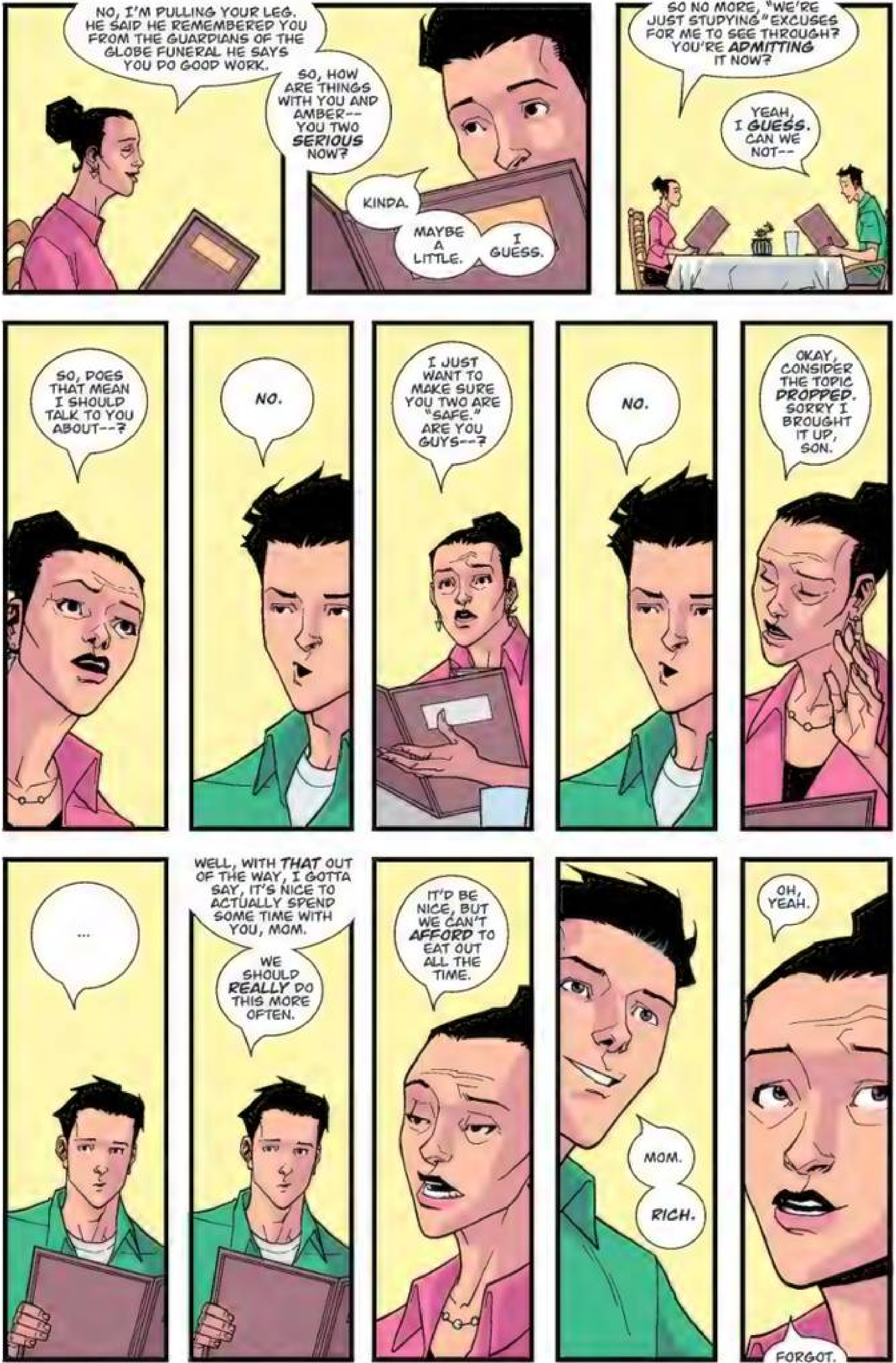

AS FAST AS YOU CAN FLY--I'LL HOPE TO SEE YOU AS SOON AS I SETTLE IN AND LET YOU KNOW WHERE I AM, BUDDY.
OH, YEAH--HEH. I CAN DO THAT.
THIS SUCKS. I ALWAYS KINDA CONSIDERED YOU MY SUPERHERO PARTNER--WE TEAMED UP A LOT. I'M GOING TO MISS YOU.
OH, MARK--I'M GOING TO MISS YOU, TOO. THAT'S WHY I COULDN'T LEAVE WITHOUT SAYING GOODBYE.
MARK, I--
⇒SIGH⇐
WHAT? WHAT IS IT?
IT'S--IT'S NOTHING. I'LL SEE YOU LATER, MARK.
GOOD-BYE.
GOOD-BYE.

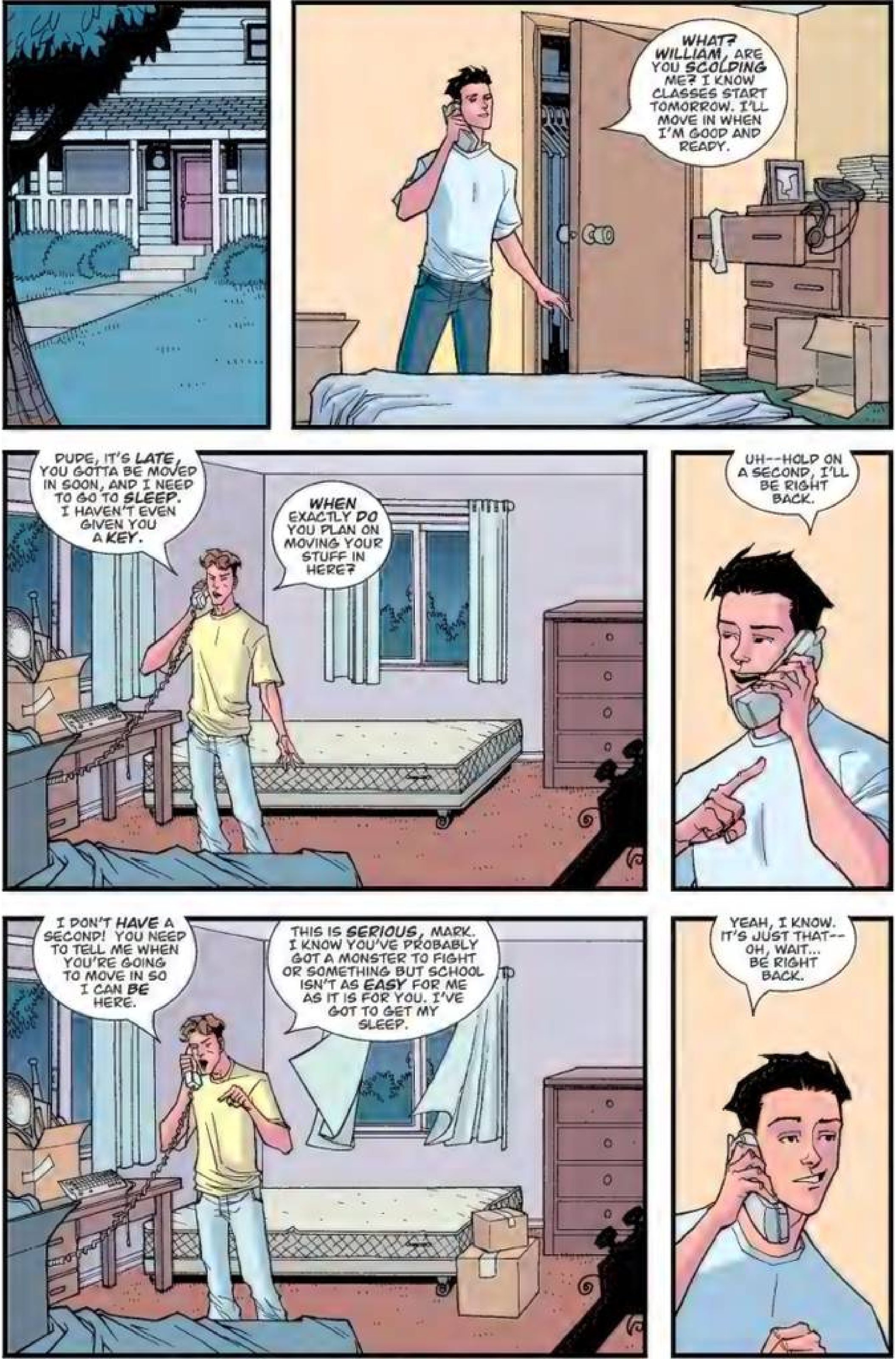

I'VE DISCOVERED SOMETHING NEW, ANGSTROM. I BELIEVE IT'S CALLED "ELBOW ROOM."
GOOD EYE, MAULER. YOU AND YOUR DOUBLE NEVER CEASE TO IMPRESS ME. I DISCOVERED A REALITY WHERE A VIRUS ATTACKED THE Y CHROMOSOME, KILLING ALL THE MALES ON EARTH. I THOUGHT MY OTHER DIMENSIONAL COUNTERPARTS DESERVED SOME R & R AFTER ALL THIS WAITING AROUND.
LET ME TELL YOU-- THEY'RE GETTING A ROYAL TREATMENT THERE. I'LL BE HEADING OVER MYSELF SHORTLY. YOU'RE WELCOME TO COME ALONG AFTER YOU REACH A STOPPING POINT. WE'RE GOING TO HAVE QUITE A TIME.
THAT'S NOT SOMETHING THAT INTERESTS US NEARLY AS MUCH AS GETTING THIS PROJECT DONE SO WE CAN GET BACK TO OUR PLANS.
YOU'LL BE HAPPY TO KNOW WE PERFECTED THE PROCESS I USED TO DOWNLOAD MY MEMORIES INTO MY CLONE.
YOU MEAN THAT I USED, RIGHT, CLONE?
CAN WE NOT DO THIS? ANYWAY--EVERYTHING SEEMS TO BE IN ORDER. WE ARE VERY CLOSE TO COMPLETING ALL THE MACHINES IN YOUR VARIOUS DIMENSIONAL SAFE HOUSES.
WE ARE PROBABLY ONLY A WEEK AWAY.
FANTASTIC. KEEP ME POSTED. I CAN'T KEEP ENTIRE CITIES WORTH OF LADIES WAITING.
I'LL BE BACK BY MORNING... MAYBE.

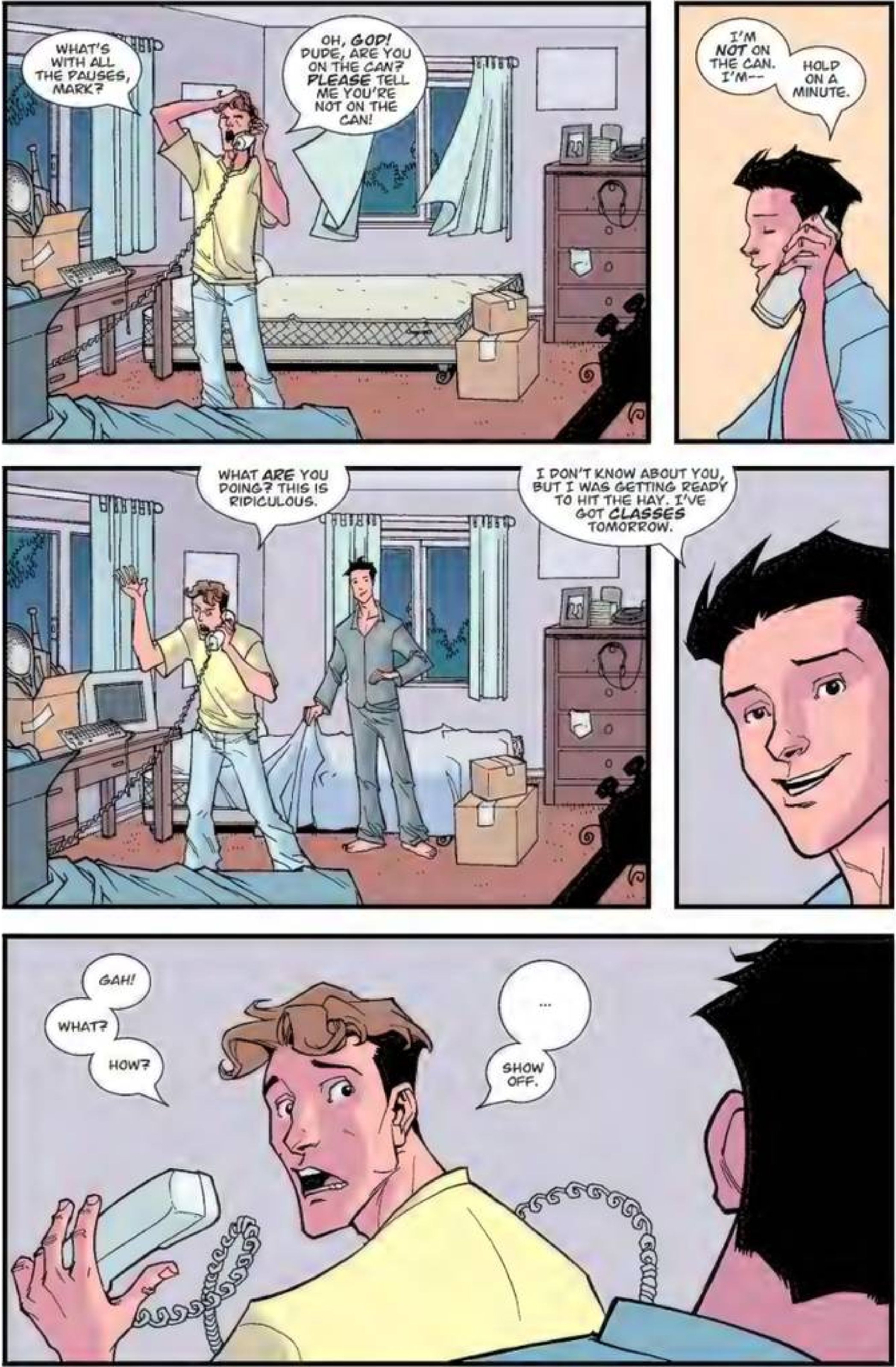

WHAT YOU'RE DOING IS RUBBISH! THIS IS MERELY A COMMON TRASH BAG! GOING BY THE AMOUNT OF FAST FOOD WASTE, PROBABLY AMERICAN.
IT PROBABLY FELL FROM A CARGO PLANE-- AND WAS BLOWN HERE BY UPDRAFTS. IT'S BOLLOCKS TO THINK THIS CAME FROM A--
EY, WOT?!
FWEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE
BM
TWOP!
OOF!
HAIL! HAIL! HAIL! HAIL! HAIL! HAIL! HAIL! HAIL! HAIL! HAIL! HAIL!
ALL HAIL THE SKY GOD'S CHOSEN ONE! HE IS TO BE OUR ONE TRUE RULER ON EARTH!
HAIL! HAIL! HAIL! HAIL! HAIL! HAIL! HAIL! HAIL! HAIL! HAIL! HAIL! HAIL! HAIL! HAIL!

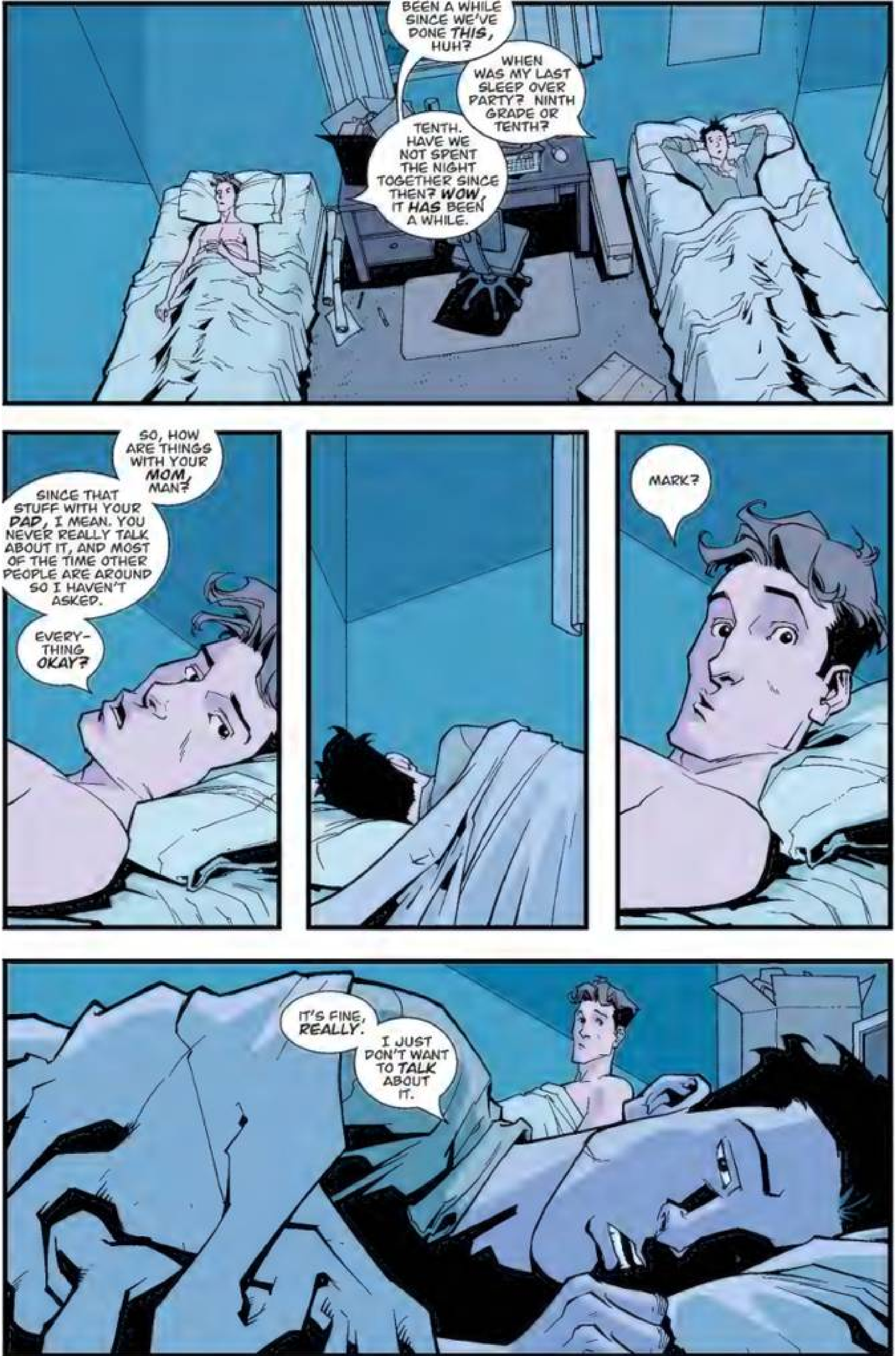

TAILOR shoppe
BREA
WELL, ART, CAN YOU FIX IT?
WHY ARE YOU STILL COMING HERE, THOUGH? CAN'T YOUR NEW GOVERNMENT BOSSES GET YOU NEW COSTUMES?
I COULD, MARK, BUT IT'D BE EASIER JUST TO MAKE YOU A NEW ONE. I'VE GOT SOME NEW FABRICS I'D LIKE TO TRY OUT.
YEAH, BUT THEY DON'T FIT RIGHT, AND THEY--
WAIT A MINUTE! DID MOM TELL YOU?
YOU GET A FEW DRINKS IN YOUR MOTHER AND THERE'S NOT MUCH SHE WON'T TELL YOU.
OH, HEY--SORRY. THAT WAS COMPLETELY INAPPROPRIATE. I-- I DON'T KNOW WHAT I WAS THINKING...
HEY, SHE TOLD ME ABOUT HOW YOU'RE GETTING ONTO HER ABOUT THAT. GO EASY ON HER, OKAY?
SHE LOST YOUR DAD TOO, BUT SHE'S ALSO LOSING YOU. BETWEEN THE SUPERHERO GIG AND YOU GOING OFF TO COLLEGE, YOU'RE NOT GOING TO BE SEEING HER MUCH.
HER LIFE, FOR MORE YEARS THAN SHE CAN REMEMBER, HAS BEEN ABOUT TAKING CARE OF YOU AND YOUR FATHER, AND NOW SHE'S JUST GOT HERSELF.
IT'S GOING TO TAKE A WHILE TO ADJUST--AND IT'S GOING TO BE A ROUGH ROAD FOR HER.
TRY AND CUT HER SOME SLACK.
YEAH. I SEE WHAT YOU'RE SAYING. I'LL DO MY BEST.

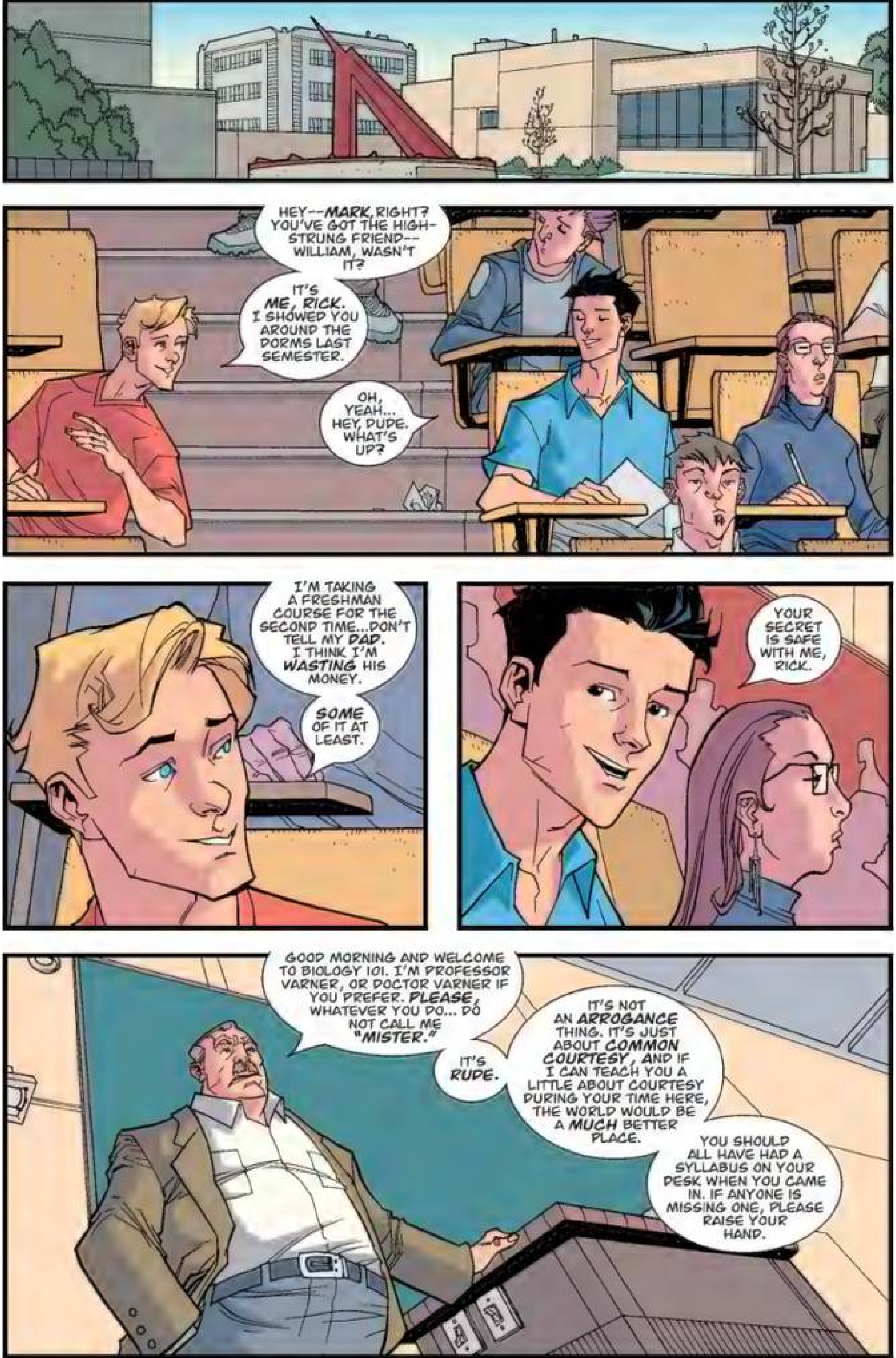

IF I HAD KNOWN YOU'D BE ON TIME I WOULD HAVE SUGGESTED YOU PICK ME UP. WE COULD HAVE SAVED ON GAS.
AND WASTE AN OPPORTUNITY TO USE THAT NEW CAR OF YOURS? FOR SHAME.
BESIDES, AREN'T WE SOMEWHAT WEALTHY THESE DAYS?
YEAH, IT'LL BE A WHILE BEFORE I'M USED TO THAT. YOUR FATHER ALWAYS MADE SURE WE HAD JUST ENOUGH. WE NEVER WANTED FOR ANYTHING, BUT WE COULDN'T GET SILLY, LIKE NOW.
I GUESS HE DIDN'T WANT TO DRAW ATTENTION TO HIMSELF.
HUH.
WHAT?
I THINK THAT'S THE FIRST TIME THE MERE MENTION OF YOUR FATHER HASN'T MADE ME WANT TO CRAWL IN BED AND NEVER GET UP.
THAT'S PROGRESS, RIGHT?
YEAH I THINK SO.
YOU TALKED TO CLAIRE LATELY? HOW'S SHE DOING?
OH, FINE. SHE SAYS, HI. HER AND SUPERPATRIOT ARE TRYING TO HAVE A BABY.
OH, AND SHE SAYS HE HAS NO IDEA WHO YOU ARE.
REALLY?

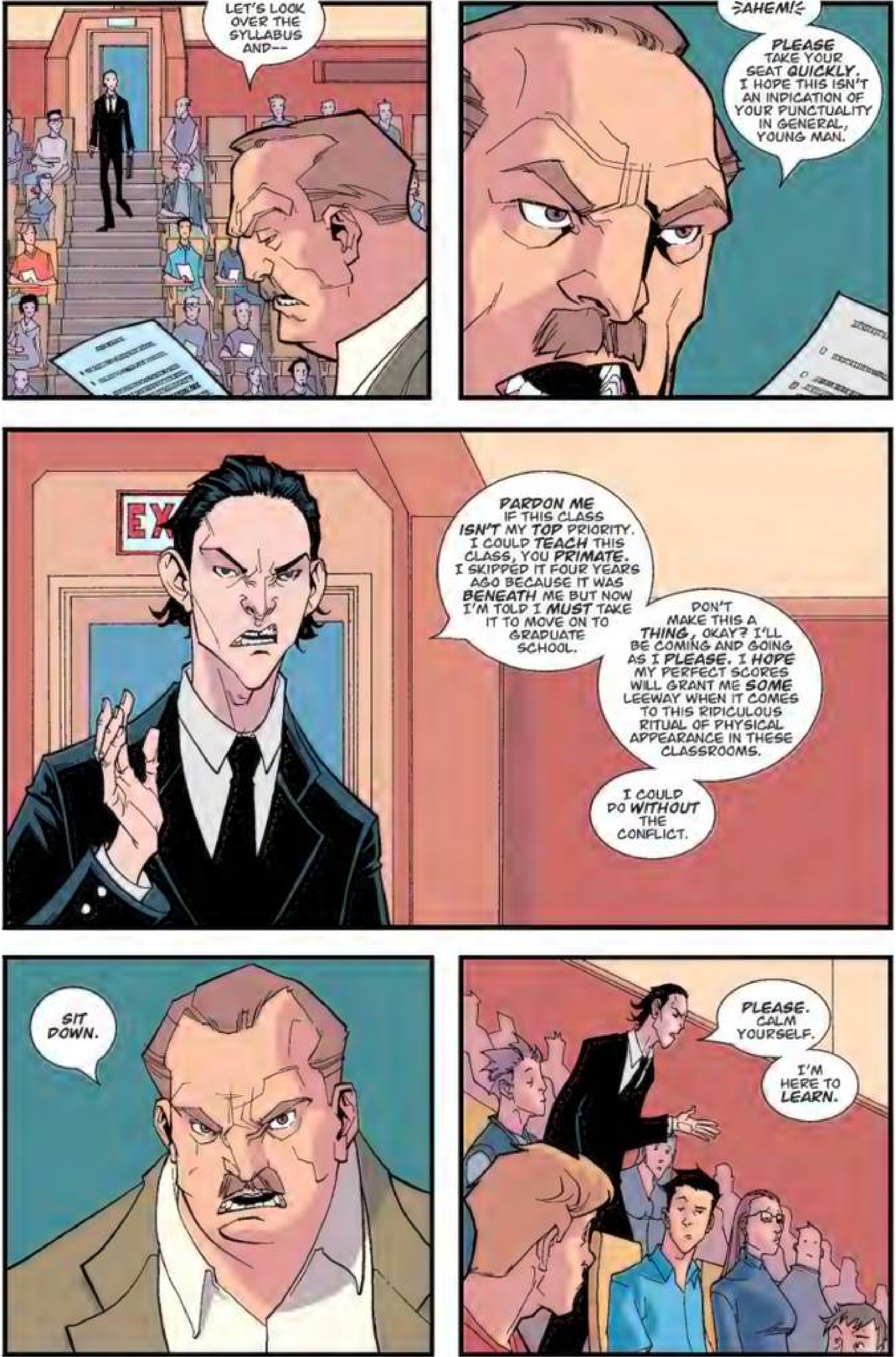

NO, I'M PULLING YOUR LEG. HE SAID HE REMEMBERED YOU FROM THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE FUNERAL HE SAYS YOU DO GOOD WORK.
SO, HOW ARE THINGS WITH YOU AND AMBER-- YOU TWO SERIOUS NOW?
KINDA.
MAYBE A LITTLE.
I GUESS.
SO NO MORE, "WE'RE JUST STUDYING" EXCUSES FOR ME TO SEE THROUGH? YOU'RE ADMITTING IT NOW?
YEAH, I GUESS. CAN WE NOT--
SO, DOES THAT MEAN I SHOULD TALK TO YOU ABOUT--?
NO.
I JUST WANT TO MAKE SURE YOU TWO ARE "SAFE." ARE YOU GUYS--?
NO.
OKAY, CONSIDER THE TOPIC DROPPED. SORRY I BROUGHT IT UP, SON.
...
WELL, WITH THAT OUT OF THE WAY, I GOTTA SAY, IT'S NICE TO ACTUALLY SPEND SOME TIME WITH YOU, MOM.
WE SHOULD REALLY DO THIS MORE OFTEN.
IT'D BE NICE, BUT WE CAN'T AFFORD TO EAT OUT ALL THE TIME.
MOM.
RICH.
OH, YEAH.
FORGOT.

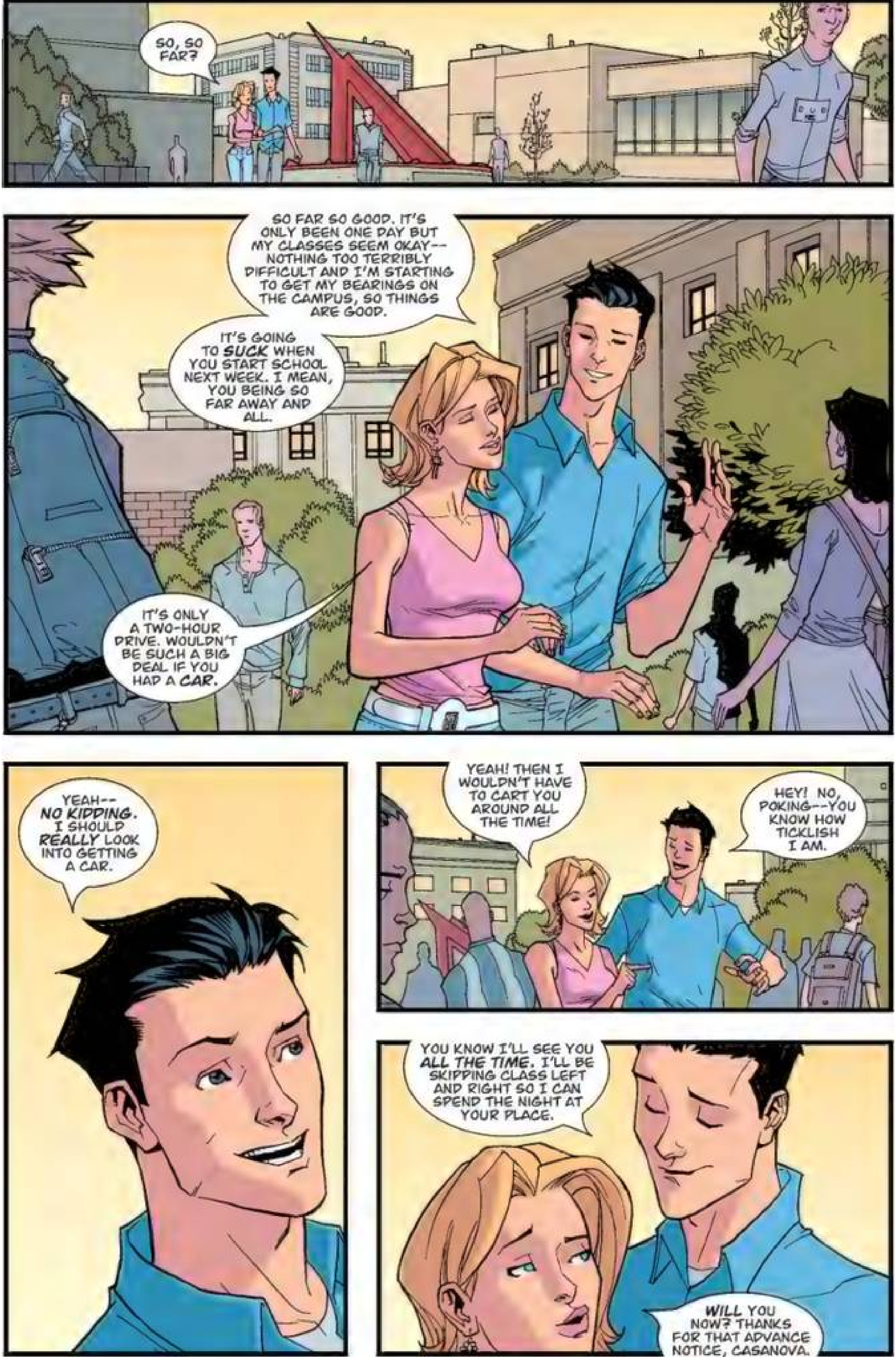

WHAT? WILLIAM, ARE YOU SCOLDING ME? I KNOW CLASSES START TOMORROW. I'LL MOVE IN WHEN I'M GOOD AND READY.
DUDE, IT'S LATE, YOU GOTTA BE MOVED IN SOON, AND I NEED TO GO TO SLEEP. I HAVEN'T EVEN GIVEN YOU A KEY.
WHEN EXACTLY DO YOU PLAN ON MOVING YOUR STUFF IN HERE?
UH--HOLD ON A SECOND, I'LL BE RIGHT BACK.
I DON'T HAVE A SECOND! YOU NEED TO TELL ME WHEN YOU'RE GOING TO MOVE IN SO I CAN BE HERE.
THIS IS SERIOUS, MARK. I KNOW YOU'VE PROBABLY GOT A MONSTER TO FIGHT OR SOMETHING BUT SCHOOL ISN'T AS EASY FOR ME AS IT IS FOR YOU. I'VE GOT TO GET MY SLEEP.
YEAH, I KNOW. IT'S JUST THAT-- OH, WAIT... BE RIGHT BACK.

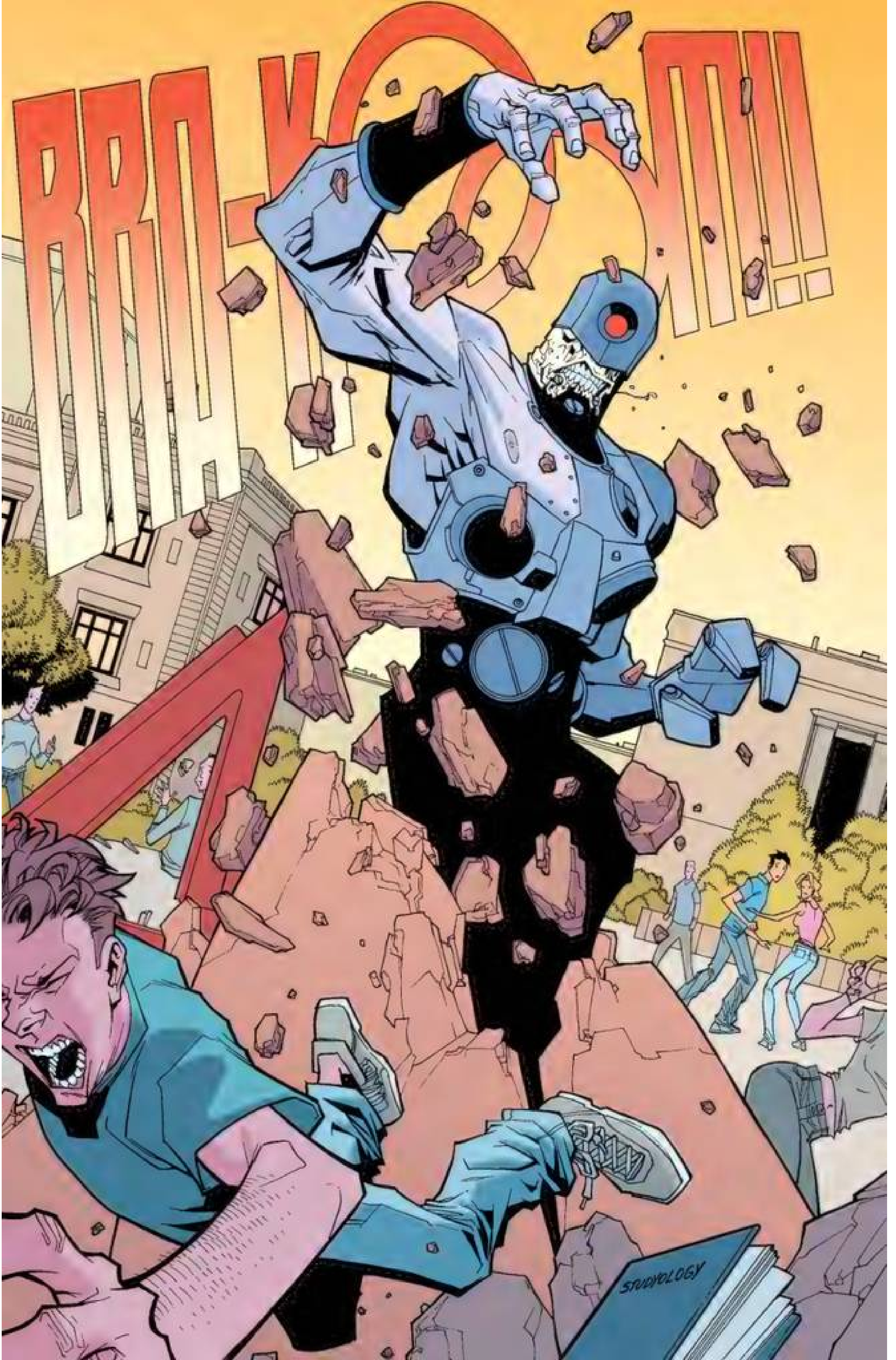

WHAT'S WITH ALL THE PAUSES, MARK?
OH, GOD! DUDE, ARE YOU ON THE CAN? PLEASE TELL ME YOU'RE NOT ON THE CAN!
I'M NOT ON THE CAN. I'M--
HOLD ON A MINUTE.
WHAT ARE YOU DOING? THIS IS RIDICULOUS.
I DON'T KNOW ABOUT YOU, BUT I WAS GETTING READY TO HIT THE HAY. I'VE GOT CLASSES TOMORROW.
GAH!
WHAT?
HOW?
...
SHOW OFF.

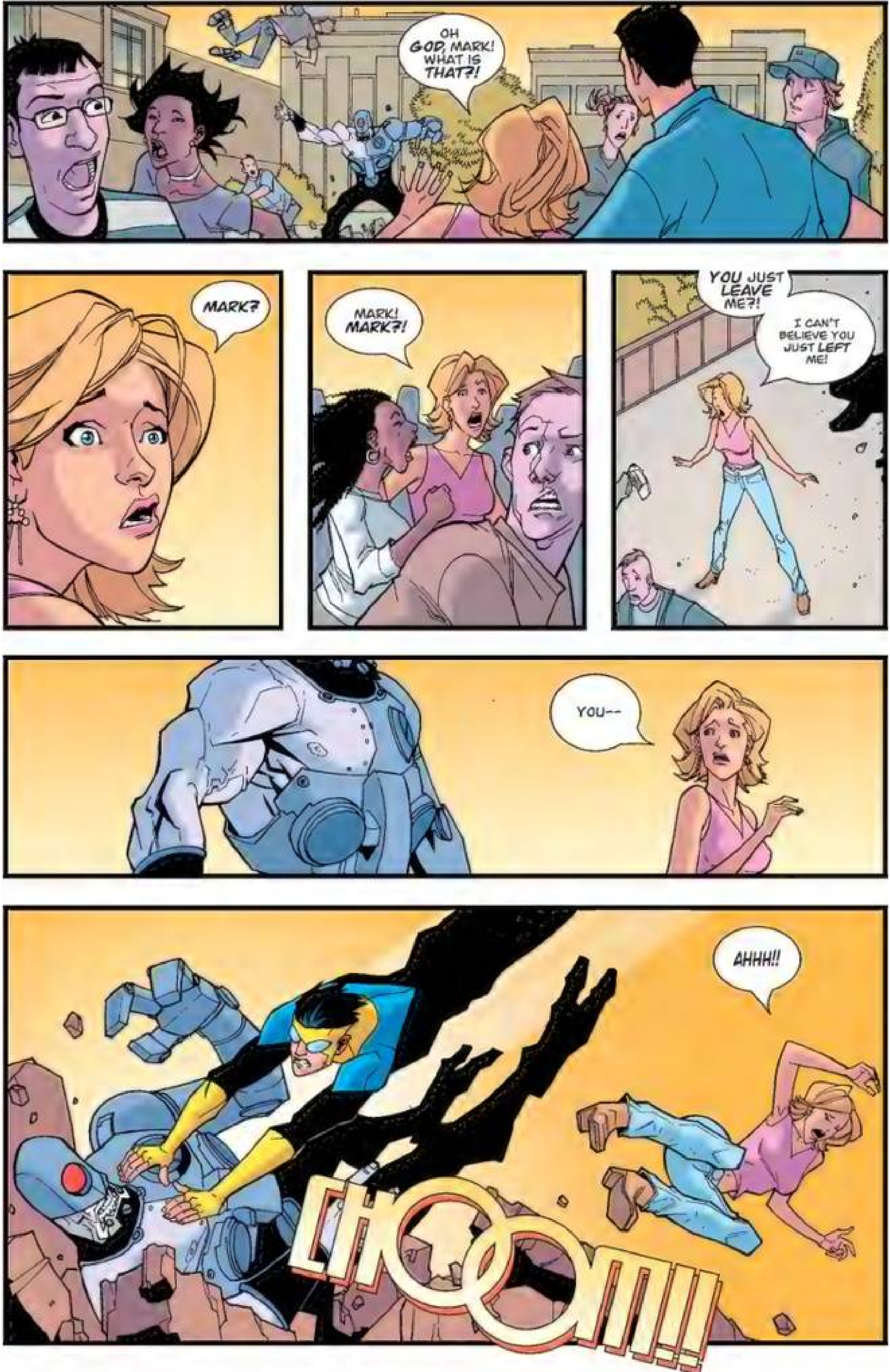

BEEN A WHILE SINCE WE'VE DONE *THIS*, HUH?
WHEN WAS MY LAST SLEEP OVER PARTY? NINTH GRADE OR TENTH?
TENTH. HAVE WE NOT SPENT THE NIGHT TOGETHER SINCE THEN? *WOW*, IT *HAS* BEEN A WHILE.
SO, HOW ARE THINGS WITH YOUR *MOM*, MAN?
SINCE THAT STUFF WITH YOUR *DAD*, I MEAN. YOU NEVER REALLY TALK ABOUT IT, AND MOST OF THE TIME OTHER PEOPLE ARE AROUND SO I HAVEN'T ASKED.
EVERYTHING *OKAY*?
MARK?
IT'S FINE, *REALLY*.
I JUST DON'T WANT TO *TALK* ABOUT IT.

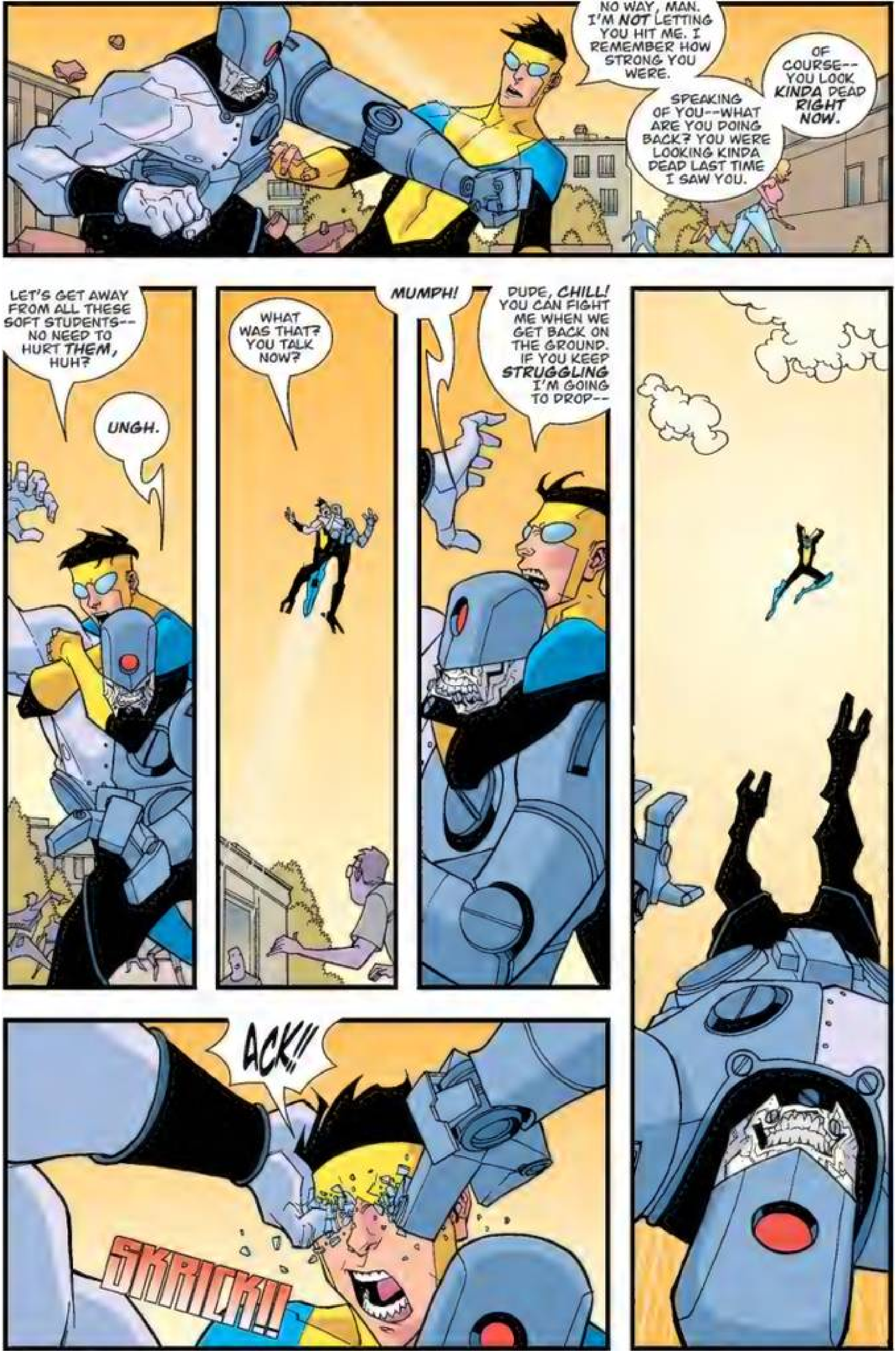

HEY--MARK, RIGHT? YOU'VE GOT THE HIGH-STRUNG FRIEND--WILLIAM, WASN'T IT?
IT'S ME, RICK. I SHOWED YOU AROUND THE DORMS LAST SEMESTER.
OH, YEAH... HEY, DUDE. WHAT'S UP?
I'M TAKING A FRESHMAN COURSE FOR THE SECOND TIME...DON'T TELL MY DAD. I THINK I'M WASTING HIS MONEY.
SOME OF IT AT LEAST.
YOUR SECRET IS SAFE WITH ME, RICK.
GOOD MORNING AND WELCOME TO BIOLOGY 101. I'M PROFESSOR VARNER, OR DOCTOR VARNER IF YOU PREFER. PLEASE, WHATEVER YOU DO... DO NOT CALL ME "MISTER."
IT'S RUDE.
IT'S NOT AN ARROGANCE THING. IT'S JUST ABOUT COMMON COURTESY, AND IF I CAN TEACH YOU A LITTLE ABOUT COURTESY DURING YOUR TIME HERE, THE WORLD WOULD BE A MUCH BETTER PLACE.
YOU SHOULD ALL HAVE HAD A SYLLABUS ON YOUR DESK WHEN YOU CAME IN. IF ANYONE IS MISSING ONE, PLEASE RAISE YOUR HAND.

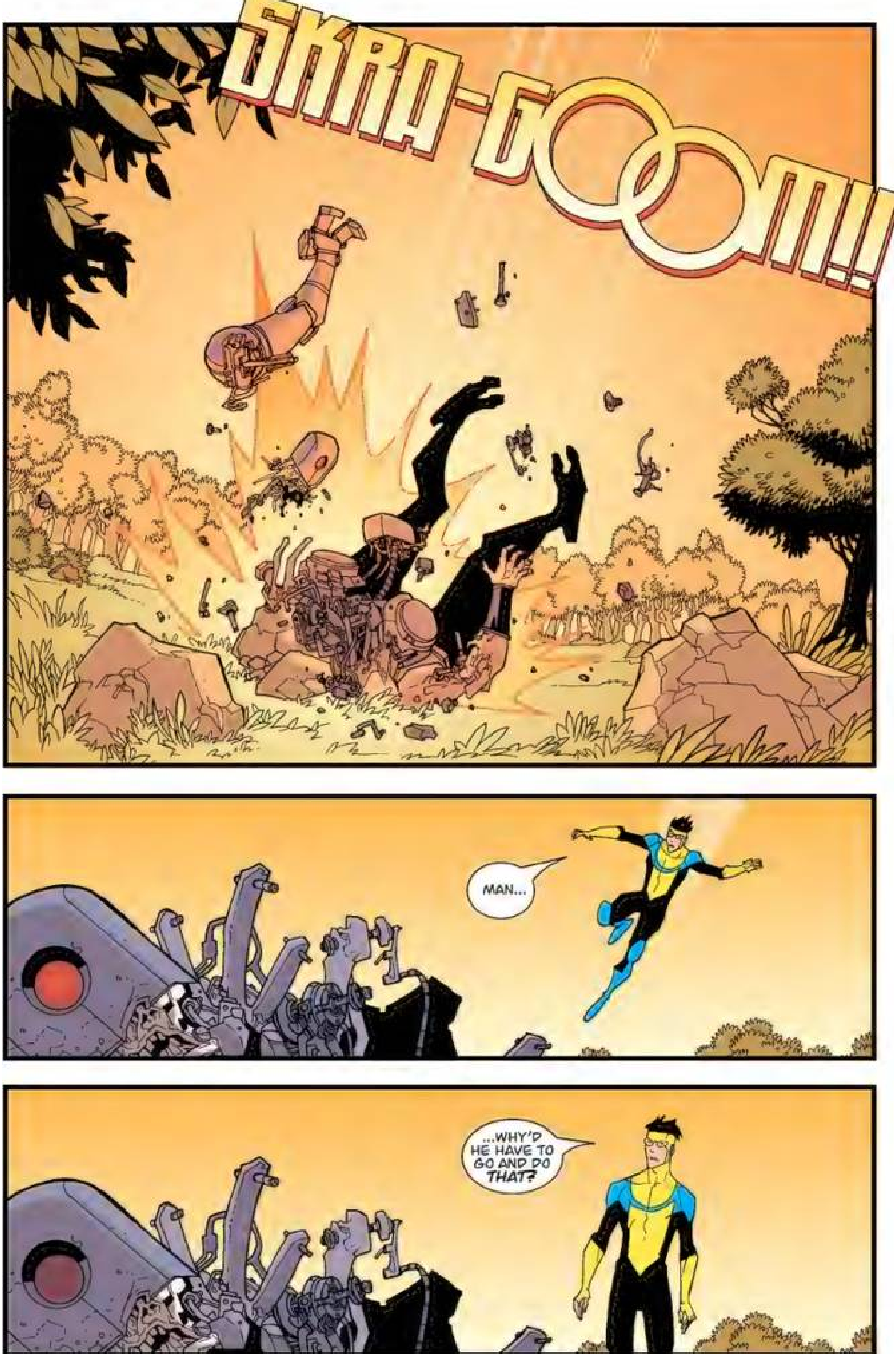

LET'S LOOK OVER THE SYLLABUS AND--
AHEM!
PLEASE TAKE YOUR SEAT QUICKLY. I HOPE THIS ISN'T AN INDICATION OF YOUR PUNCTUALITY IN GENERAL, YOUNG MAN.
PARDON ME IF THIS CLASS ISN'T MY TOP PRIORITY. I COULD TEACH THIS CLASS, YOU PRIMATE. I SKIPPED IT FOUR YEARS AGO BECAUSE IT WAS BENEATH ME BUT NOW I'M TOLD I MUST TAKE IT TO MOVE ON TO GRADUATE SCHOOL.
DON'T MAKE THIS A THING, OKAY? I'LL BE COMING AND GOING AS I PLEASE. I HOPE MY PERFECT SCORES WILL GRANT ME SOME LEEWAY WHEN IT COMES TO THIS RIDICULOUS RITUAL OF PHYSICAL APPEARANCE IN THESE CLASSROOMS.
I COULD DO WITHOUT THE CONFLICT.
SIT DOWN.
PLEASE. CALM YOURSELF.
I'M HERE TO LEARN.

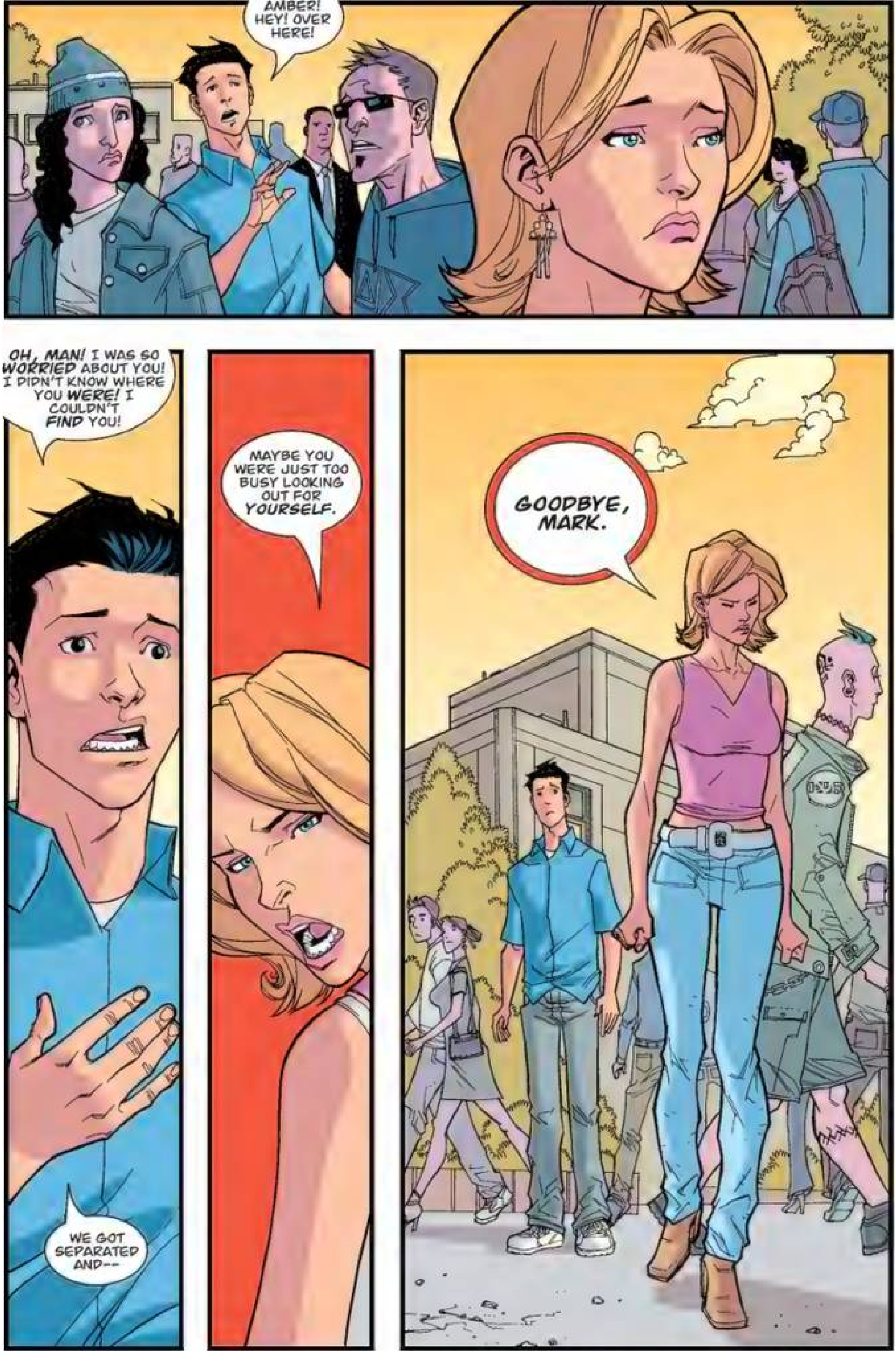

SO, SO FAR?
SO FAR SO GOOD. IT'S ONLY BEEN ONE DAY BUT MY CLASSES SEEM OKAY-- NOTHING TOO TERRIBLY DIFFICULT AND I'M STARTING TO GET MY BEARINGS ON THE CAMPUS, SO THINGS ARE GOOD.
IT'S GOING TO **SUCK** WHEN YOU START SCHOOL NEXT WEEK. I MEAN, YOU BEING SO FAR AWAY AND ALL.
IT'S ONLY A TWO-HOUR DRIVE. WOULDN'T BE SUCH A BIG DEAL IF YOU HAD A **CAR**.
YEAH-- **NO KIDDING.** I SHOULD **REALLY** LOOK INTO GETTING A CAR.
YEAH! THEN I WOULDN'T HAVE TO CART YOU AROUND ALL THE TIME!
HEY! NO, POKING--YOU KNOW HOW TICKLISH I AM.
YOU KNOW I'LL SEE YOU **ALL THE TIME.** I'LL BE SKIPPING CLASS LEFT AND RIGHT SO I CAN SPEND THE NIGHT AT YOUR PLACE.
WILL YOU NOW? THANKS FOR THAT ADVANCE NOTICE, CASANOVA.

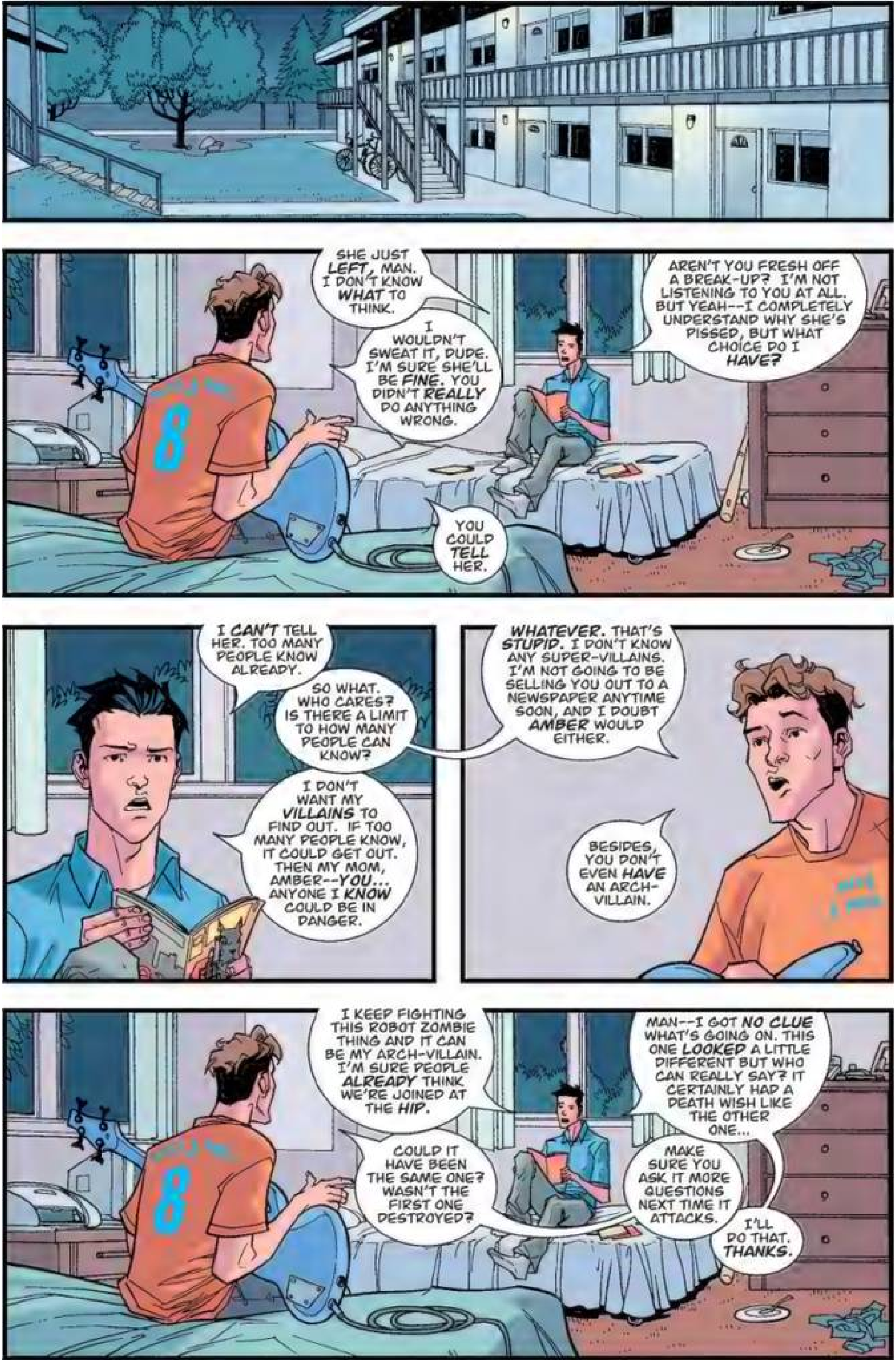

BRA-KOM!!!
STUDYOLOGY

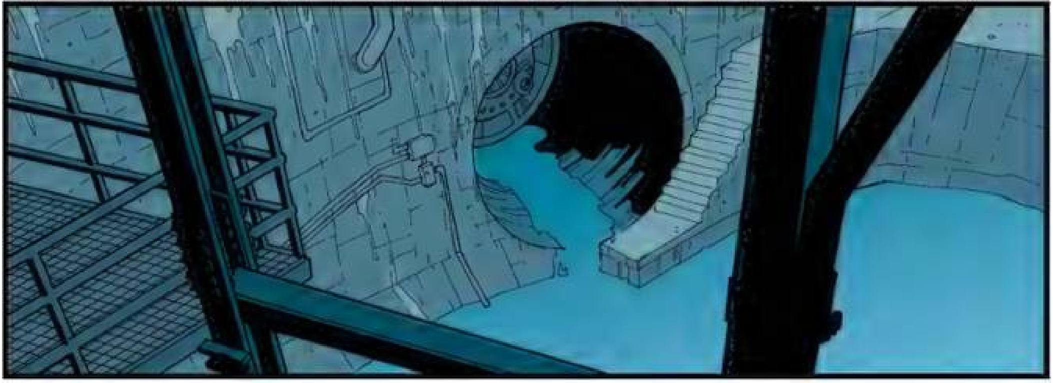

OH GOD, MARK! WHAT IS THAT?!
MARK?
MARK! MARK?!
YOU JUST LEAVE ME?!
I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU JUST LEFT ME!
YOU--
AHHH!!
CHOOM!!

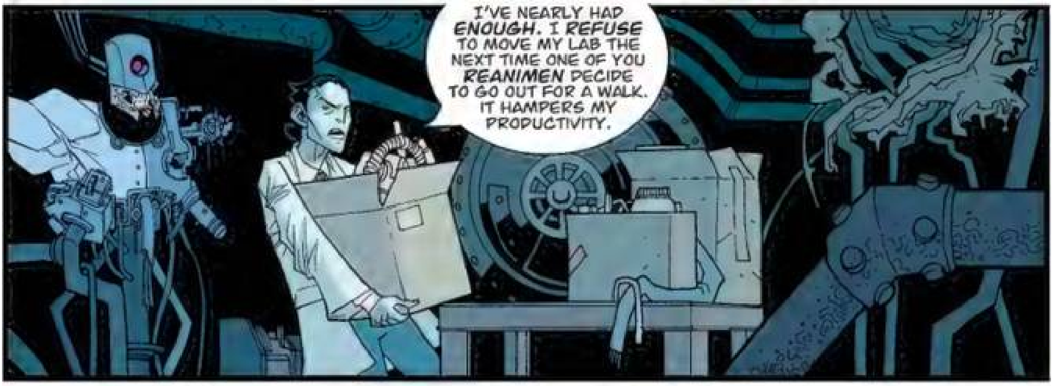

NO WAY, MAN. I'M *NOT* LETTING YOU HIT ME. I REMEMBER HOW STRONG YOU WERE.
SPEAKING OF YOU--WHAT ARE YOU DOING BACK? YOU WERE LOOKING KINDA DEAD LAST TIME I SAW YOU.
OF COURSE-- YOU LOOK *KINDA* DEAD *RIGHT NOW.*
LET'S GET AWAY FROM ALL THESE SOFT STUDENTS-- NO NEED TO HURT *THEM*, HUH?
UNGH.
WHAT WAS THAT? YOU TALK NOW?
MUMPH!
DUDE, *CHILL!* YOU CAN FIGHT ME WHEN WE GET BACK ON THE GROUND. IF YOU KEEP *STRUGGLING* I'M GOING TO DROP--
ACK!!
SKRICK!!

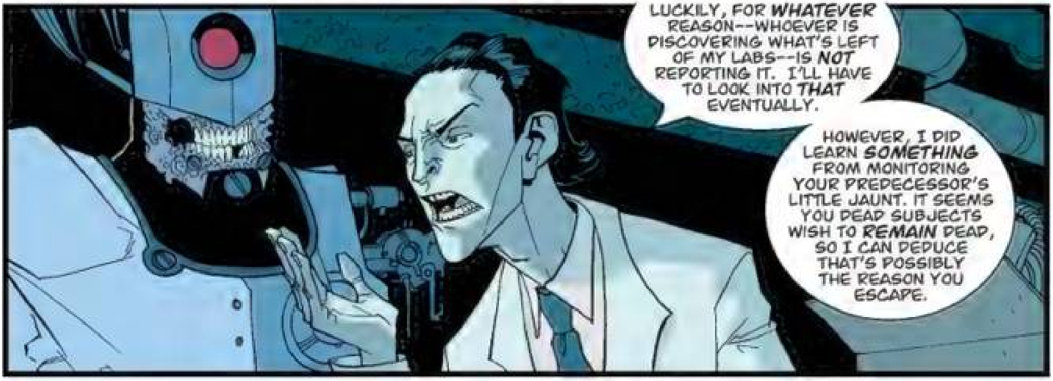

SKRA-GOOM!!
MAN...
...WHY'D HE HAVE TO GO AND DO *THAT?*

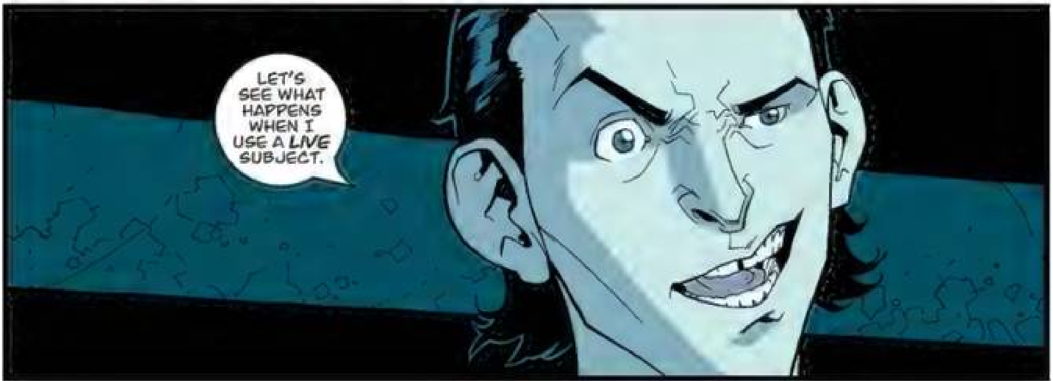

AMBER! HEY! OVER HERE!
OH, MAN! I WAS SO WORRIED ABOUT YOU! I DIDN'T KNOW WHERE YOU WERE! I COULDN'T FIND YOU!
WE GOT SEPARATED AND--
MAYBE YOU WERE JUST TOO BUSY LOOKING OUT FOR YOURSELF.
GOODBYE, MARK.


SHE JUST LEFT, MAN. I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO THINK.
I WOULDN'T SWEAT IT, DUDE. I'M SURE SHE'LL BE FINE. YOU DIDN'T REALLY DO ANYTHING WRONG.
AREN'T YOU FRESH OFF A BREAK-UP? I'M NOT LISTENING TO YOU AT ALL. BUT YEAH--I COMPLETELY UNDERSTAND WHY SHE'S PISSED, BUT WHAT CHOICE DO I HAVE?
YOU COULD TELL HER.
I CAN'T TELL HER. TOO MANY PEOPLE KNOW ALREADY.
SO WHAT. WHO CARES? IS THERE A LIMIT TO HOW MANY PEOPLE CAN KNOW?
I DON'T WANT MY VILLAINS TO FIND OUT. IF TOO MANY PEOPLE KNOW, IT COULD GET OUT. THEN MY MOM, AMBER--YOU... ANYONE I KNOW COULD BE IN DANGER.
WHATEVER. THAT'S STUPID. I DON'T KNOW ANY SUPER-VILLAINS. I'M NOT GOING TO BE SELLING YOU OUT TO A NEWSPAPER ANYTIME SOON, AND I DOUBT AMBER WOULD EITHER.
BESIDES, YOU DON'T EVEN HAVE AN ARCH-VILLAIN.
I KEEP FIGHTING THIS ROBOT ZOMBIE THING AND IT CAN BE MY ARCH-VILLAIN. I'M SURE PEOPLE ALREADY THINK WE'RE JOINED AT THE HIP.
COULD IT HAVE BEEN THE SAME ONE? WASN'T THE FIRST ONE DESTROYED?
MAN--I GOT NO CLUE WHAT'S GOING ON. THIS ONE LOOKED A LITTLE DIFFERENT BUT WHO CAN REALLY SAY? IT CERTAINLY HAD A DEATH WISH LIKE THE OTHER ONE...
MAKE SURE YOU ASK IT MORE QUESTIONS NEXT TIME IT ATTACKS.
I'LL DO THAT. THANKS.
8

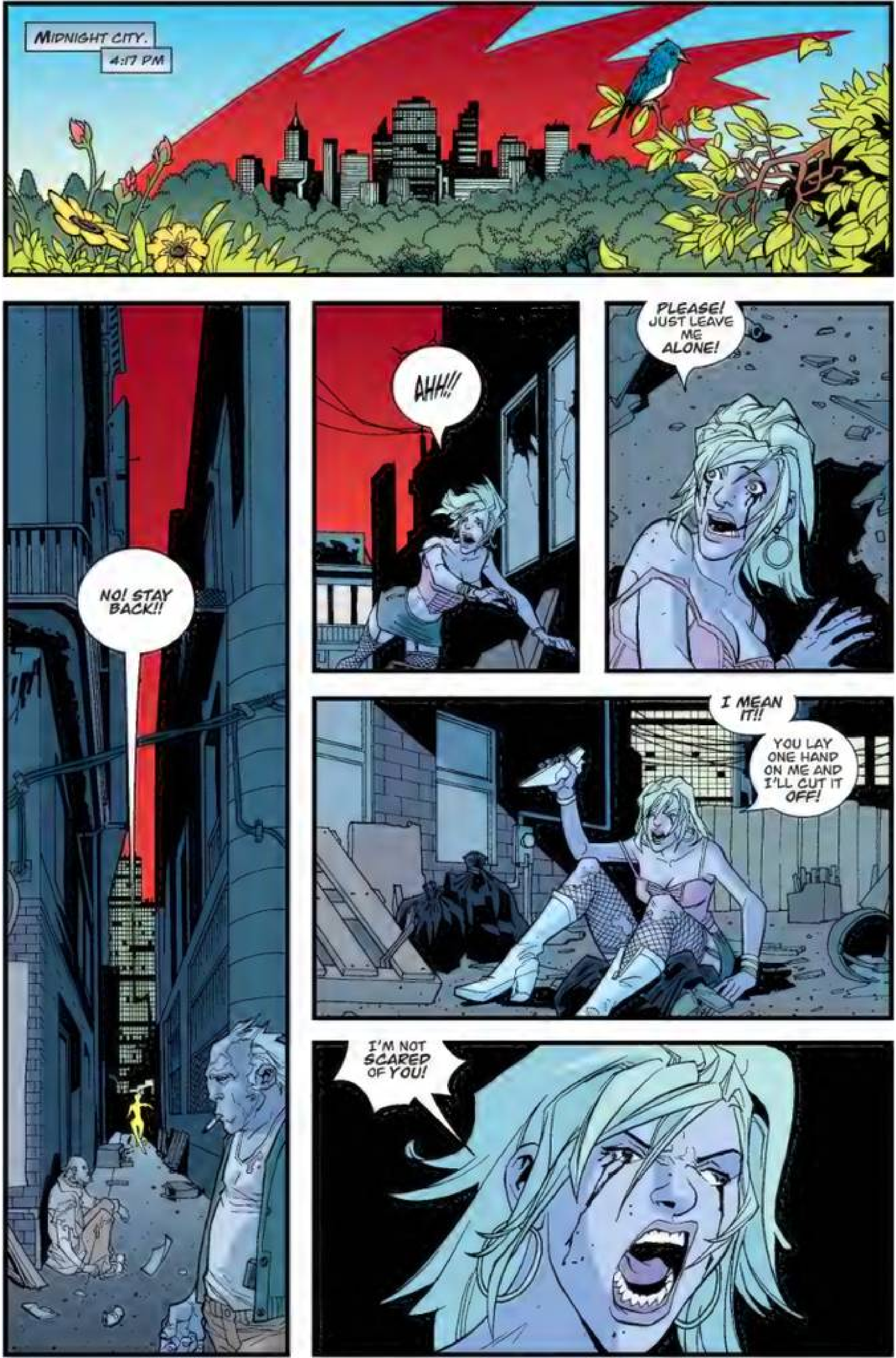


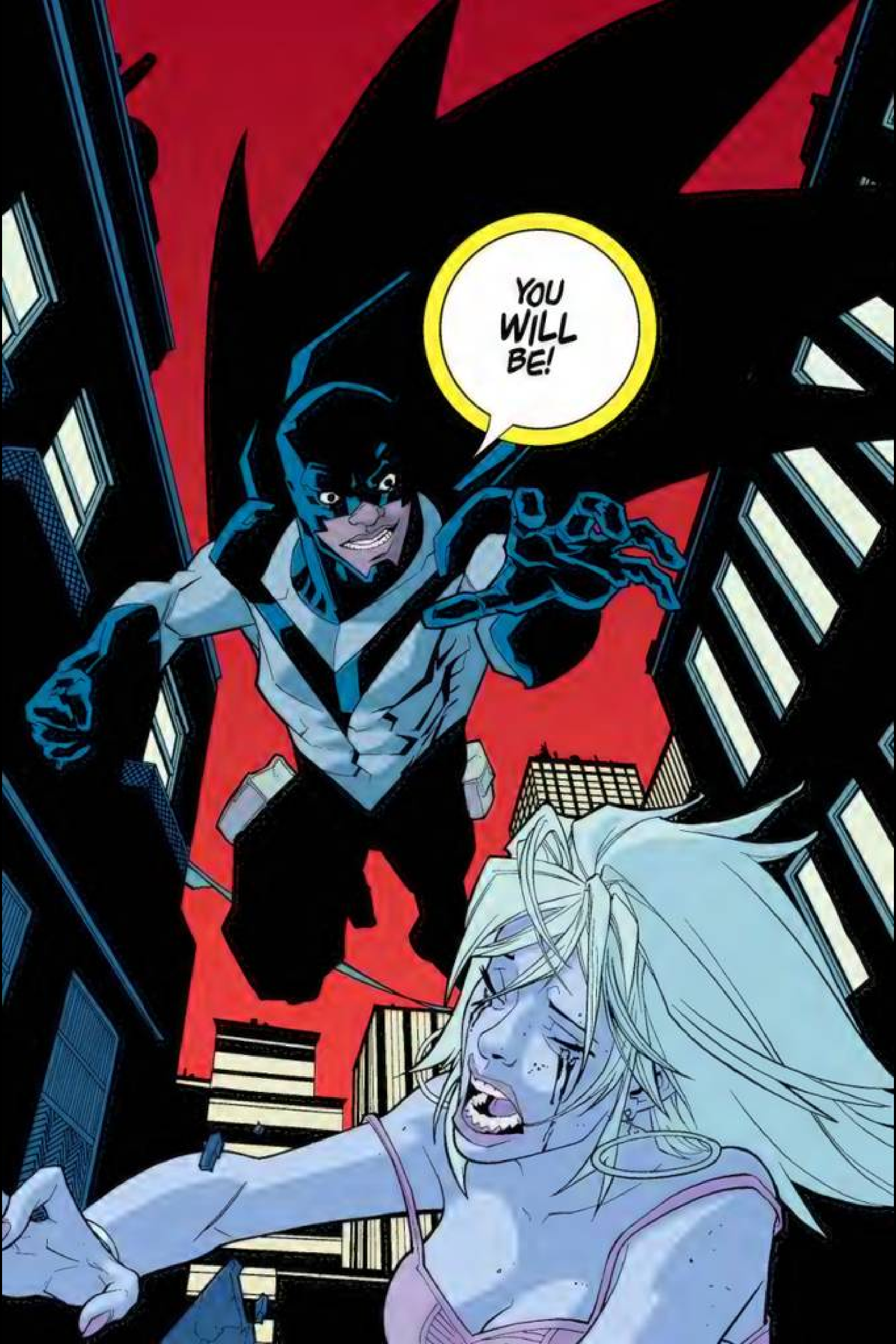

I'VE NEARLY HAD ENOUGH. I REFUSE TO MOVE MY LAB THE NEXT TIME ONE OF YOU REANIMEN DECIDE TO GO OUT FOR A WALK. IT HAMPERS MY PRODUCTIVITY.

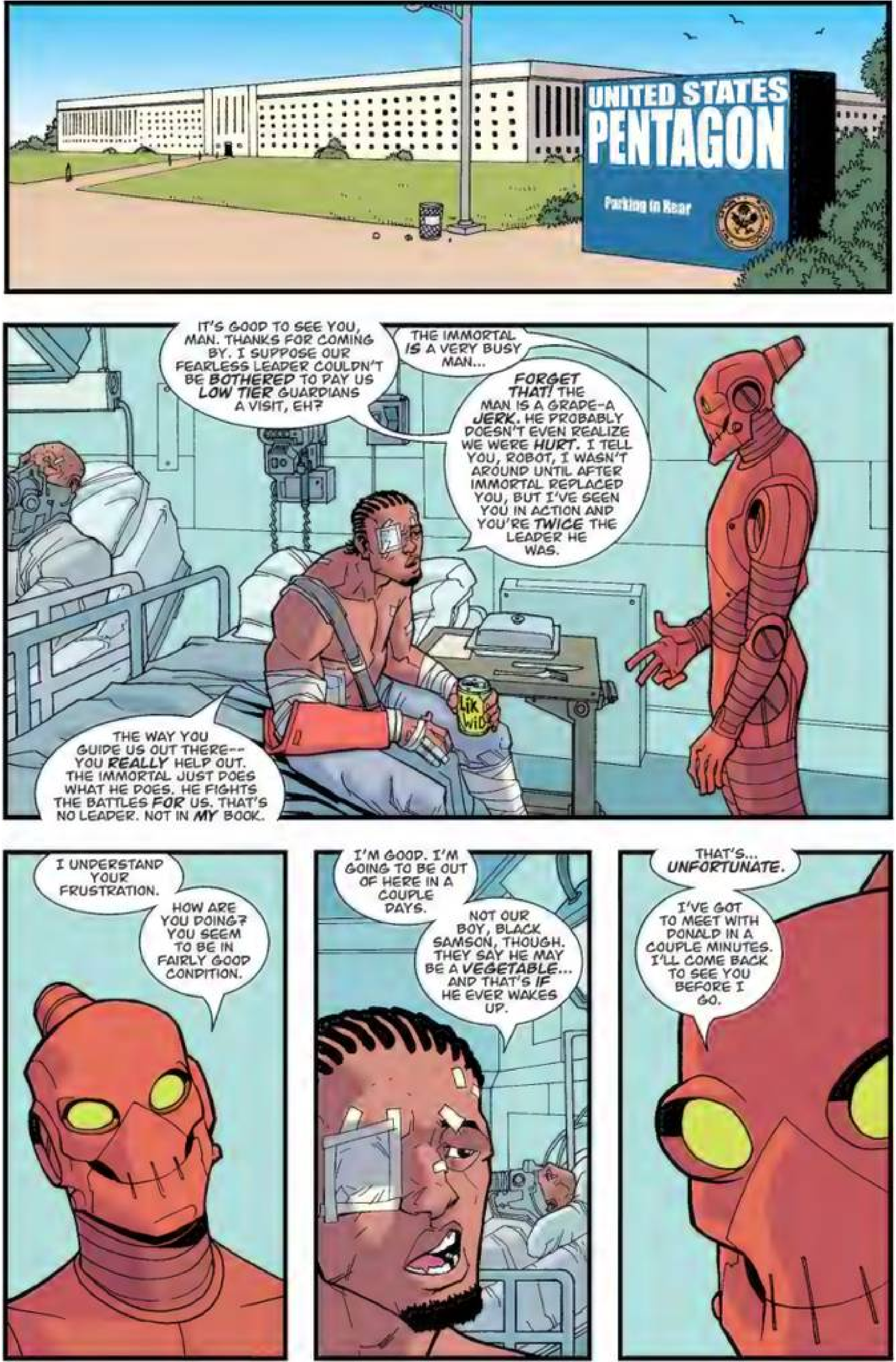

LUCKILY, FOR WHATEVER REASON--WHOEVER IS DISCOVERING WHAT'S LEFT OF MY LABS--IS NOT REPORTING IT. I'LL HAVE TO LOOK INTO THAT EVENTUALLY.
HOWEVER, I DID LEARN SOMETHING FROM MONITORING YOUR PREDECESSOR'S LITTLE JAUNT. IT SEEMS YOU DEAD SUBJECTS WISH TO REMAIN DEAD, SO I CAN DEDUCE THAT'S POSSIBLY THE REASON YOU ESCAPE.

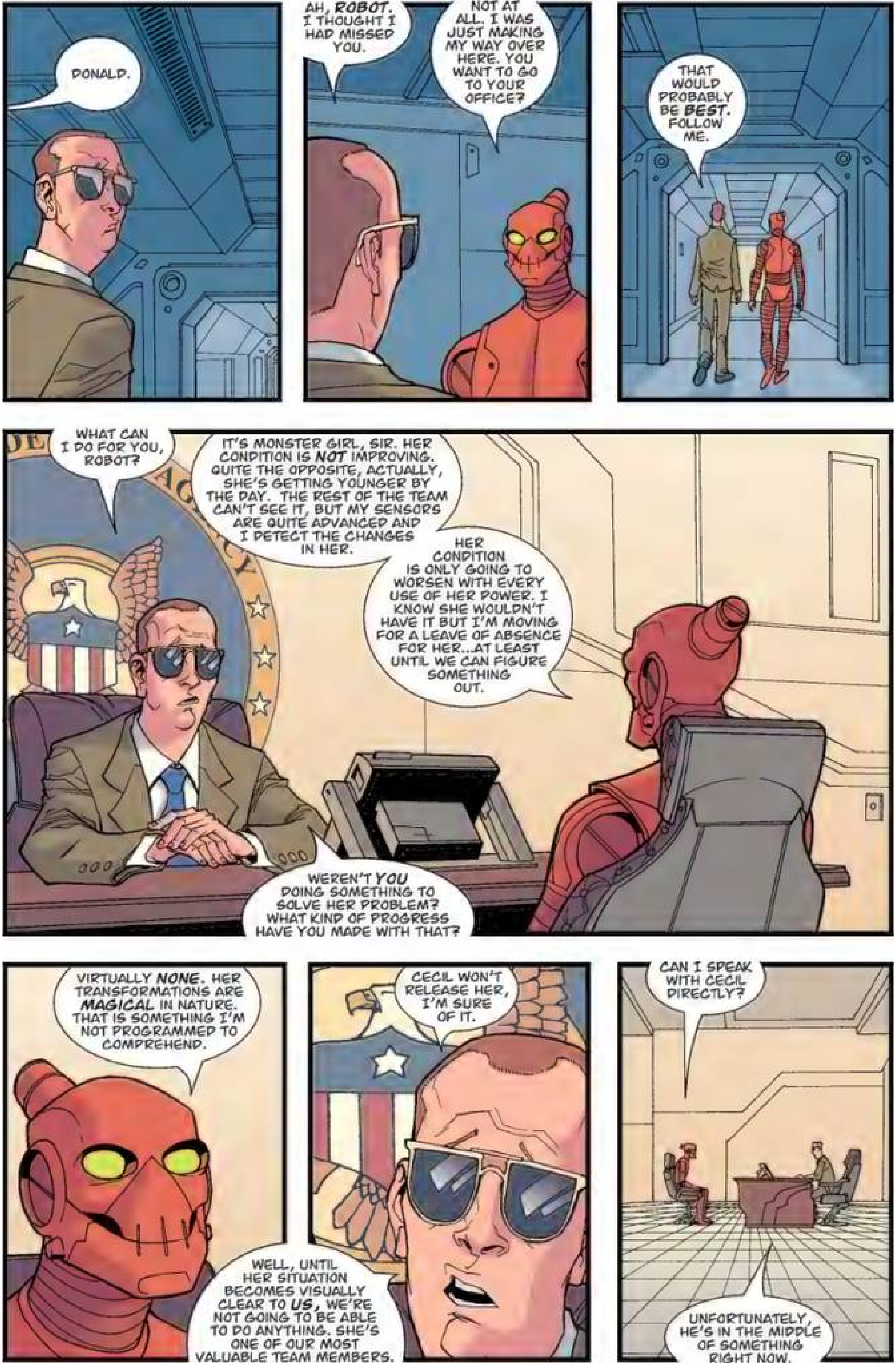

LET'S SEE WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I USE A LIVE SUBJECT.

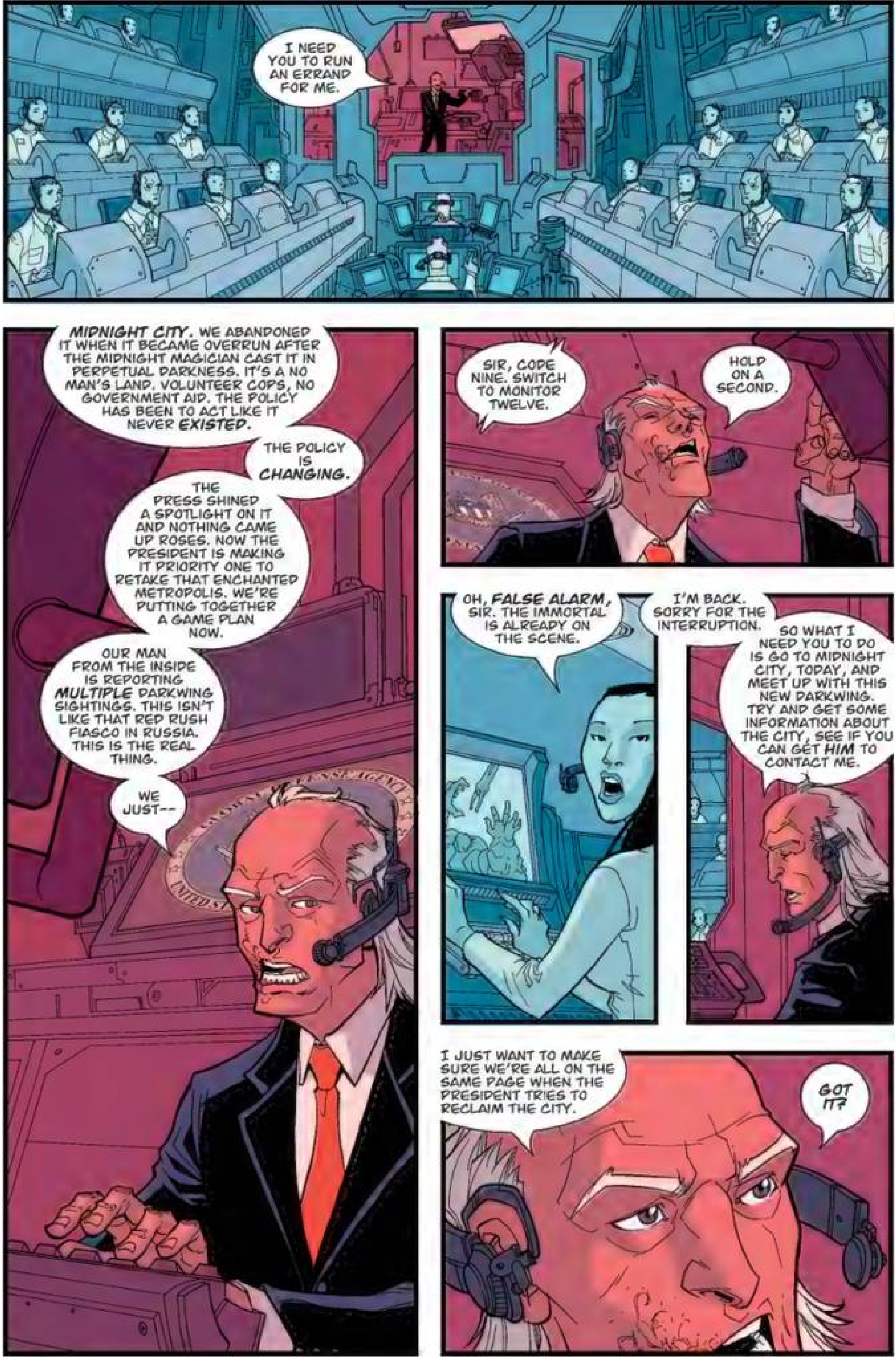
ISSUE TWENTY-ONE

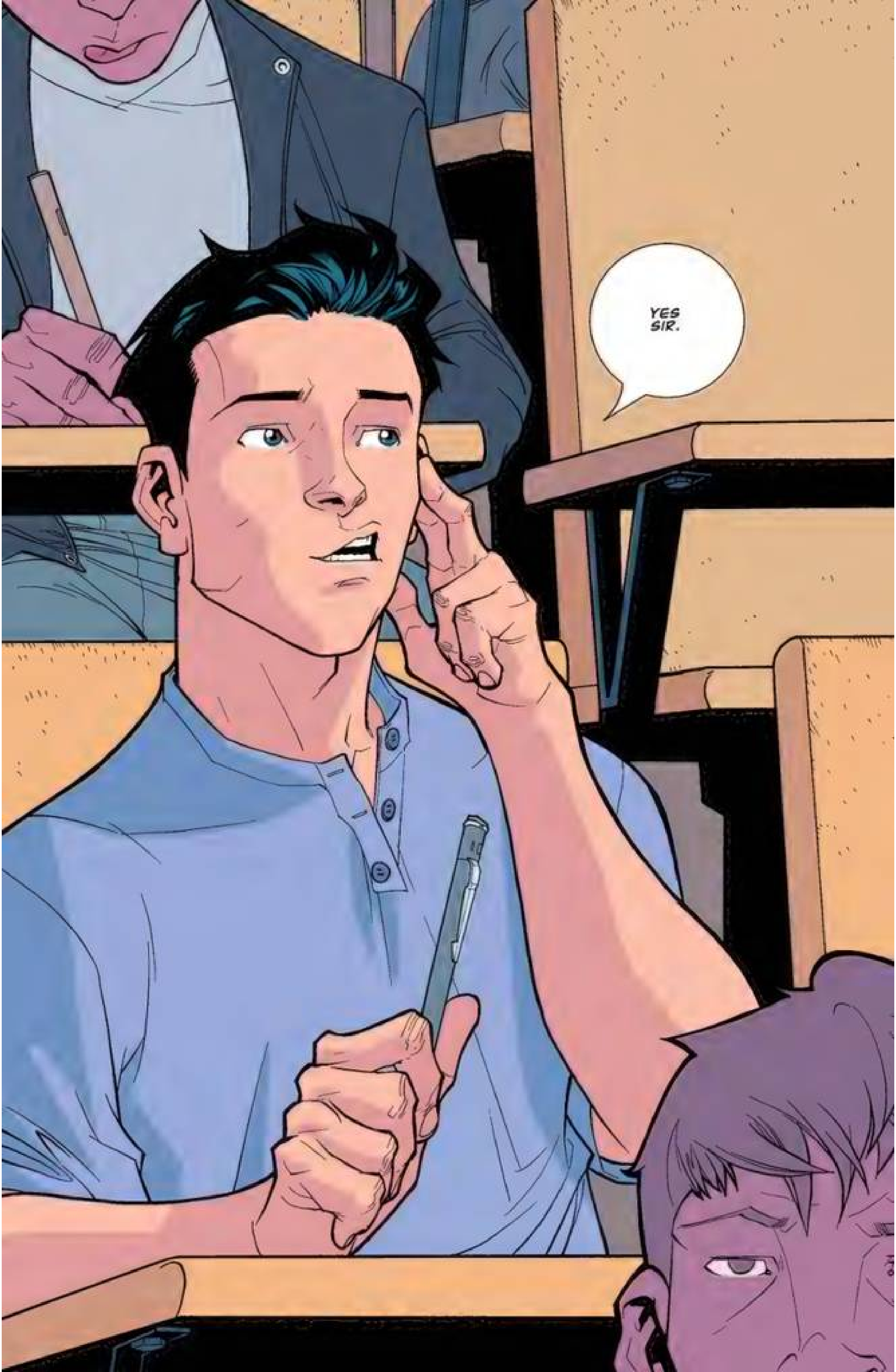

MIDNIGHT CITY.
4:17 PM
NO! STAY BACK!!
AHH!!
PLEASE! JUST LEAVE ME ALONE!
I MEAN IT!!
YOU LAY ONE HAND ON ME AND I'LL CUT IT OFF!
I'M NOT SCARED OF YOU!

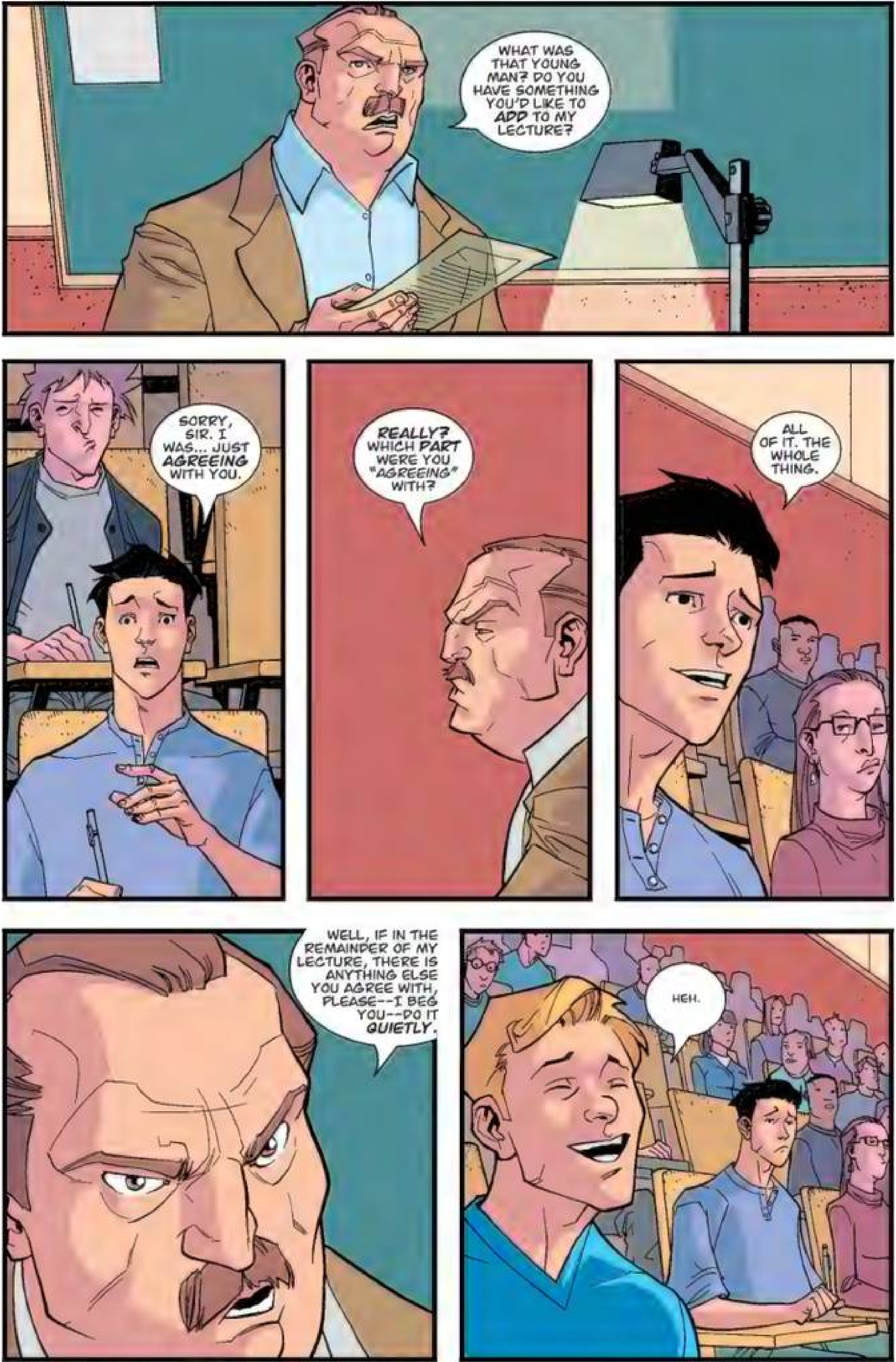

YOU WILL BE!

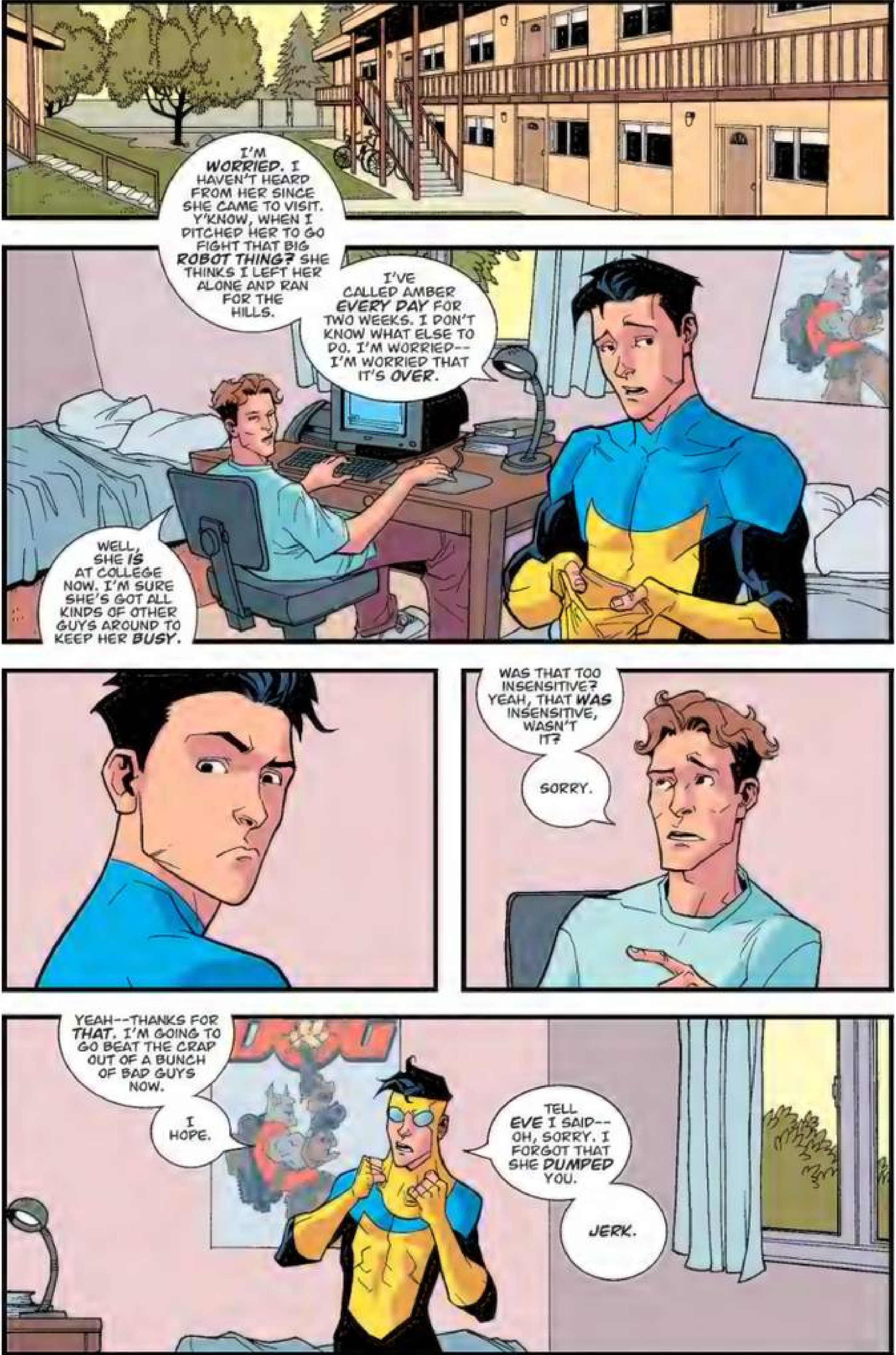

UNITED STATES PENTAGON
Parking in Rear
IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU, MAN. THANKS FOR COMING BY. I SUPPOSE OUR FEARLESS LEADER COULDN'T BE BOTHERED TO PAY US LOW TIER GUARDIANS A VISIT, EH?
THE IMMORTAL IS A VERY BUSY MAN...
FORGET THAT! THE MAN IS A GRADE-A JERK. HE PROBABLY DOESN'T EVEN REALIZE WE WERE HURT. I TELL YOU, ROBOT, I WASN'T AROUND UNTIL AFTER IMMORTAL REPLACED YOU, BUT I'VE SEEN YOU IN ACTION AND YOU'RE TWICE THE LEADER HE WAS.
LIK WID
THE WAY YOU GUIDE US OUT THERE-- YOU REALLY HELP OUT. THE IMMORTAL JUST DOES WHAT HE DOES. HE FIGHTS THE BATTLES FOR US. THAT'S NO LEADER. NOT IN MY BOOK.
I UNDERSTAND YOUR FRUSTRATION.
HOW ARE YOU DOING? YOU SEEM TO BE IN FAIRLY GOOD CONDITION.
I'M GOOD. I'M GOING TO BE OUT OF HERE IN A COUPLE DAYS.
NOT OUR BOY, BLACK SAMSON, THOUGH. THEY SAY HE MAY BE A VEGETABLE... AND THAT'S IF HE EVER WAKES UP.
THAT'S... UNFORTUNATE.
I'VE GOT TO MEET WITH DONALD IN A COUPLE MINUTES. I'LL COME BACK TO SEE YOU BEFORE I GO.

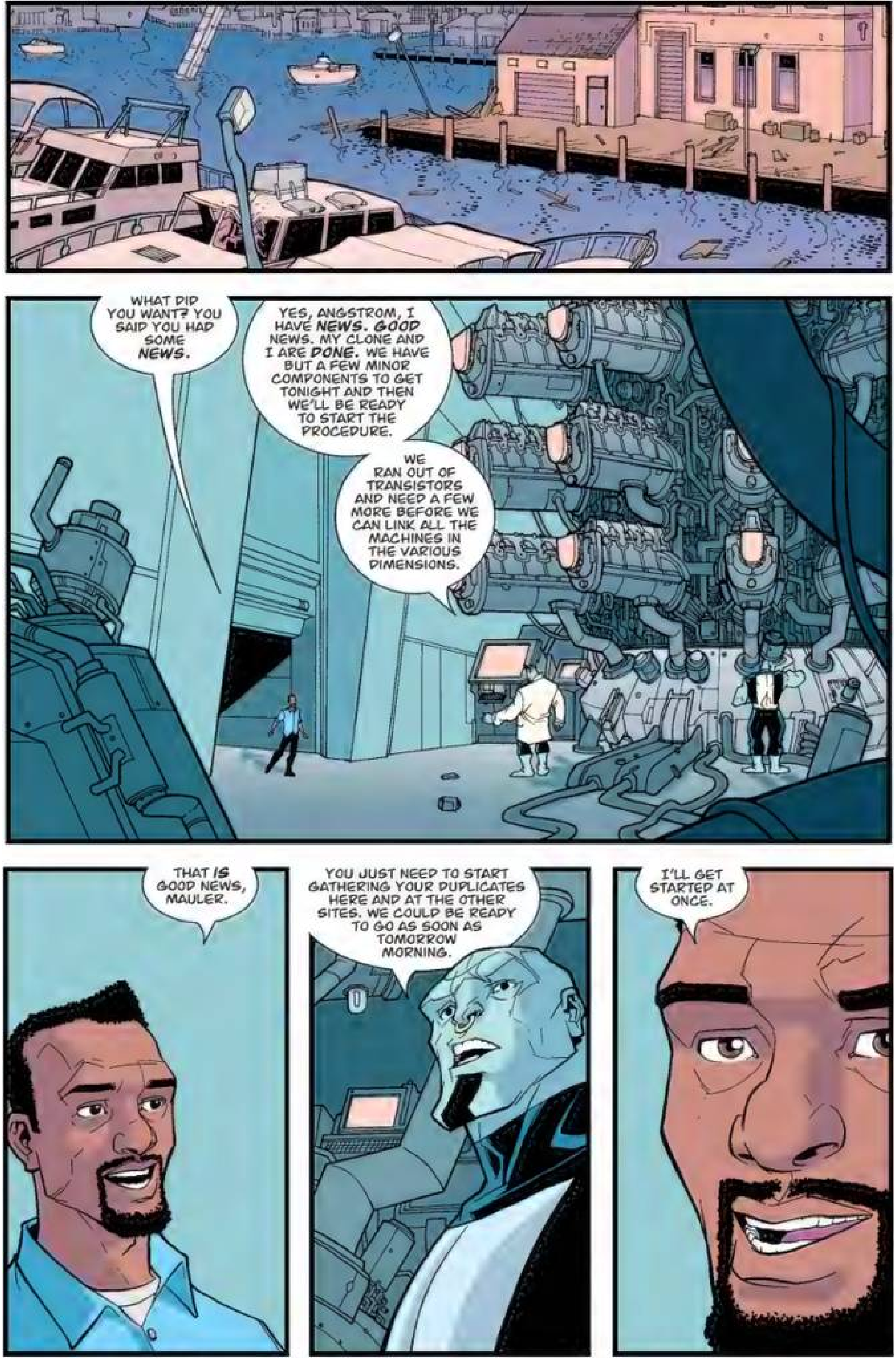

DONALD.
AH, *ROBOT*. I THOUGHT I HAD MISSED YOU.
NOT AT ALL. I WAS JUST MAKING MY WAY OVER HERE. YOU WANT TO GO TO YOUR OFFICE?
THAT WOULD PROBABLY BE *BEST*. FOLLOW ME.
WHAT CAN I DO FOR YOU, ROBOT?
IT'S MONSTER GIRL, SIR. HER CONDITION IS *NOT* IMPROVING. QUITE THE OPPOSITE, ACTUALLY, SHE'S GETTING YOUNGER BY THE DAY. THE REST OF THE TEAM CAN'T SEE IT, BUT MY SENSORS ARE QUITE ADVANCED AND I DETECT THE CHANGES IN HER.
HER CONDITION IS ONLY GOING TO WORSEN WITH EVERY USE OF HER POWER. I KNOW SHE WOULDN'T HAVE IT BUT I'M MOVING FOR A LEAVE OF ABSENCE FOR HER...AT LEAST UNTIL WE CAN FIGURE SOMETHING OUT.
WEREN'T *YOU* DOING SOMETHING TO SOLVE HER PROBLEM? WHAT KIND OF PROGRESS HAVE YOU MADE WITH THAT?
VIRTUALLY *NONE*. HER TRANSFORMATIONS ARE *MAGICAL* IN NATURE. THAT IS SOMETHING I'M NOT PROGRAMMED TO COMPREHEND.
CECIL WON'T RELEASE HER, I'M SURE OF IT.
WELL, UNTIL HER SITUATION BECOMES VISUALLY CLEAR TO *US*, WE'RE NOT GOING TO BE ABLE TO DO ANYTHING. SHE'S ONE OF OUR MOST VALUABLE TEAM MEMBERS.
CAN I SPEAK WITH CECIL DIRECTLY?
UNFORTUNATELY, HE'S IN THE MIDDLE OF SOMETHING RIGHT NOW.

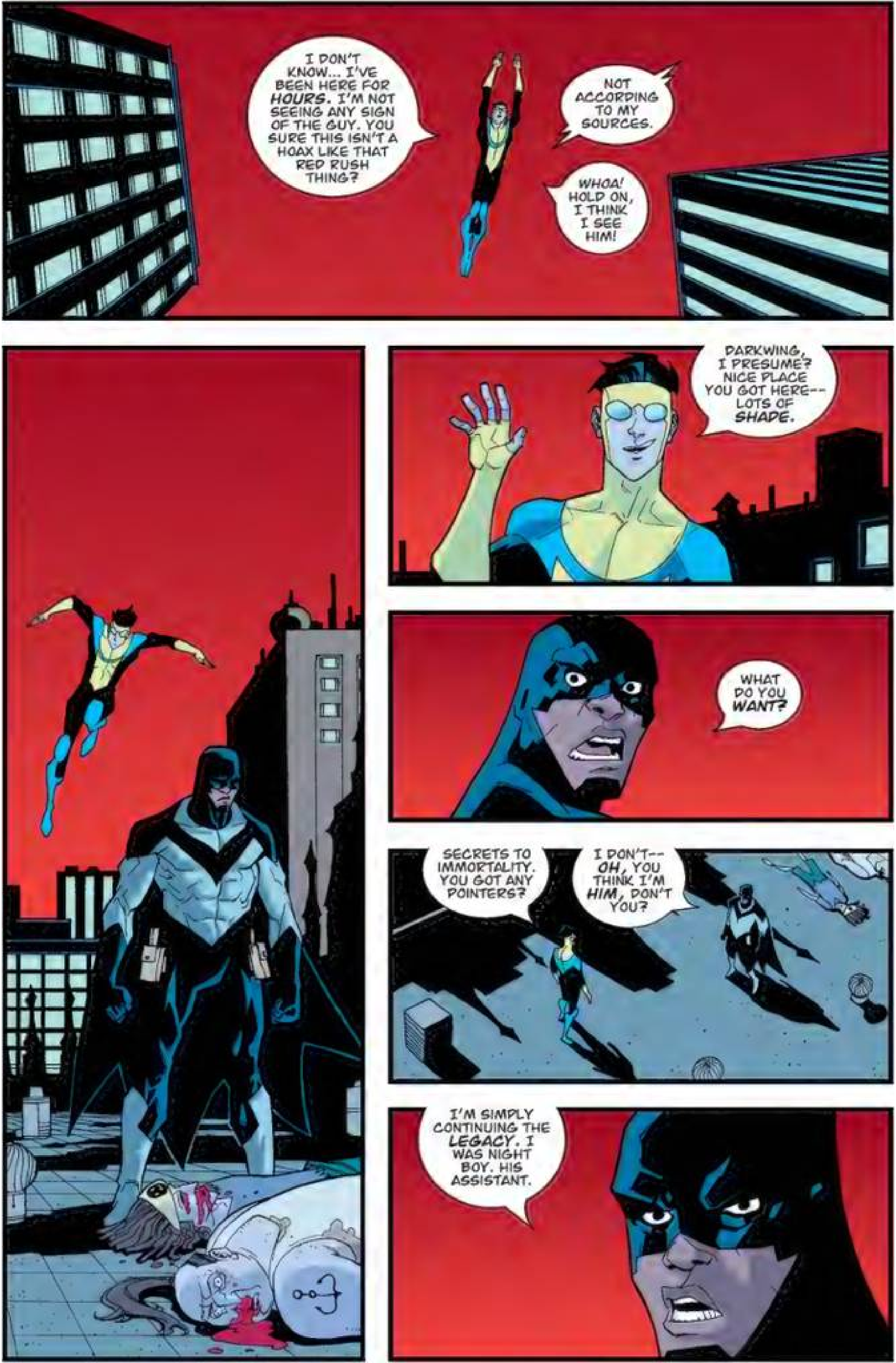

I NEED YOU TO RUN AN ERRAND FOR ME.
MIDNIGHT CITY. WE ABANDONED IT WHEN IT BECAME OVERRUN AFTER THE MIDNIGHT MAGICIAN CAST IT IN PERPETUAL DARKNESS. IT'S A NO MAN'S LAND. VOLUNTEER COPS, NO GOVERNMENT AID. THE POLICY HAS BEEN TO ACT LIKE IT NEVER EXISTED.
THE POLICY IS CHANGING.
THE PRESS SHINED A SPOTLIGHT ON IT AND NOTHING CAME UP ROSES. NOW THE PRESIDENT IS MAKING IT PRIORITY ONE TO RETAKE THAT ENCHANTED METROPOLIS. WE'RE PUTTING TOGETHER A GAME PLAN NOW.
OUR MAN FROM THE INSIDE IS REPORTING MULTIPLE DARKWING SIGHTINGS. THIS ISN'T LIKE THAT RED RUSH FIASCO IN RUSSIA. THIS IS THE REAL THING.
WE JUST--
SIR, CODE NINE. SWITCH TO MONITOR TWELVE.
HOLD ON A SECOND.
OH, FALSE ALARM, SIR. THE IMMORTAL IS ALREADY ON THE SCENE.
I'M BACK. SORRY FOR THE INTERRUPTION.
SO WHAT I NEED YOU TO DO IS GO TO MIDNIGHT CITY, TODAY, AND MEET UP WITH THIS NEW DARKWING. TRY AND GET SOME INFORMATION ABOUT THE CITY, SEE IF YOU CAN GET HIM TO CONTACT ME.
I JUST WANT TO MAKE SURE WE'RE ALL ON THE SAME PAGE WHEN THE PRESIDENT TRIES TO RECLAIM THE CITY.
GOT IT?

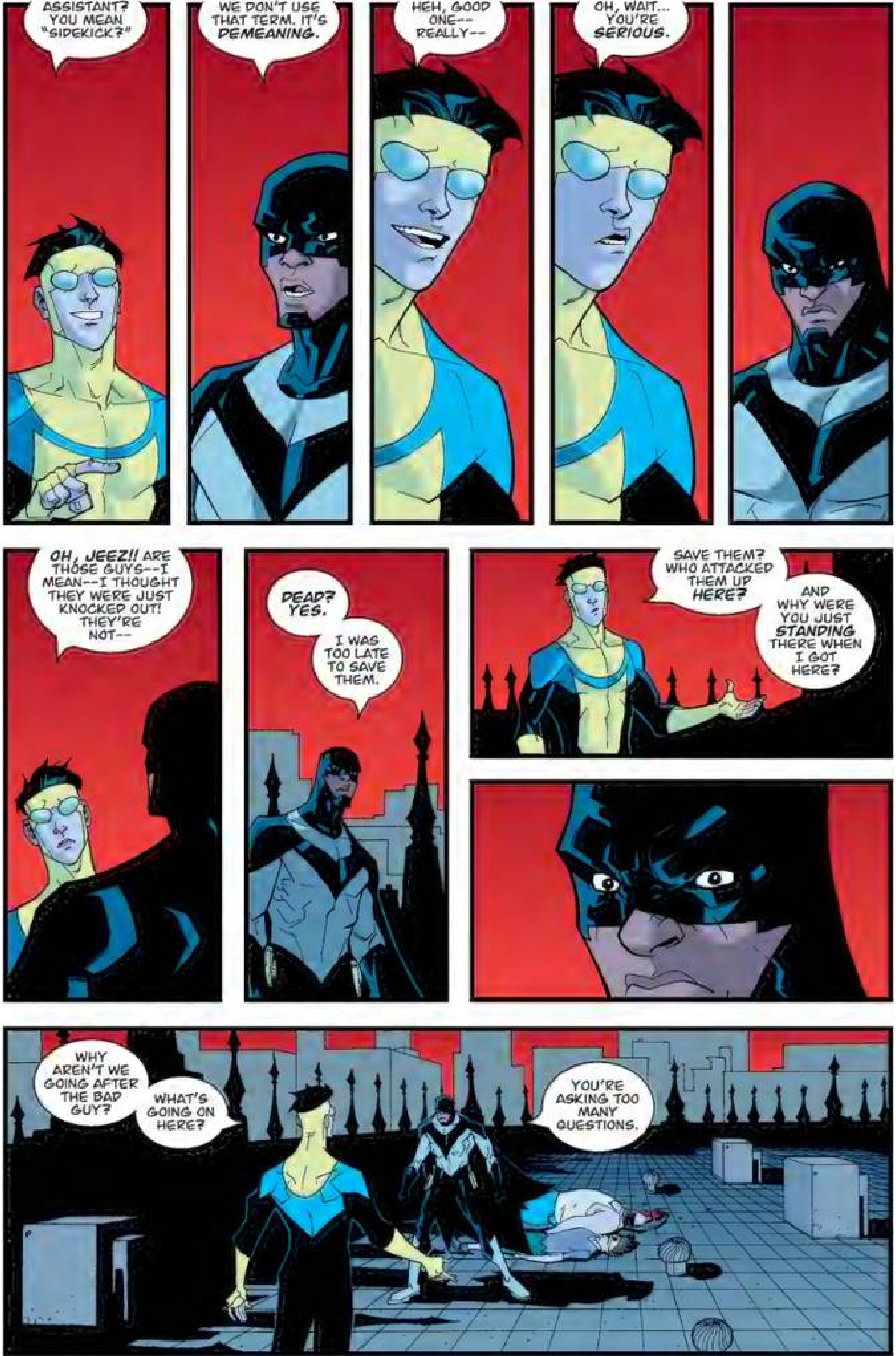

YES SIR.

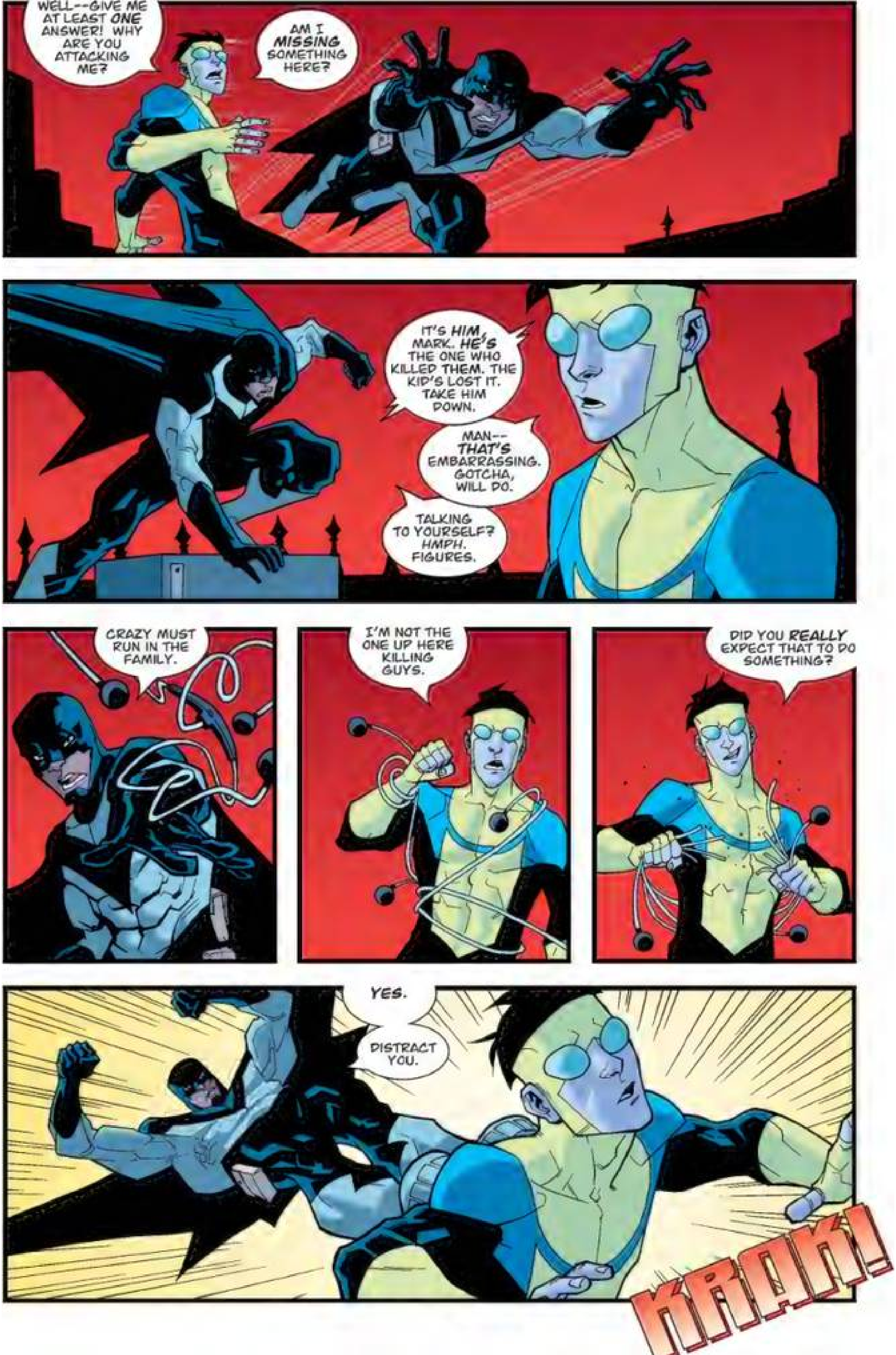

WHAT WAS THAT YOUNG MAN? DO YOU HAVE SOMETHING YOU'D LIKE TO **ADD** TO MY LECTURE?
SORRY, SIR. I WAS... JUST **AGREEING** WITH YOU.
REALLY? WHICH **PART** WERE YOU "AGREEING" WITH?
ALL OF IT. THE WHOLE THING.
WELL, IF IN THE REMAINDER OF MY LECTURE, THERE IS ANYTHING ELSE YOU AGREE WITH, PLEASE--I BEG YOU--DO IT **QUIETLY**.
HEH.

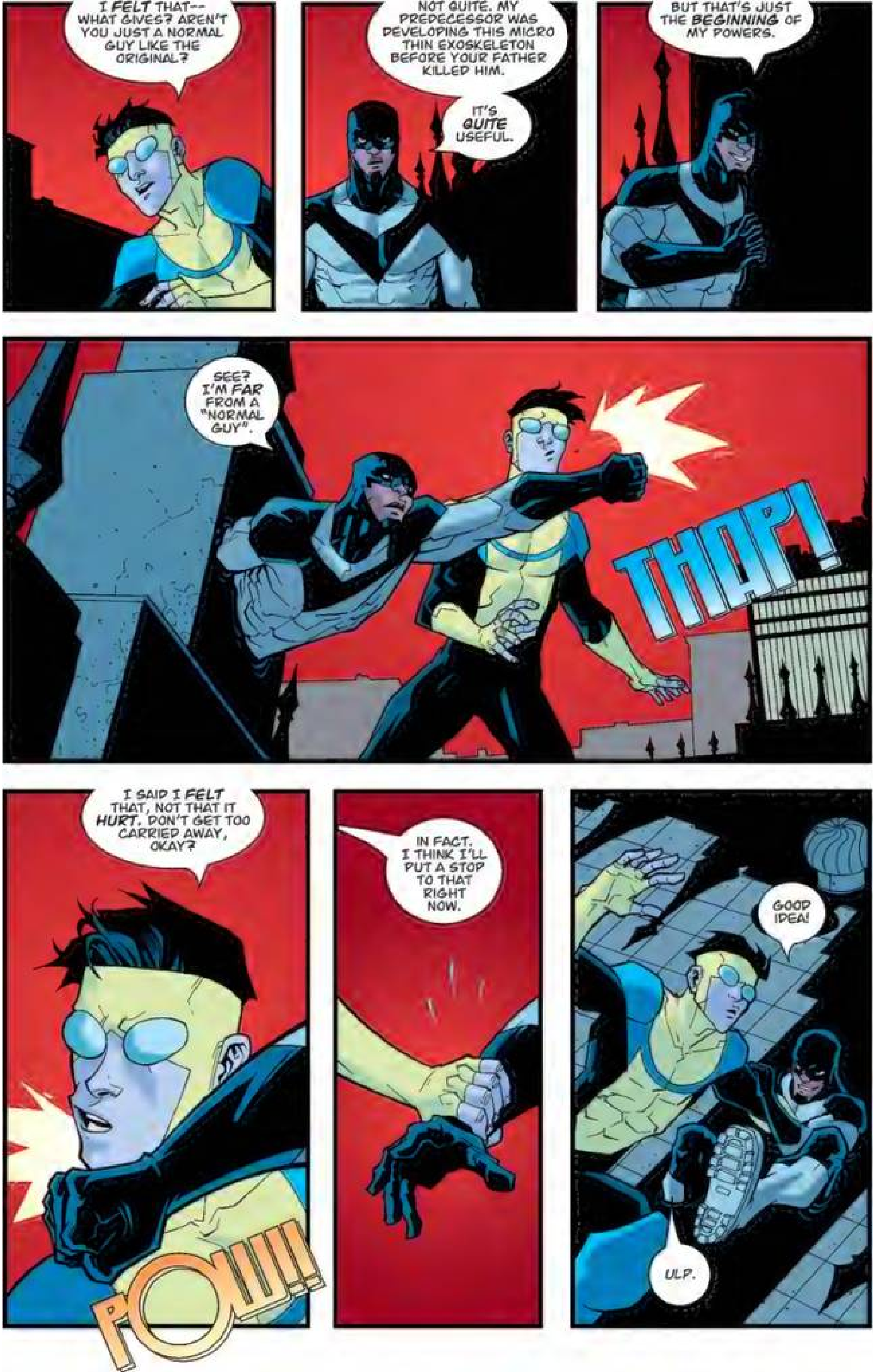

I'M WORRIED. I HAVEN'T HEARD FROM HER SINCE SHE CAME TO VISIT. Y'KNOW, WHEN I DITCHED HER TO GO FIGHT THAT BIG ROBOT THING? SHE THINKS I LEFT HER ALONE AND RAN FOR THE HILLS.
I'VE CALLED AMBER EVERY DAY FOR TWO WEEKS. I DON'T KNOW WHAT ELSE TO DO. I'M WORRIED-- I'M WORRIED THAT IT'S OVER.
WELL, SHE IS AT COLLEGE NOW. I'M SURE SHE'S GOT ALL KINDS OF OTHER GUYS AROUND TO KEEP HER BUSY.
WAS THAT TOO INSENSITIVE? YEAH, THAT WAS INSENSITIVE, WASN'T IT?
SORRY.
YEAH--THANKS FOR THAT. I'M GOING TO GO BEAT THE CRAP OUT OF A BUNCH OF BAD GUYS NOW.
I HOPE.
TELL EVE I SAID-- OH, SORRY. I FORGOT THAT SHE DUMPED YOU.
JERK.

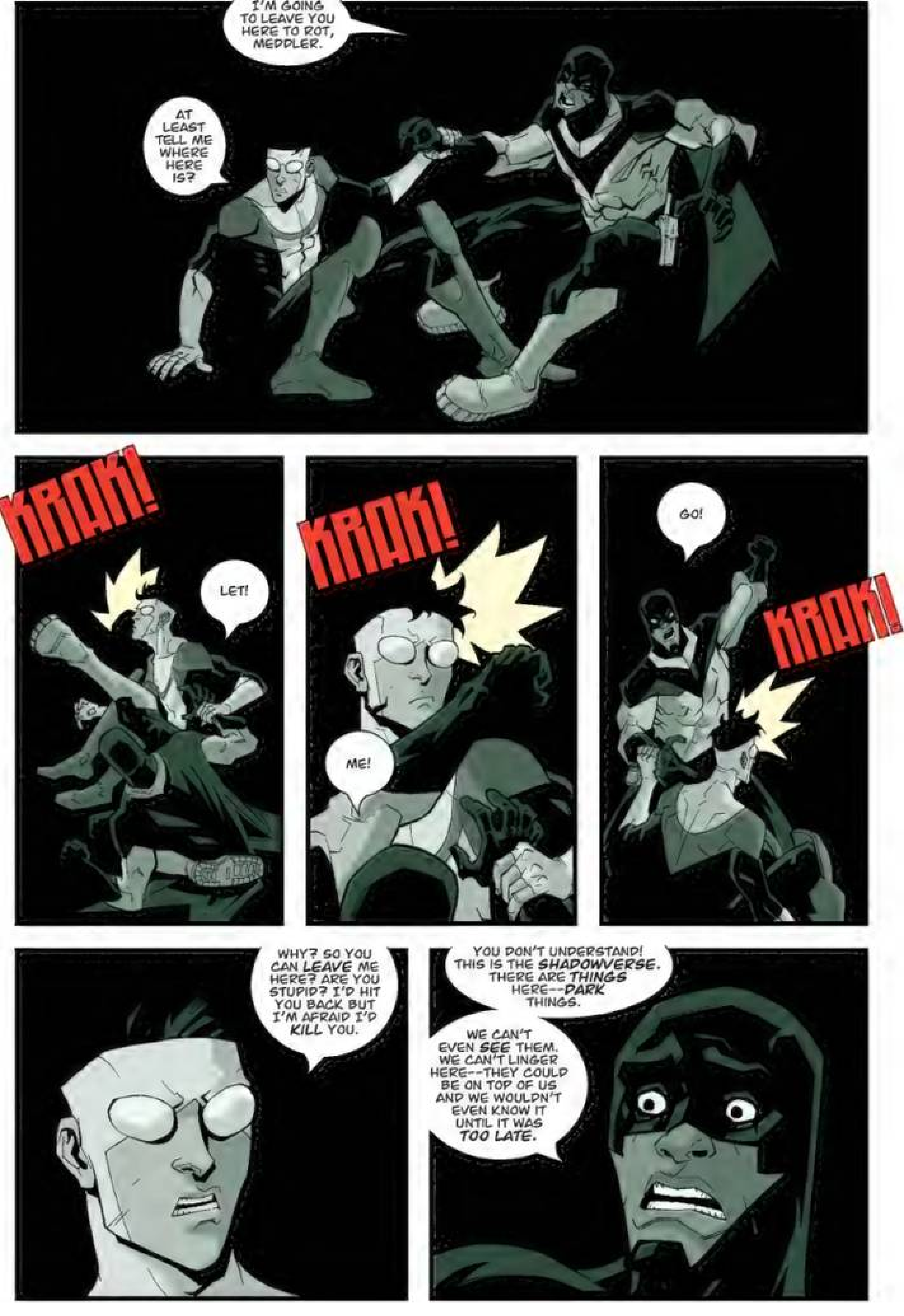

WHAT DID YOU WANT? YOU SAID YOU HAD SOME **NEWS**.
YES, ANGSTROM, I HAVE **NEWS. GOOD** NEWS. MY CLONE AND I ARE **DONE**. WE HAVE BUT A FEW MINOR COMPONENTS TO GET TONIGHT AND THEN WE'LL BE READY TO START THE PROCEDURE.
WE RAN OUT OF TRANSISTORS AND NEED A FEW MORE BEFORE WE CAN LINK ALL THE MACHINES IN THE VARIOUS DIMENSIONS.
THAT **IS** GOOD NEWS, MAULER.
YOU JUST NEED TO START GATHERING YOUR DUPLICATES HERE AND AT THE OTHER SITES. WE COULD BE READY TO GO AS SOON AS TOMORROW MORNING.
I'LL GET STARTED AT ONCE.

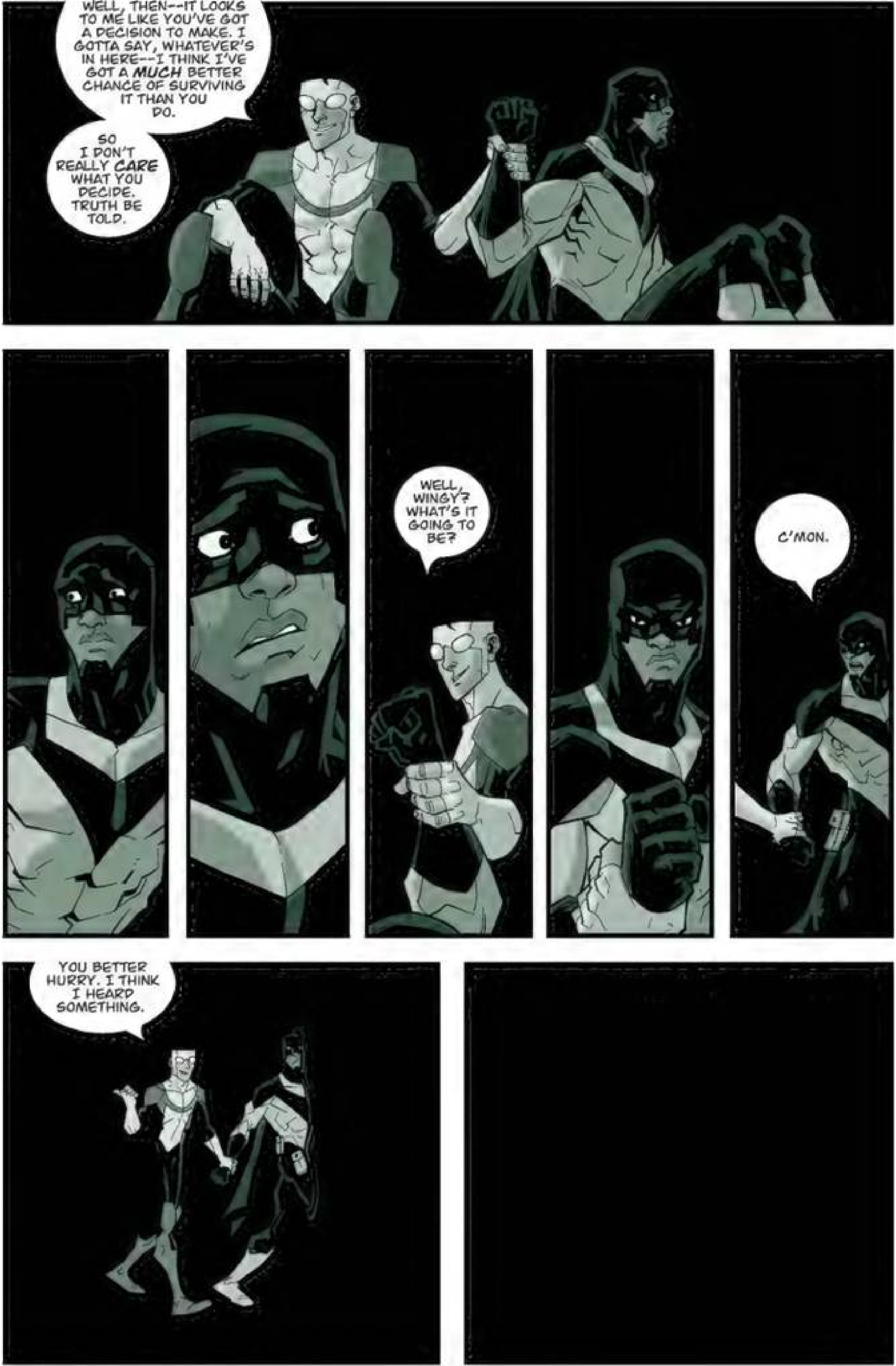

I DON'T KNOW... I'VE BEEN HERE FOR **HOURS.** I'M NOT SEEING ANY SIGN OF THE GUY. YOU SURE THIS ISN'T A HOAX LIKE THAT RED RUSH THING?
NOT ACCORDING TO MY SOURCES.
WHOA! HOLD ON, I THINK I SEE HIM!
DARKWING, I PRESUME? NICE PLACE YOU GOT HERE-- LOTS OF **SHADE.**
WHAT DO YOU **WANT?**
SECRETS TO IMMORTALITY. YOU GOT ANY POINTERS?
I DON'T-- **OH,** YOU THINK I'M **HIM,** DON'T YOU?
I'M SIMPLY CONTINUING THE **LEGACY.** I WAS NIGHT BOY. HIS ASSISTANT.

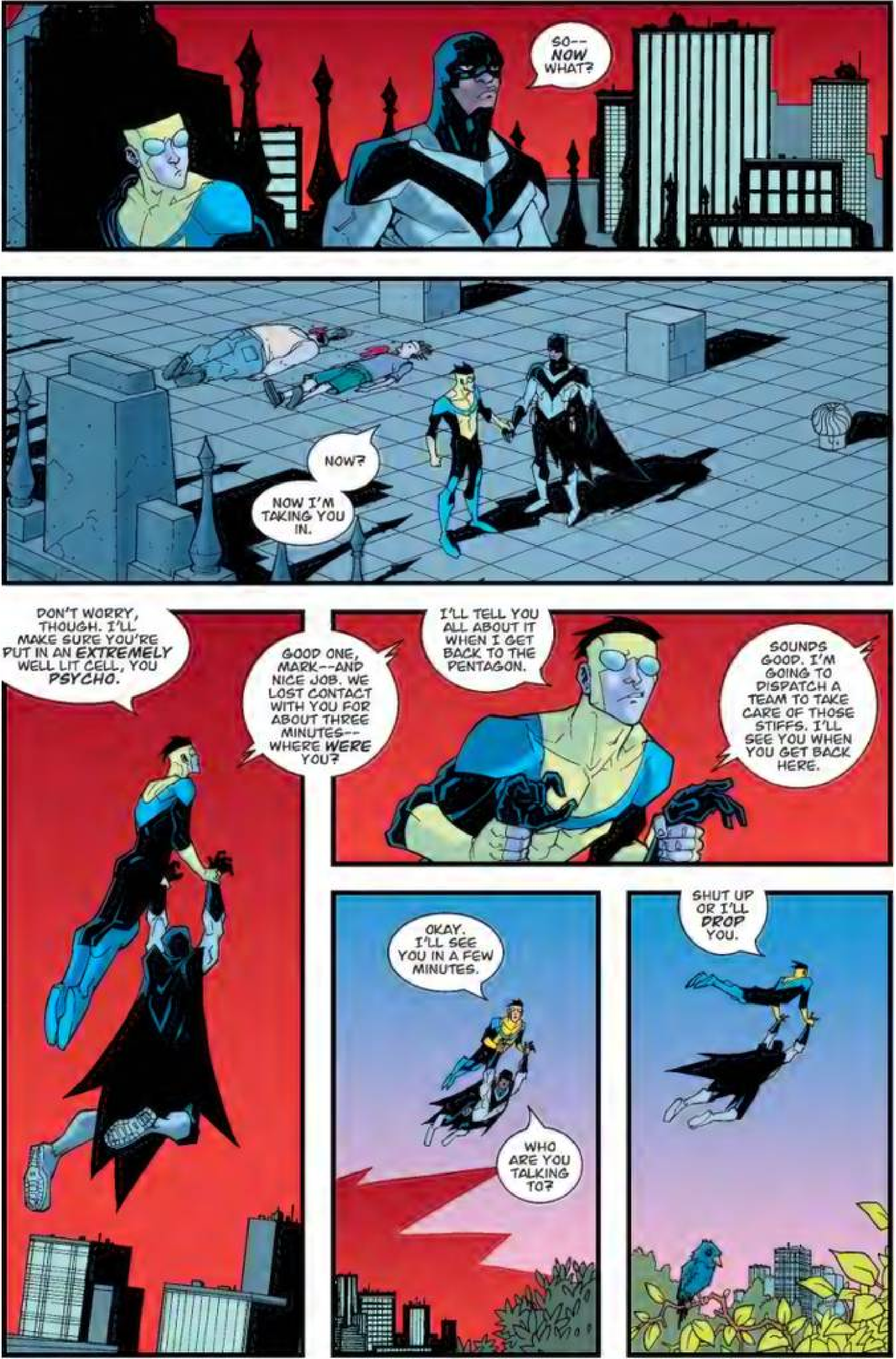

ASSISTANT? YOU MEAN "SIDEKICK?"
WE DON'T USE THAT TERM. IT'S **DEMEANING.**
HEH, GOOD ONE-- REALLY--
OH, WAIT... YOU'RE **SERIOUS.**
OH, JEEZ!! ARE THOSE GUYS--I MEAN--I THOUGHT THEY WERE JUST KNOCKED OUT! THEY'RE NOT--
DEAD? YES.
I WAS TOO LATE TO SAVE THEM.
SAVE THEM? WHO ATTACKED THEM UP **HERE?**
AND WHY WERE YOU JUST **STANDING** THERE WHEN I GOT HERE?
WHY AREN'T WE GOING AFTER THE BAD GUY?
WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?
YOU'RE ASKING TOO MANY QUESTIONS.

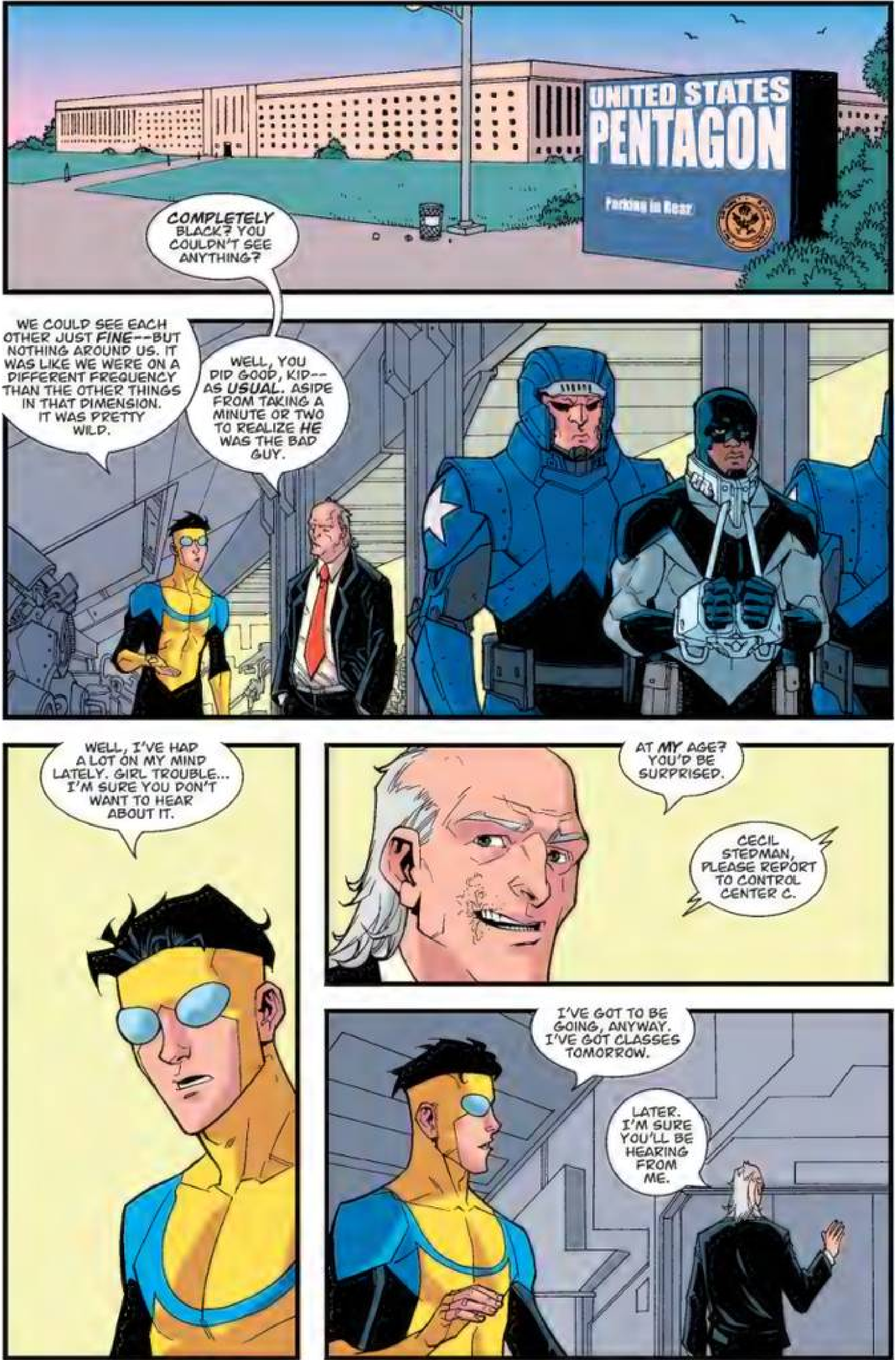

WELL--GIVE ME AT LEAST ONE ANSWER! WHY ARE YOU ATTACKING ME?
AM I MISSING SOMETHING HERE?
IT'S HIM, MARK. HE'S THE ONE WHO KILLED THEM. THE KID'S LOST IT. TAKE HIM DOWN.
MAN-- THAT'S EMBARRASSING. GOTCHA, WILL DO.
TALKING TO YOURSELF? HMPH. FIGURES.
CRAZY MUST RUN IN THE FAMILY.
I'M NOT THE ONE UP HERE KILLING GUYS.
DID YOU REALLY EXPECT THAT TO DO SOMETHING?
YES.
DISTRACT YOU.
KRAK!

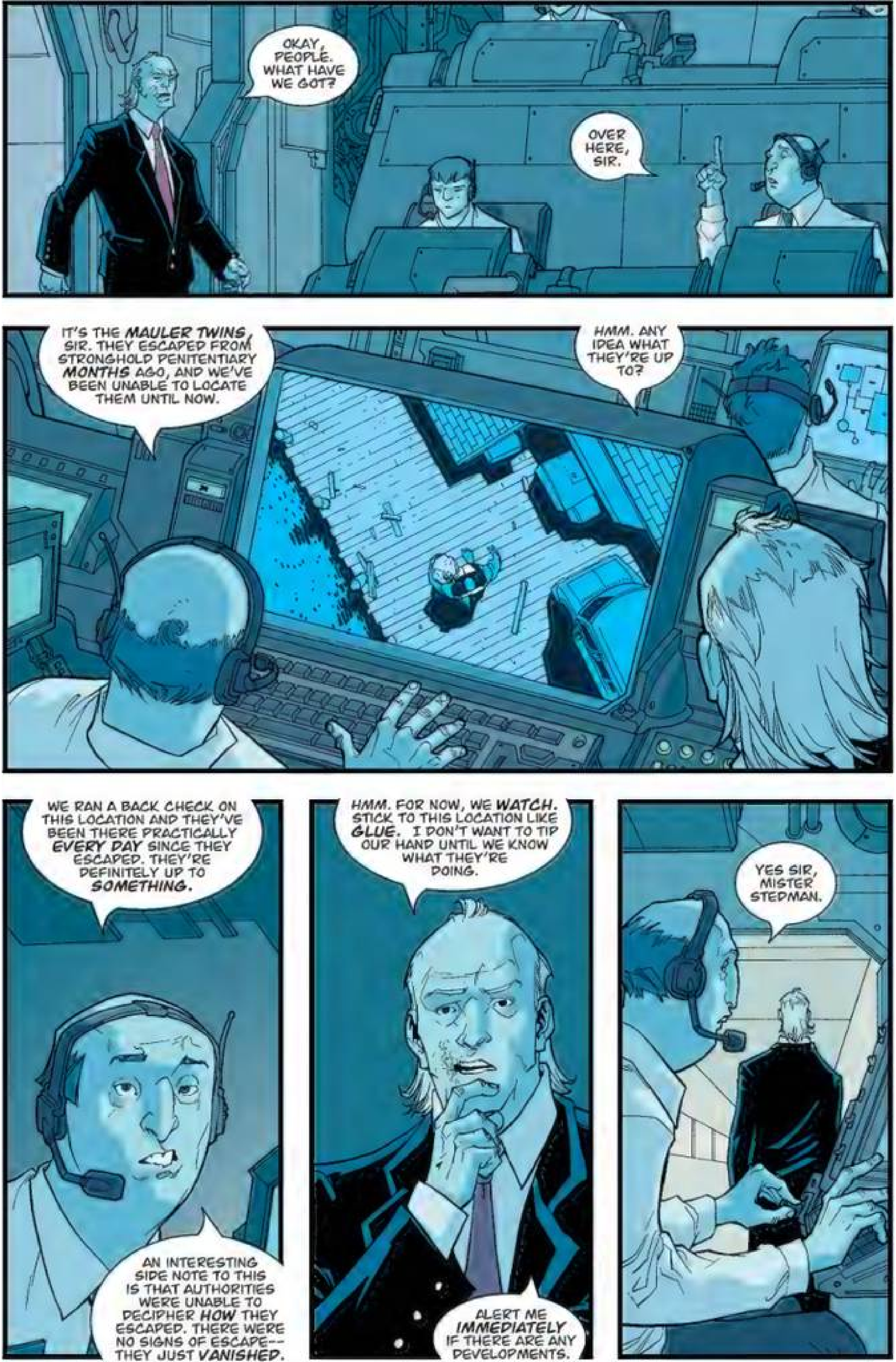

I FELT THAT-- WHAT GIVES? AREN'T YOU JUST A NORMAL GUY LIKE THE ORIGINAL?
NOT QUITE. MY PREDECESSOR WAS DEVELOPING THIS MICRO THIN EXOSKELETON BEFORE YOUR FATHER KILLED HIM.
IT'S QUITE USEFUL.
BUT THAT'S JUST THE BEGINNING OF MY POWERS.
SEE? I'M FAR FROM A "NORMAL GUY".
THOP!
I SAID I FELT THAT, NOT THAT IT HURT. DON'T GET TOO CARRIED AWAY, OKAY?
POW!!
IN FACT, I THINK I'LL PUT A STOP TO THAT RIGHT NOW.
GOOD IDEA!
ULP.

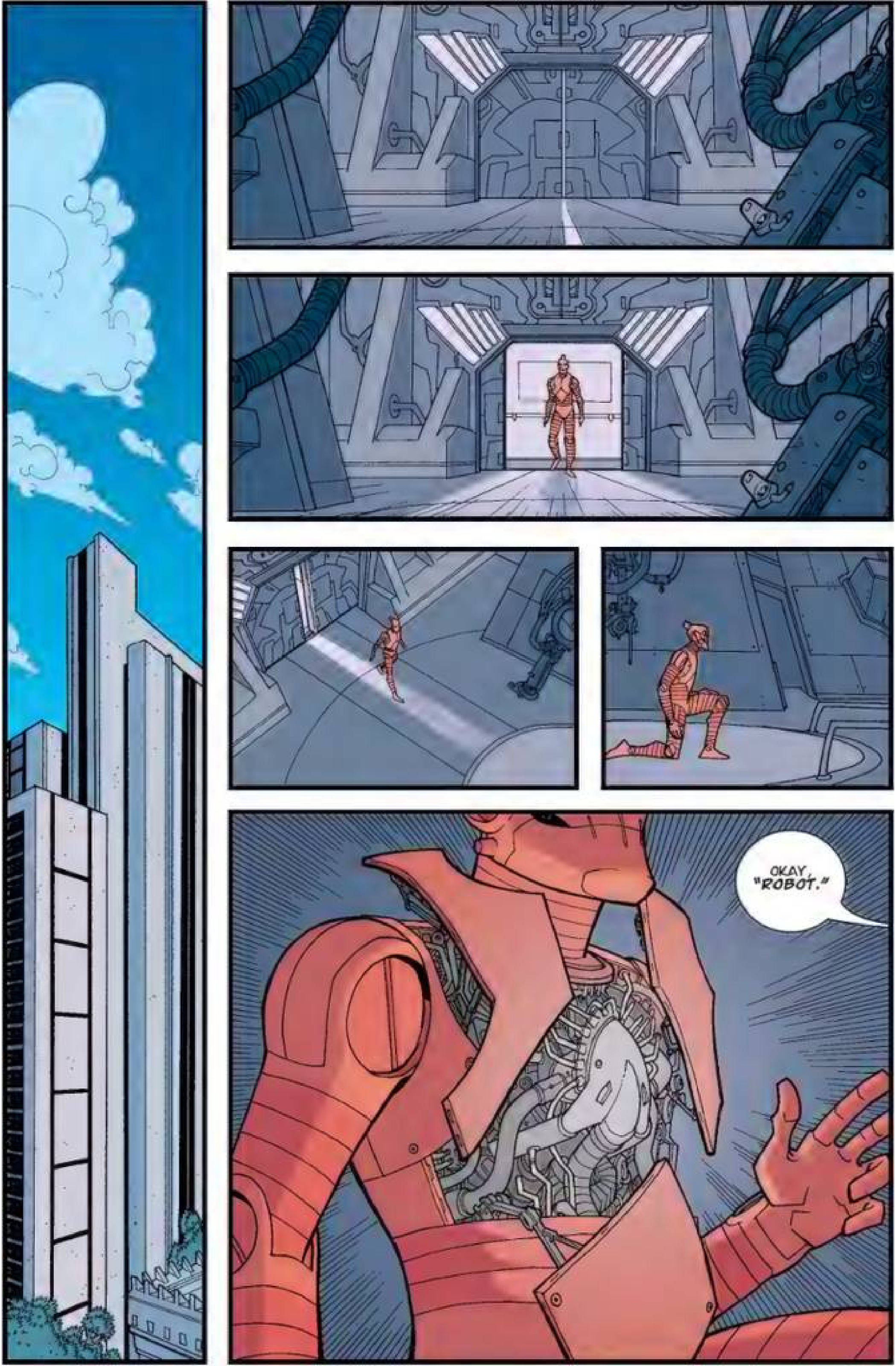

I'M GOING TO LEAVE YOU HERE TO ROT, MEDDLER.
AT LEAST TELL ME WHERE HERE IS?
KRAK!
LET!
KRAK!
ME!
GO!
KRAK!
WHY? SO YOU CAN LEAVE ME HERE? ARE YOU STUPID? I'D HIT YOU BACK BUT I'M AFRAID I'D KILL YOU.
YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND! THIS IS THE SHADOWVERSE. THERE ARE THINGS HERE--DARK THINGS.
WE CAN'T EVEN SEE THEM. WE CAN'T LINGER HERE--THEY COULD BE ON TOP OF US AND WE WOULDN'T EVEN KNOW IT UNTIL IT WAS TOO LATE.


WELL, THEN--IT LOOKS TO ME LIKE YOU'VE GOT A DECISION TO MAKE. I GOTTA SAY, WHATEVER'S IN HERE--I THINK I'VE GOT A *MUCH* BETTER CHANCE OF SURVIVING IT THAN YOU DO.
SO I DON'T REALLY *CARE* WHAT YOU DECIDE. TRUTH BE TOLD.
WELL, WINGY? WHAT'S IT GOING TO BE?
C'MON.
YOU BETTER HURRY. I THINK I HEARD SOMETHING.


SO-- NOW WHAT?
NOW?
NOW I'M TAKING YOU IN.
DON'T WORRY, THOUGH. I'LL MAKE SURE YOU'RE PUT IN AN EXTREMELY WELL LIT CELL, YOU PSYCHO.
GOOD ONE, MARK--AND NICE JOB. WE LOST CONTACT WITH YOU FOR ABOUT THREE MINUTES-- WHERE WERE YOU?
I'LL TELL YOU ALL ABOUT IT WHEN I GET BACK TO THE PENTAGON.
SOUNDS GOOD. I'M GOING TO DISPATCH A TEAM TO TAKE CARE OF THOSE STIFFS. I'LL SEE YOU WHEN YOU GET BACK HERE.
OKAY. I'LL SEE YOU IN A FEW MINUTES.
WHO ARE YOU TALKING TO?
SHUT UP OR I'LL DROP YOU.

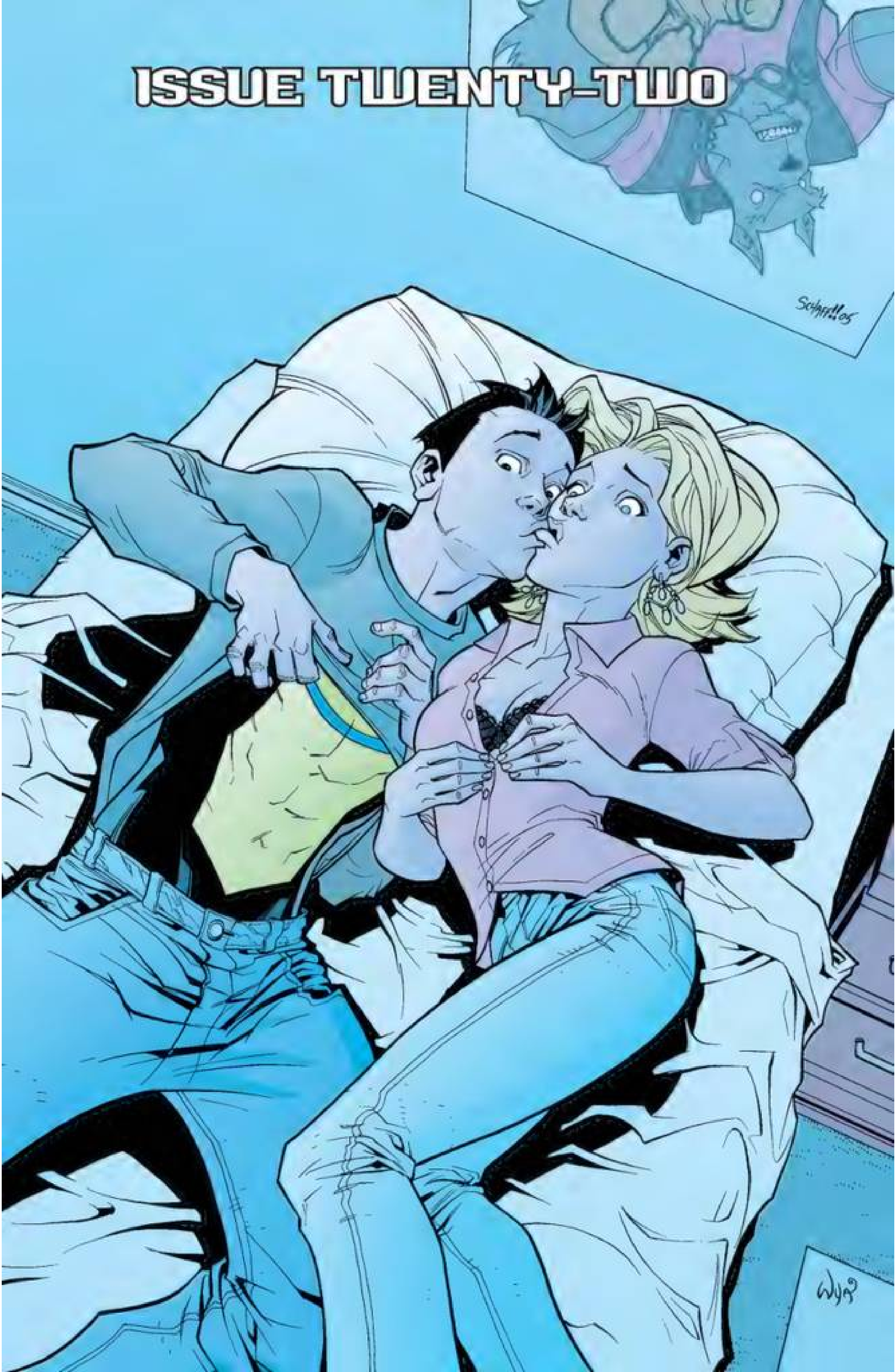

UNITED STATES PENTAGON
Parking in Rear
COMPLETELY BLACK? YOU COULDN'T SEE ANYTHING?
WE COULD SEE EACH OTHER JUST FINE--BUT NOTHING AROUND US. IT WAS LIKE WE WERE ON A DIFFERENT FREQUENCY THAN THE OTHER THINGS IN THAT DIMENSION. IT WAS PRETTY WILD.
WELL, YOU DID GOOD, KID-- AS USUAL. ASIDE FROM TAKING A MINUTE OR TWO TO REALIZE HE WAS THE BAD GUY.
WELL, I'VE HAD A LOT ON MY MIND LATELY. GIRL TROUBLE... I'M SURE YOU DON'T WANT TO HEAR ABOUT IT.
AT MY AGE? YOU'D BE SURPRISED.
CECIL STEDMAN, PLEASE REPORT TO CONTROL CENTER C.
I'VE GOT TO BE GOING, ANYWAY. I'VE GOT CLASSES TOMORROW.
LATER. I'M SURE YOU'LL BE HEARING FROM ME.

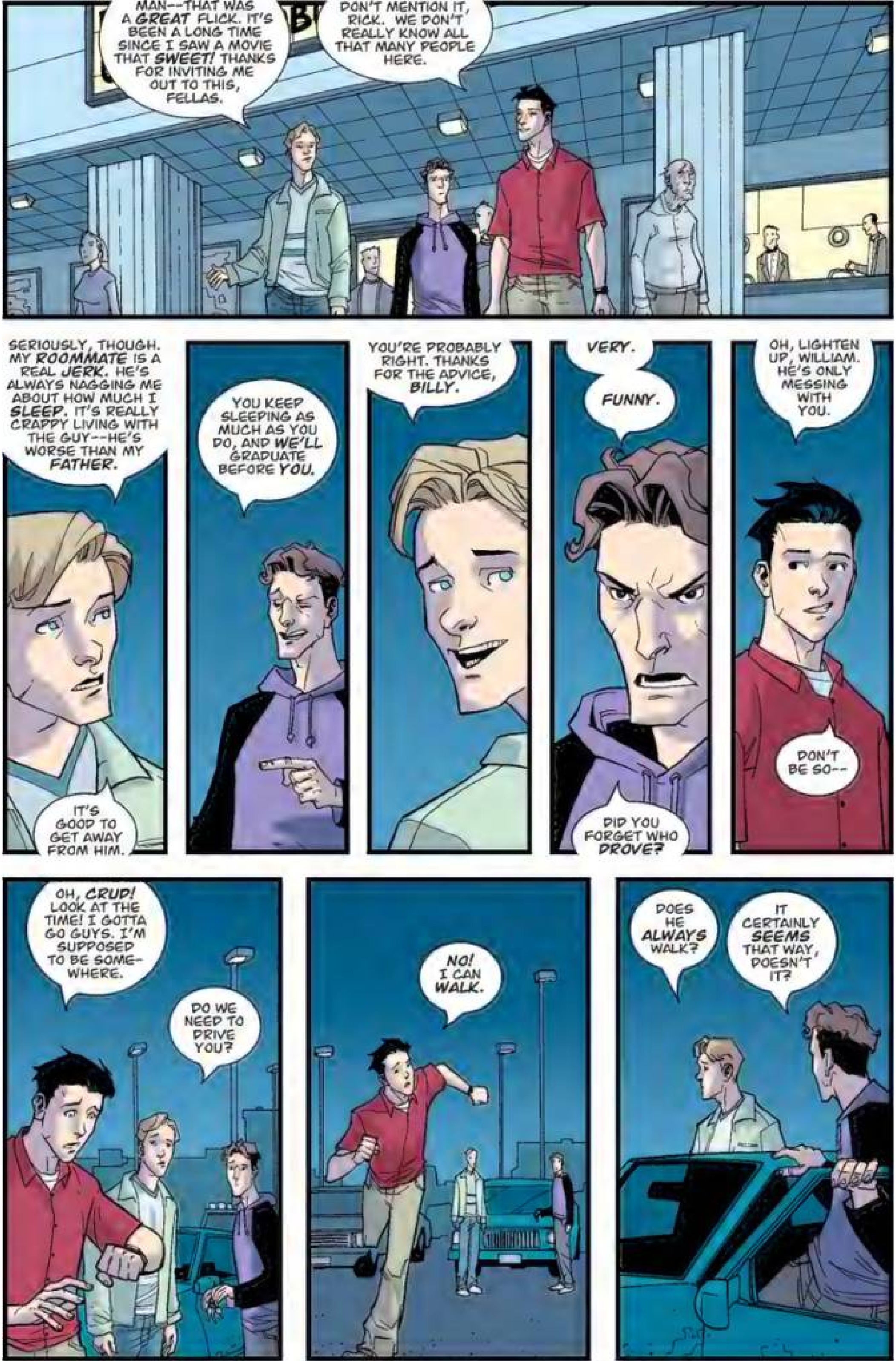

OKAY, PEOPLE. WHAT HAVE WE GOT?
OVER HERE, SIR.
IT'S THE MAULER TWINS, SIR. THEY ESCAPED FROM STRONGHOLD PENITENTIARY MONTHS AGO, AND WE'VE BEEN UNABLE TO LOCATE THEM UNTIL NOW.
HMM. ANY IDEA WHAT THEY'RE UP TO?
WE RAN A BACK CHECK ON THIS LOCATION AND THEY'VE BEEN THERE PRACTICALLY EVERY DAY SINCE THEY ESCAPED. THEY'RE DEFINITELY UP TO SOMETHING.
AN INTERESTING SIDE NOTE TO THIS IS THAT AUTHORITIES WERE UNABLE TO DECIPHER HOW THEY ESCAPED. THERE WERE NO SIGNS OF ESCAPE-- THEY JUST VANISHED.
HMM. FOR NOW, WE WATCH. STICK TO THIS LOCATION LIKE GLUE. I DON'T WANT TO TIP OUR HAND UNTIL WE KNOW WHAT THEY'RE DOING.
ALERT ME IMMEDIATELY IF THERE ARE ANY DEVELOPMENTS.
YES SIR, MISTER STEDMAN.

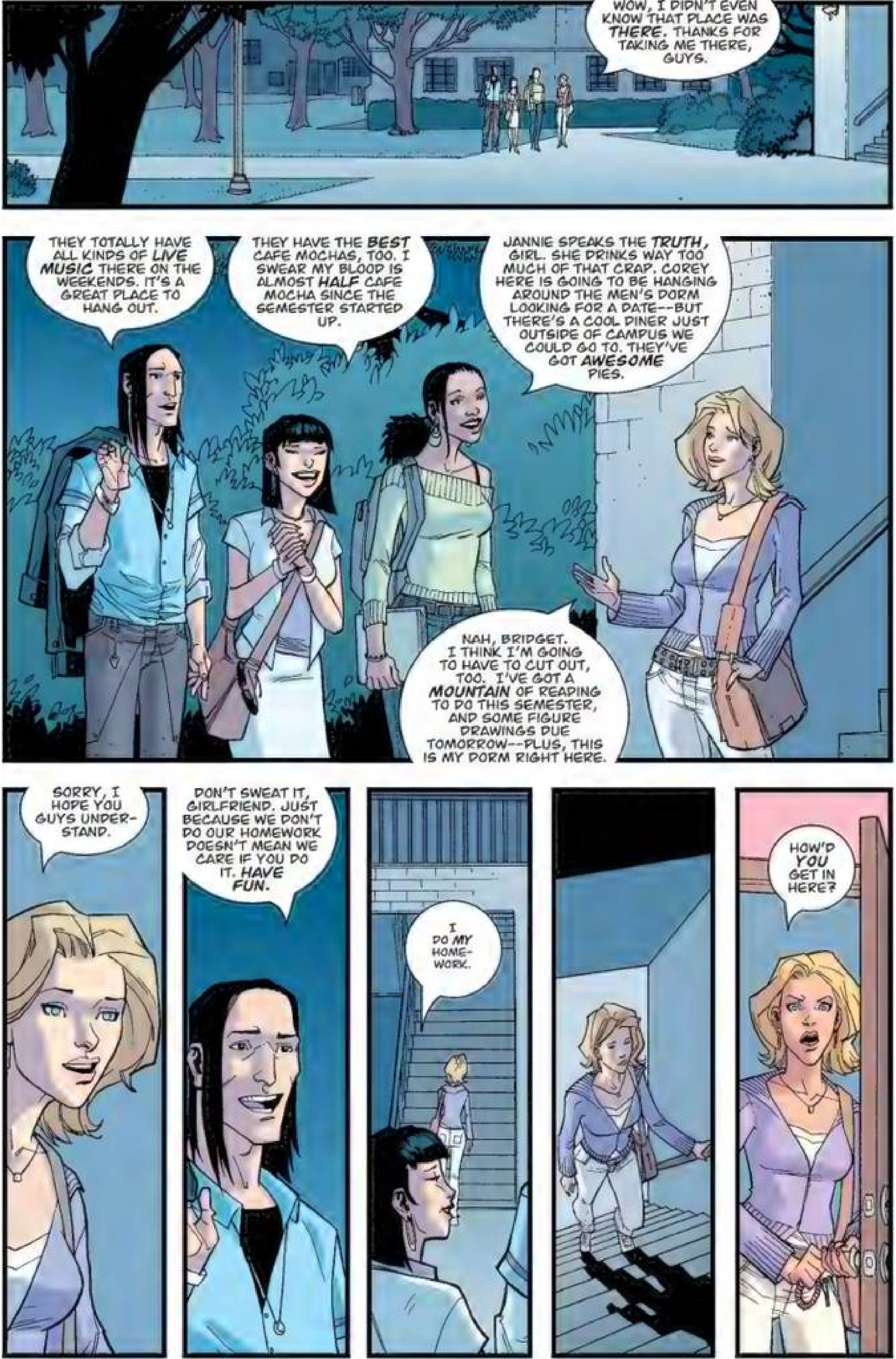

OKAY, "ROBOT."

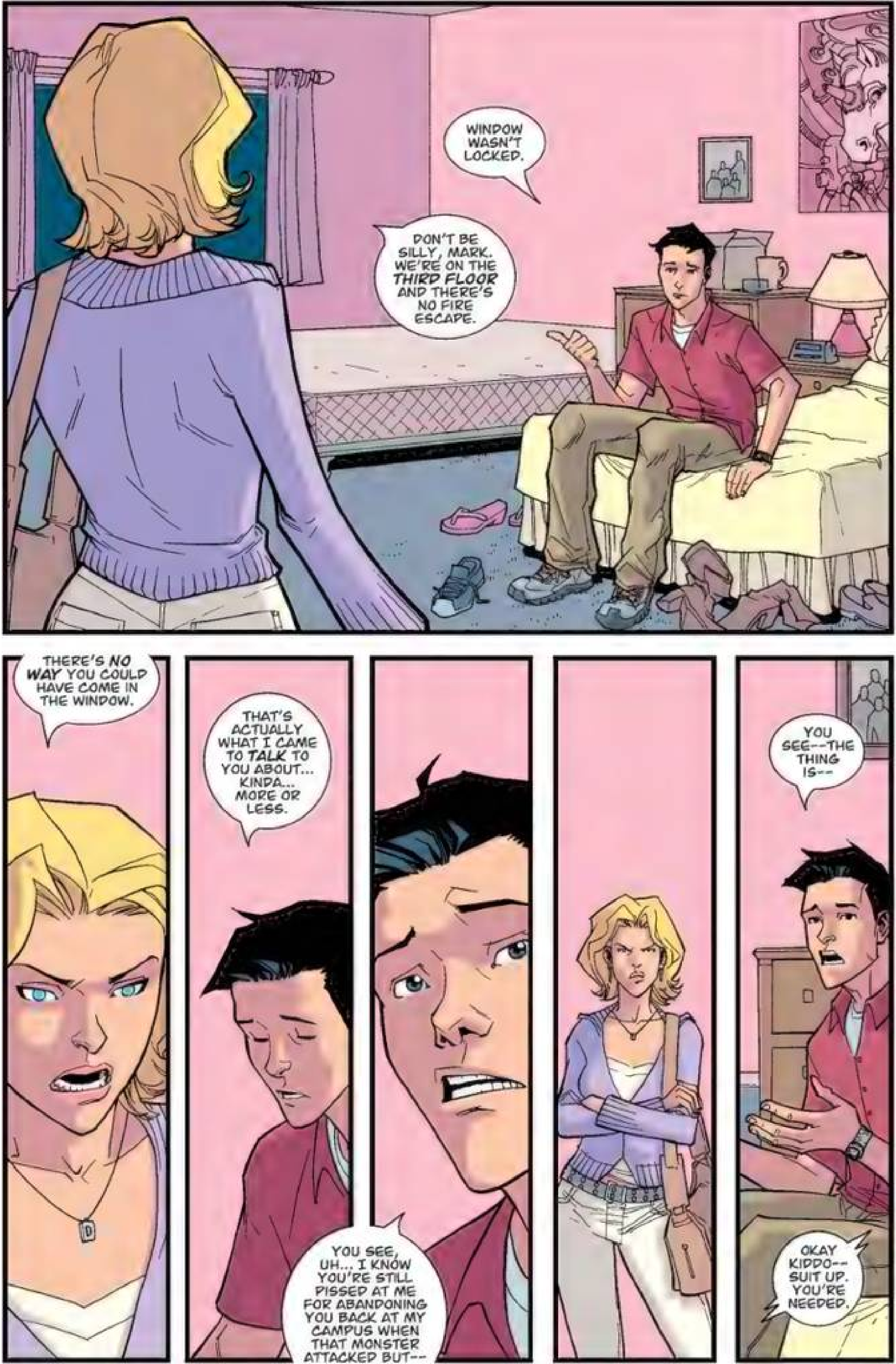
LET'S GET STARTED.

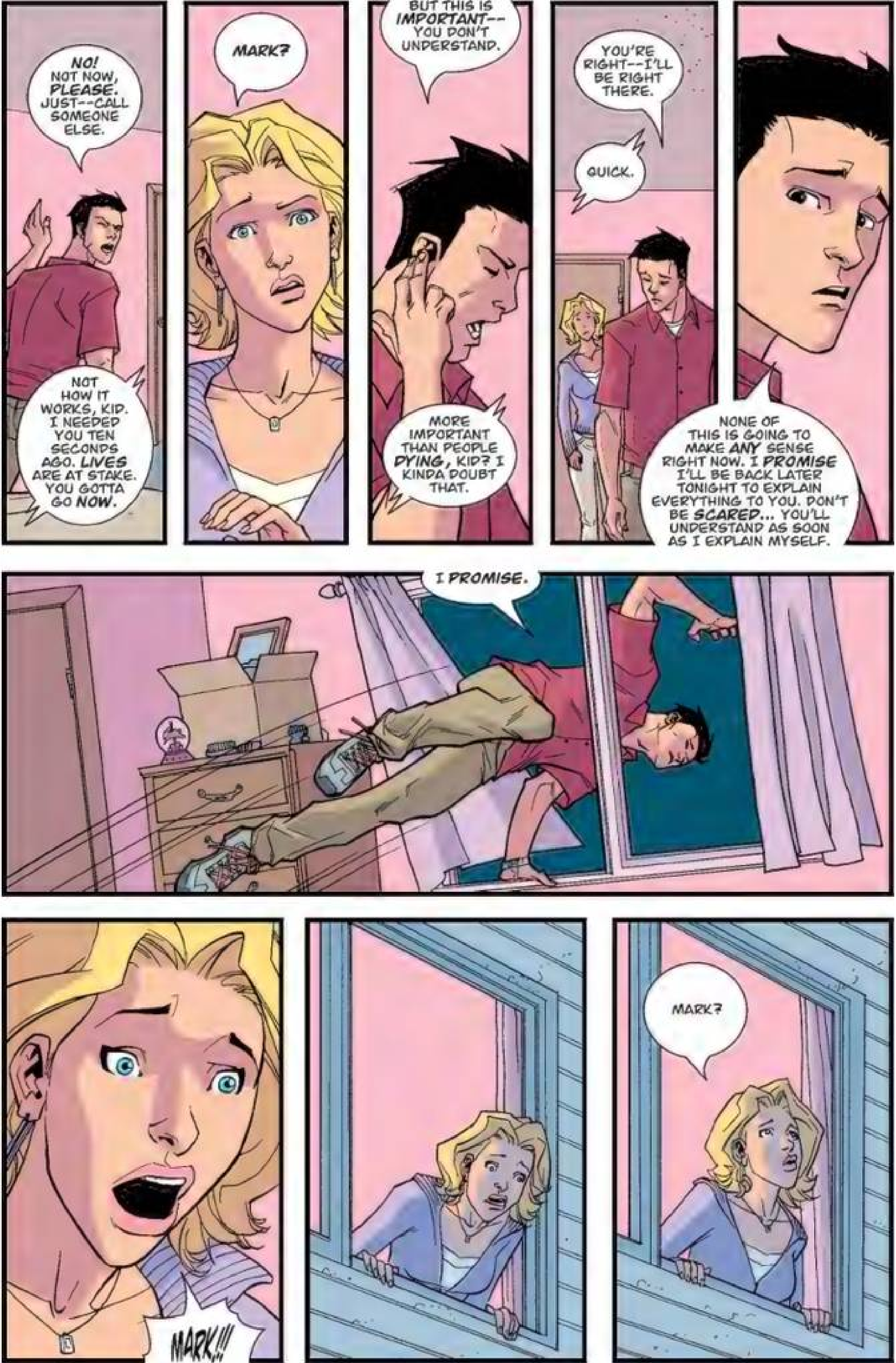
ISSUE TWENTY-TWO

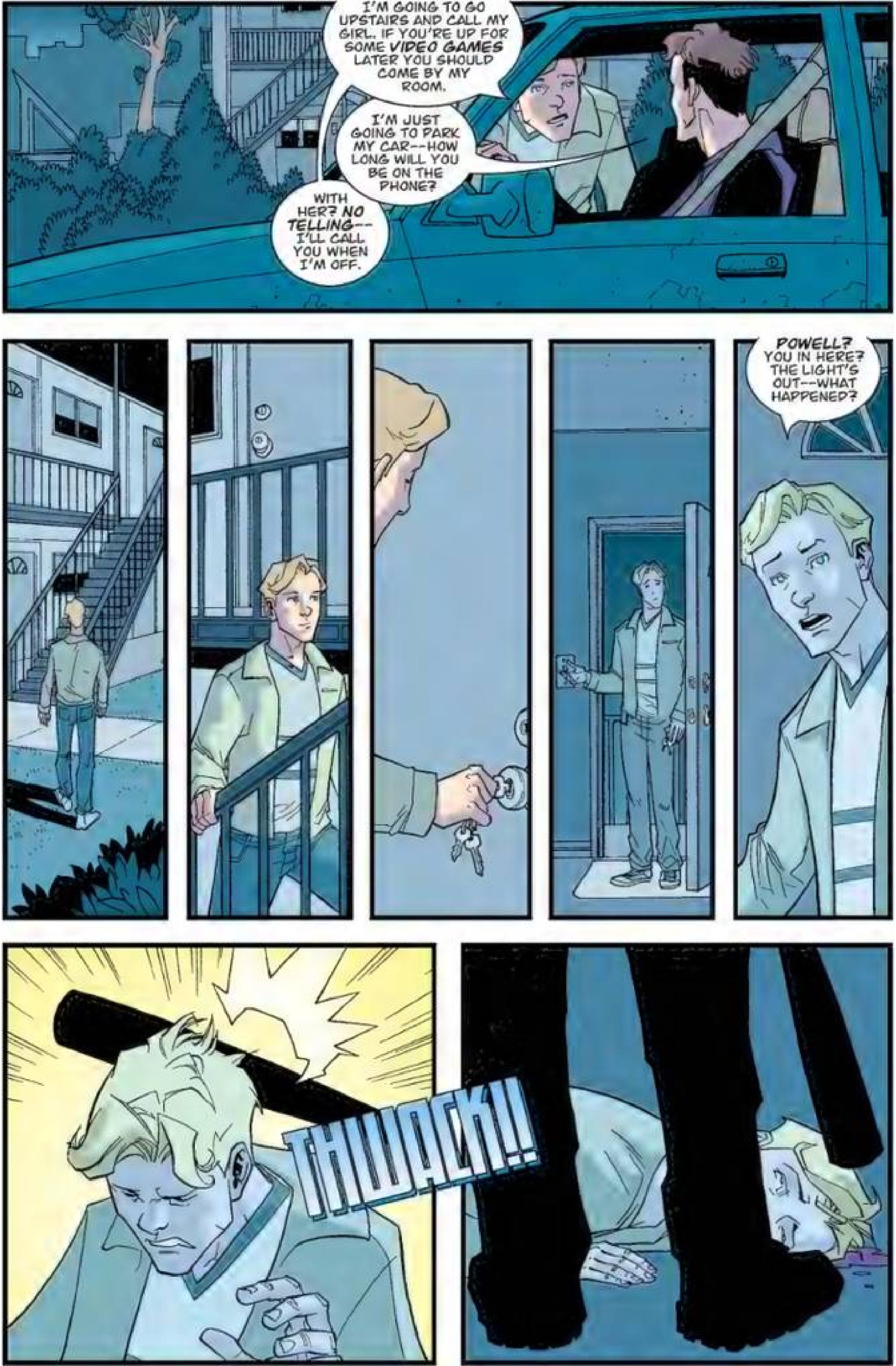


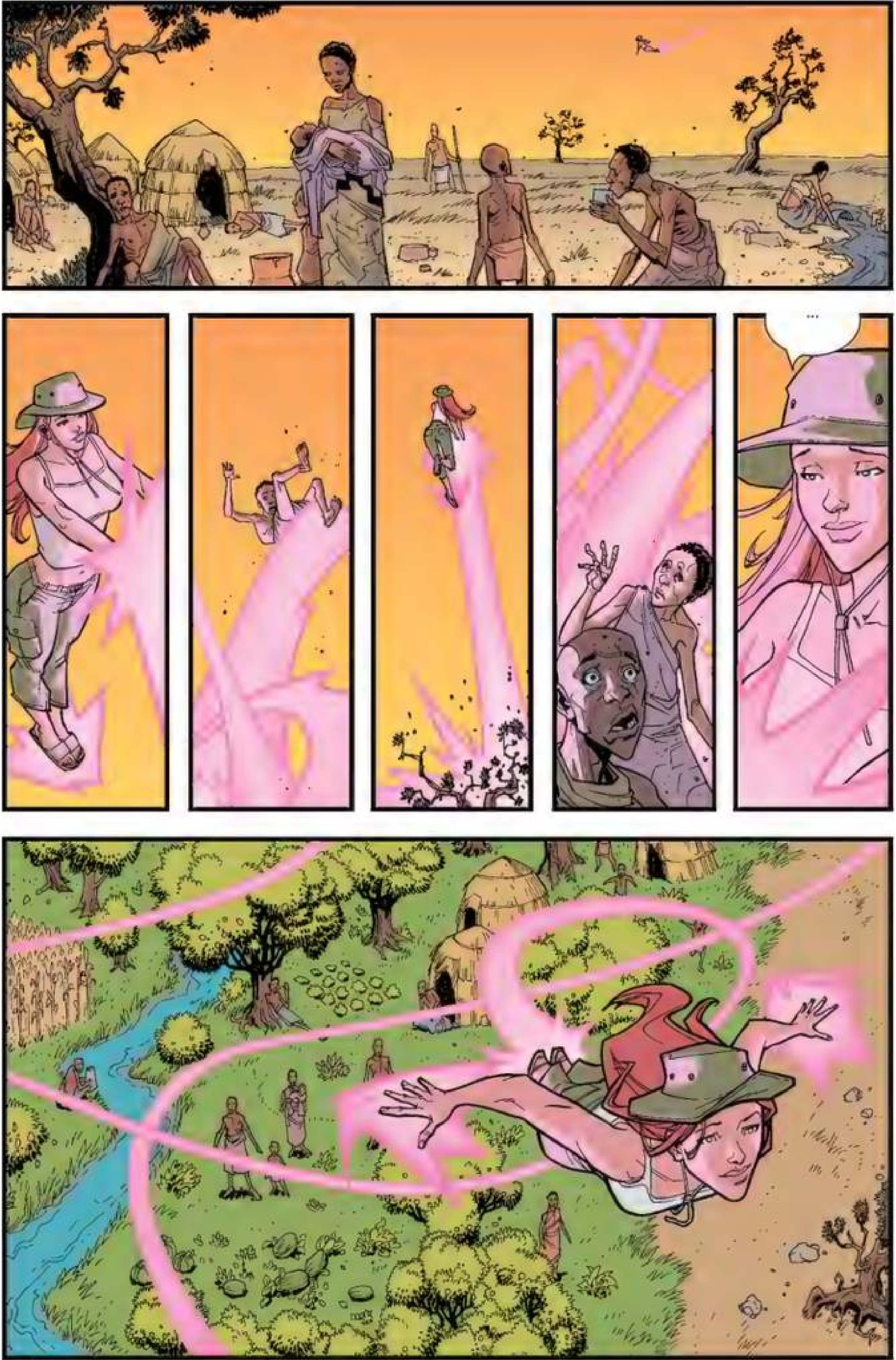

MAN--THAT WAS A GREAT FLICK. IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME SINCE I SAW A MOVIE THAT SWEET! THANKS FOR INVITING ME OUT TO THIS, FELLAS.
DON'T MENTION IT, RICK. WE DON'T REALLY KNOW ALL THAT MANY PEOPLE HERE.
SERIOUSLY, THOUGH. MY ROOMMATE IS A REAL JERK. HE'S ALWAYS NAGGING ME ABOUT HOW MUCH I SLEEP. IT'S REALLY CRAPPY LIVING WITH THE GUY--HE'S WORSE THAN MY FATHER.
IT'S GOOD TO GET AWAY FROM HIM.
YOU KEEP SLEEPING AS MUCH AS YOU DO, AND WE'LL GRADUATE BEFORE YOU.
YOU'RE PROBABLY RIGHT. THANKS FOR THE ADVICE, BILLY.
VERY.
FUNNY.
DID YOU FORGET WHO DROVE?
OH, LIGHTEN UP, WILLIAM. HE'S ONLY MESSING WITH YOU.
DON'T BE SO--
OH, CRUD! LOOK AT THE TIME! I GOTTA GO GUYS. I'M SUPPOSED TO BE SOME-WHERE.
DO WE NEED TO DRIVE YOU?
NO! I CAN WALK.
DOES HE ALWAYS WALK?
IT CERTAINLY SEEMS THAT WAY, DOESN'T IT?

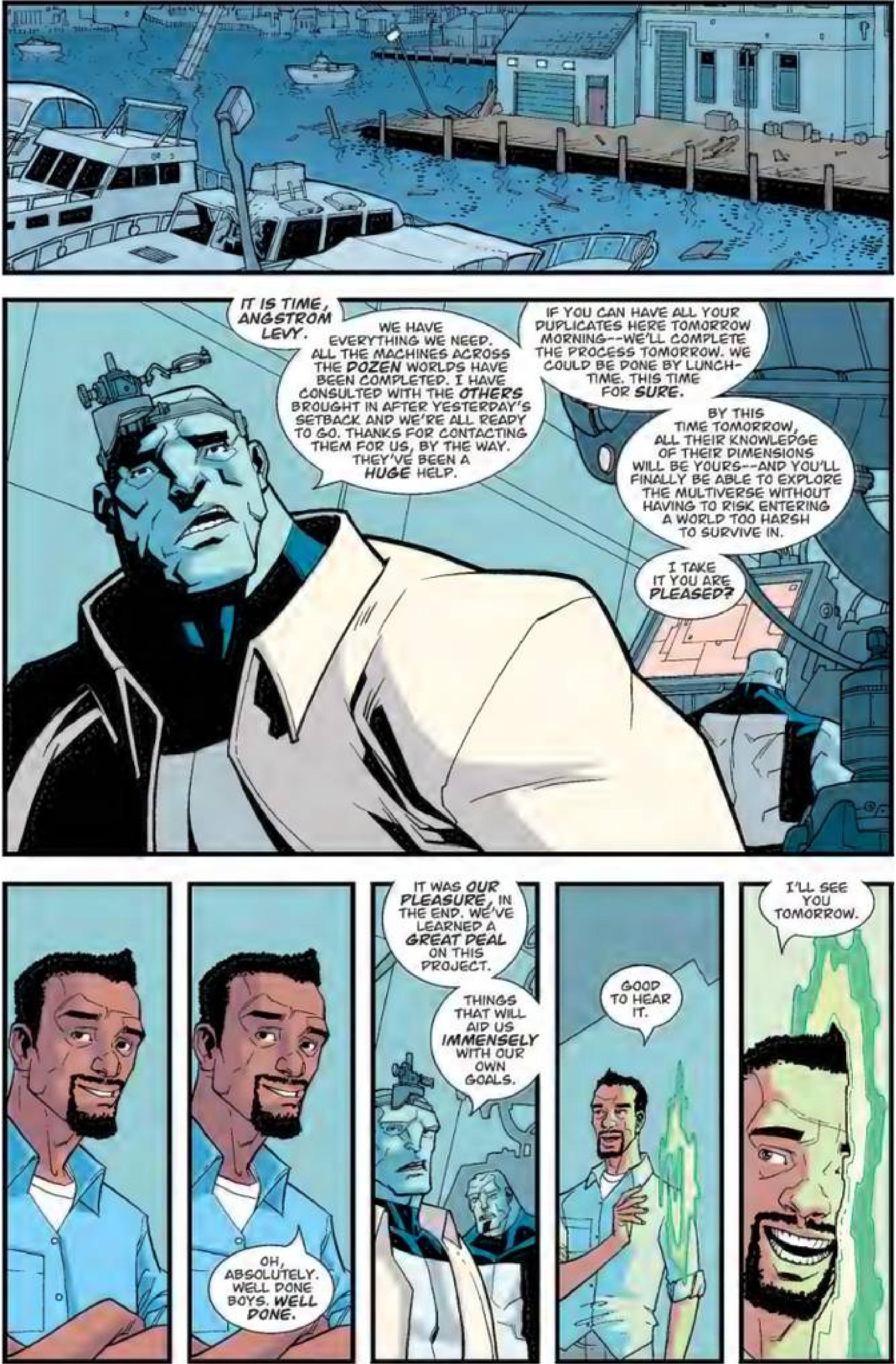

WOW, I DIDN'T EVEN KNOW THAT PLACE WAS THERE. THANKS FOR TAKING ME THERE, GUYS.
THEY TOTALLY HAVE ALL KINDS OF LIVE MUSIC THERE ON THE WEEKENDS. IT'S A GREAT PLACE TO HANG OUT.
THEY HAVE THE BEST CAFE MOCHAS, TOO. I SWEAR MY BLOOD IS ALMOST HALF CAFE MOCHA SINCE THE SEMESTER STARTED UP.
JANNIE SPEAKS THE TRUTH, GIRL. SHE DRINKS WAY TOO MUCH OF THAT CRAP. COREY HERE IS GOING TO BE HANGING AROUND THE MEN'S DORM LOOKING FOR A DATE--BUT THERE'S A COOL DINER JUST OUTSIDE OF CAMPUS WE COULD GO TO. THEY'VE GOT AWESOME PIES.
NAH, BRIDGET. I THINK I'M GOING TO HAVE TO CUT OUT, TOO. I'VE GOT A MOUNTAIN OF READING TO DO THIS SEMESTER, AND SOME FIGURE DRAWINGS DUE TOMORROW--PLUS, THIS IS MY DORM RIGHT HERE.
SORRY, I HOPE YOU GUYS UNDERSTAND.
DON'T SWEAT IT, GIRLFRIEND. JUST BECAUSE WE DON'T DO OUR HOMEWORK DOESN'T MEAN WE CARE IF YOU DO IT. HAVE FUN.
I DO MY HOMEWORK.
HOW'D YOU GET IN HERE?

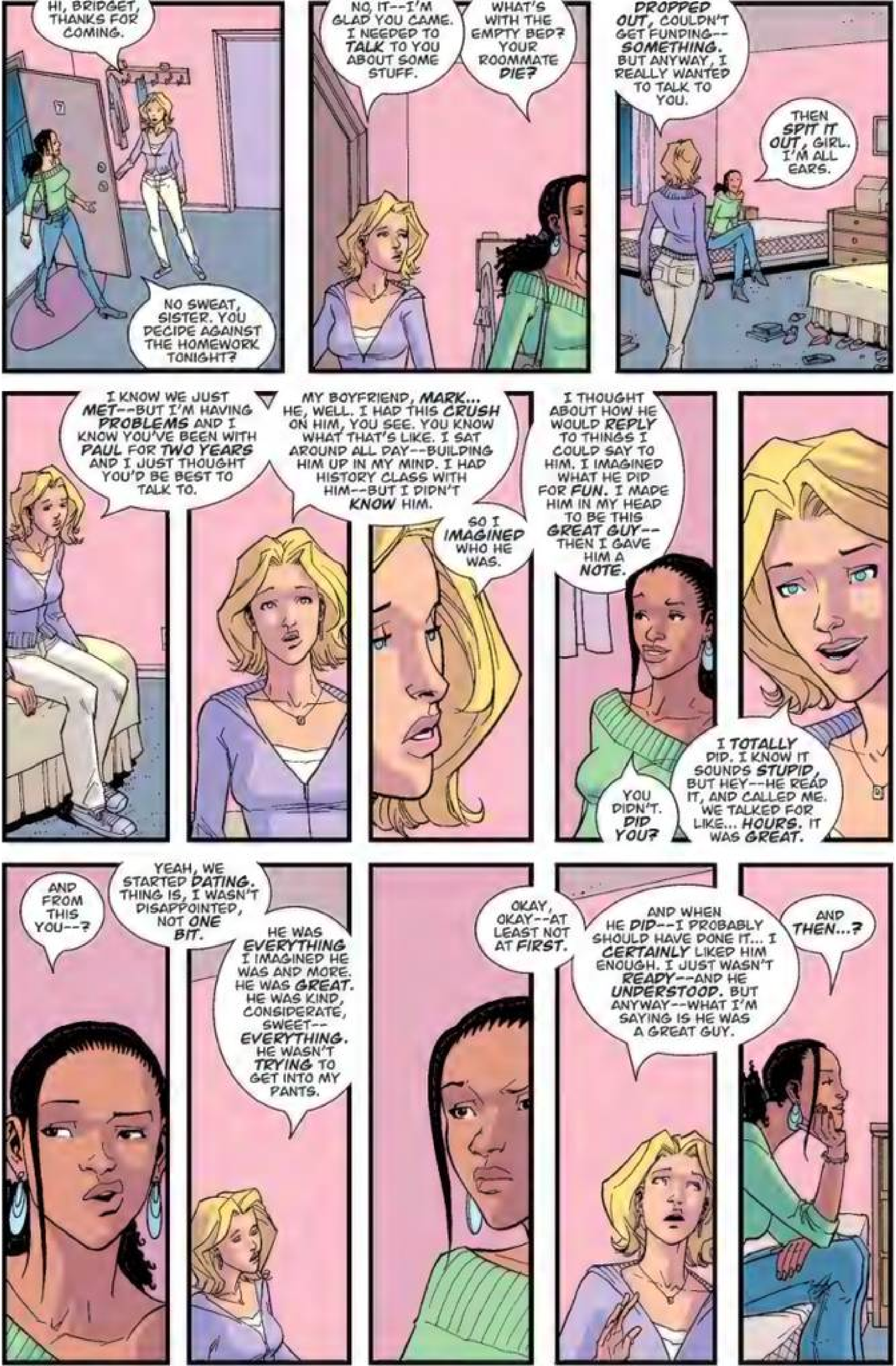

WINDOW WASN'T LOCKED.
DON'T BE SILLY, MARK. WE'RE ON THE *THIRD FLOOR* AND THERE'S NO FIRE ESCAPE.
THERE'S *NO WAY* YOU COULD HAVE COME IN THE WINDOW.
THAT'S ACTUALLY WHAT I CAME TO *TALK* TO YOU ABOUT... KINDA... MORE OR LESS.
YOU SEE, UH... I KNOW YOU'RE STILL PISSED AT ME FOR ABANDONING YOU BACK AT MY CAMPUS WHEN THAT MONSTER ATTACKED BUT--
YOU SEE--THE THING IS--
OKAY KIDDO-- SUIT UP. YOU'RE NEEDED.

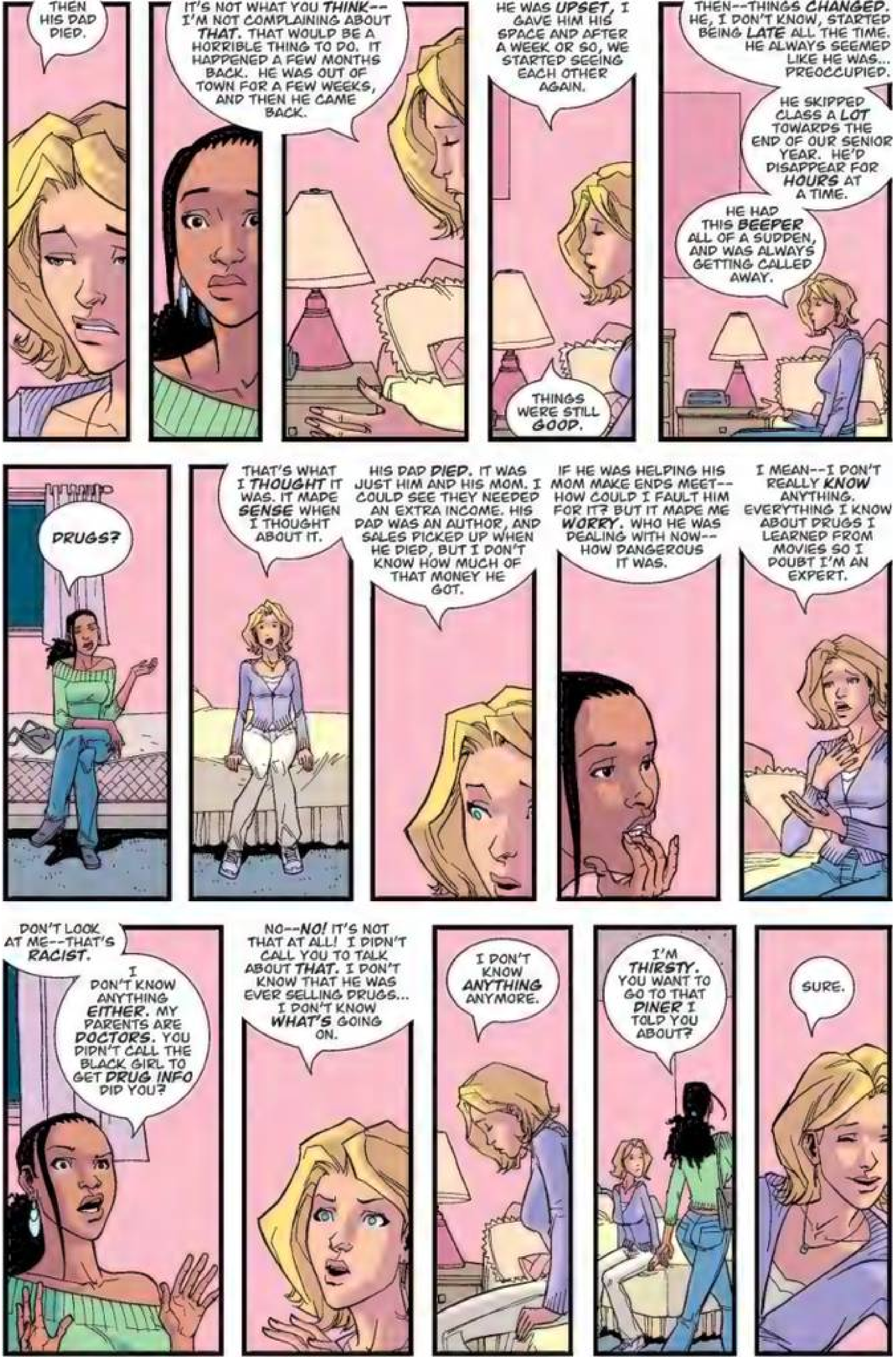

NO! NOT NOW, PLEASE. JUST--CALL SOMEONE ELSE.
NOT HOW IT WORKS, KID. I NEEDED YOU TEN SECONDS AGO. LIVES ARE AT STAKE. YOU GOTTA GO NOW.
MARK?
BUT THIS IS IMPORTANT-- YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND.
MORE IMPORTANT THAN PEOPLE DYING, KID? I KINDA DOUBT THAT.
YOU'RE RIGHT--I'LL BE RIGHT THERE.
QUICK.
NONE OF THIS IS GOING TO MAKE ANY SENSE RIGHT NOW. I PROMISE I'LL BE BACK LATER TONIGHT TO EXPLAIN EVERYTHING TO YOU. DON'T BE SCARED... YOU'LL UNDERSTAND AS SOON AS I EXPLAIN MYSELF.
I PROMISE.
MARK!!!
MARK?

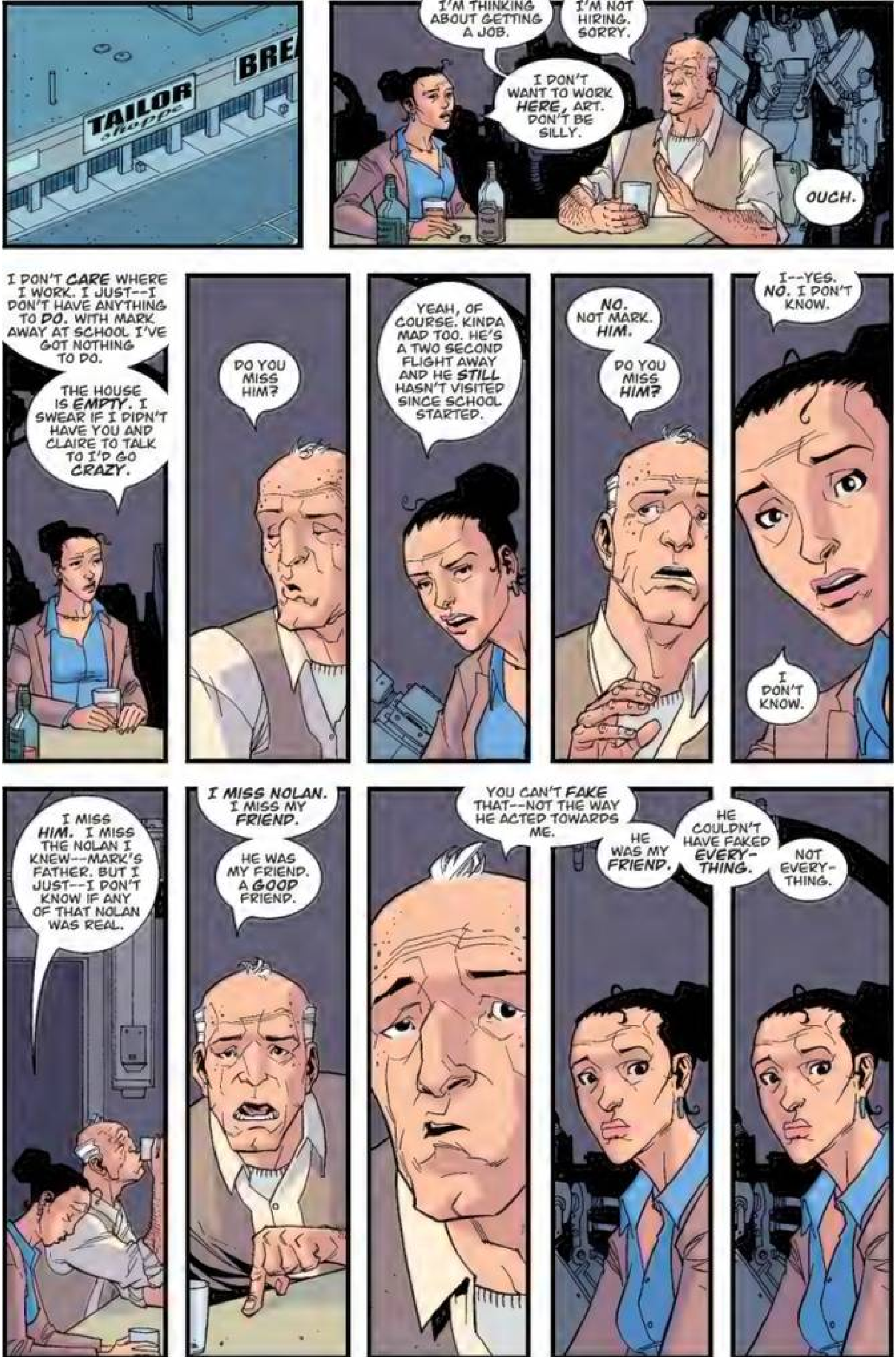

I'M GOING TO GO UPSTAIRS AND CALL MY GIRL. IF YOU'RE UP FOR SOME VIDEO GAMES LATER YOU SHOULD COME BY MY ROOM.
I'M JUST GOING TO PARK MY CAR--HOW LONG WILL YOU BE ON THE PHONE?
WITH HER? NO TELLING-- I'LL CALL YOU WHEN I'M OFF.
POWELL? YOU IN HERE? THE LIGHT'S OUT--WHAT HAPPENED?
THWACK!!

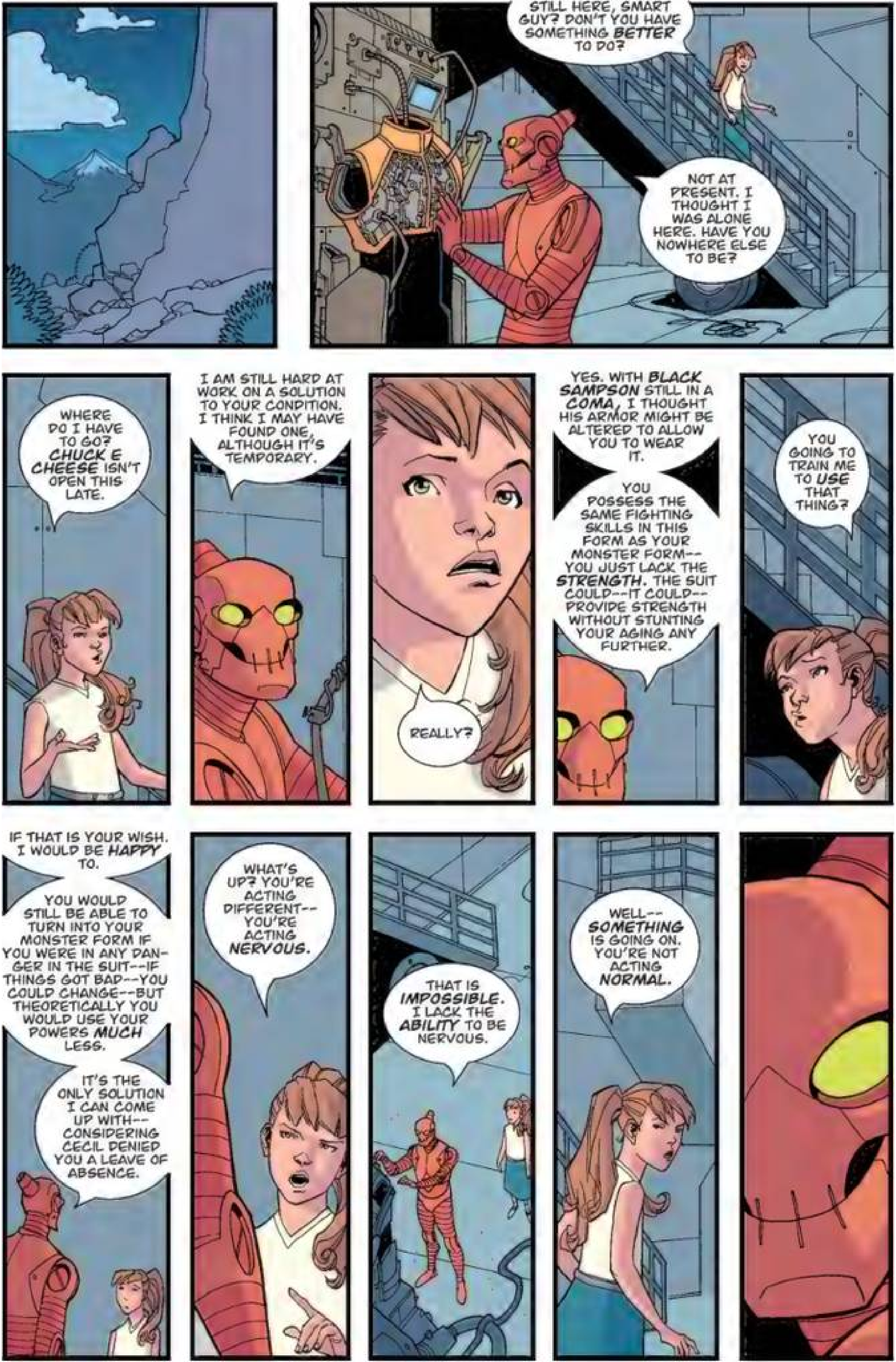


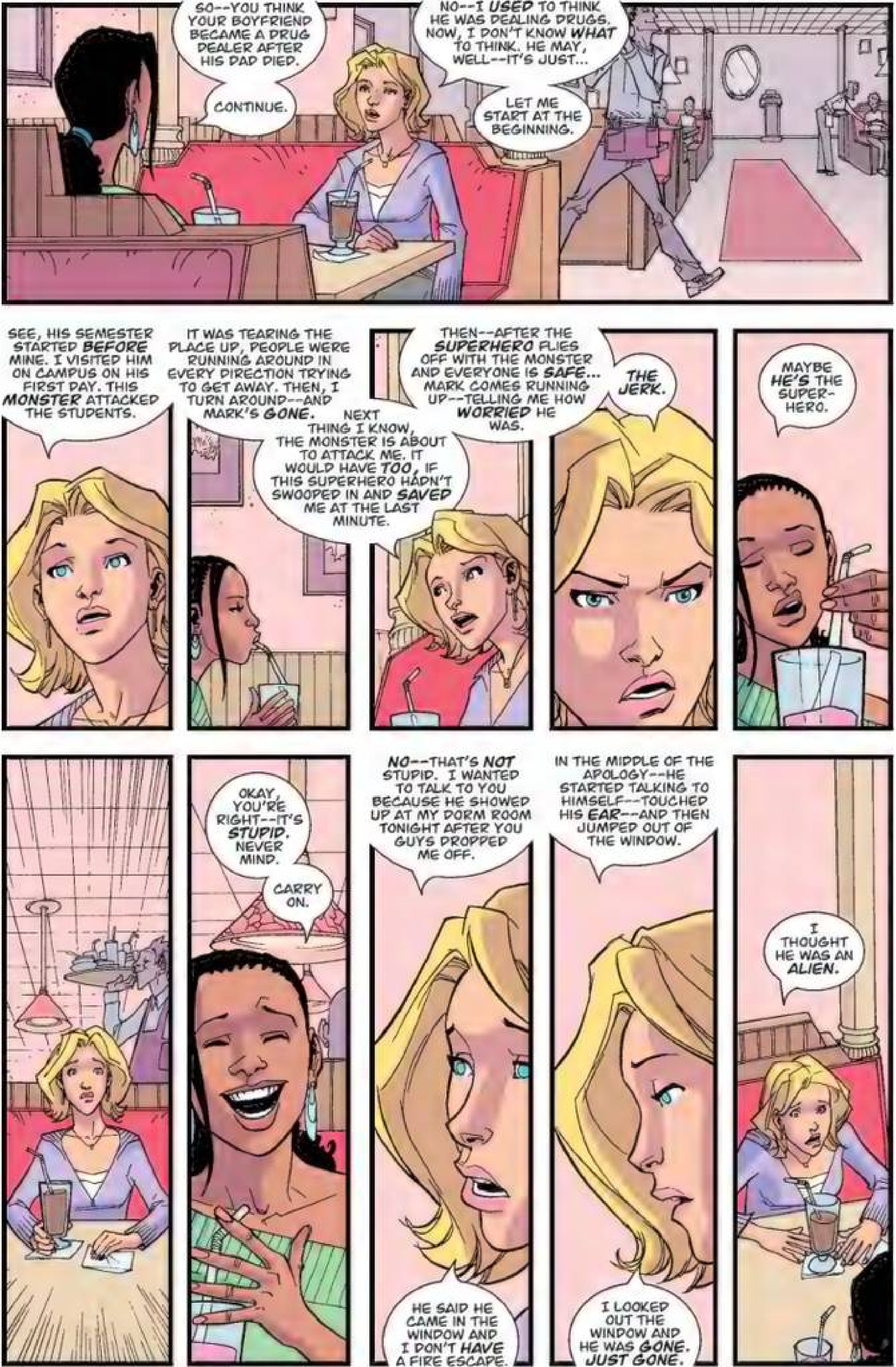

IT IS TIME, ANGSTROM LEVY.
WE HAVE EVERYTHING WE NEED. ALL THE MACHINES ACROSS THE DOZEN WORLDS HAVE BEEN COMPLETED. I HAVE CONSULTED WITH THE OTHERS BROUGHT IN AFTER YESTERDAY'S SETBACK AND WE'RE ALL READY TO GO. THANKS FOR CONTACTING THEM FOR US, BY THE WAY. THEY'VE BEEN A HUGE HELP.
IF YOU CAN HAVE ALL YOUR DUPLICATES HERE TOMORROW MORNING--WE'LL COMPLETE THE PROCESS TOMORROW. WE COULD BE DONE BY LUNCHTIME. THIS TIME FOR SURE.
BY THIS TIME TOMORROW, ALL THEIR KNOWLEDGE OF THEIR DIMENSIONS WILL BE YOURS--AND YOU'LL FINALLY BE ABLE TO EXPLORE THE MULTIVERSE WITHOUT HAVING TO RISK ENTERING A WORLD TOO HARSH TO SURVIVE IN.
I TAKE IT YOU ARE PLEASED?
OH, ABSOLUTELY. WELL DONE BOYS. WELL DONE.
IT WAS OUR PLEASURE, IN THE END. WE'VE LEARNED A GREAT DEAL ON THIS PROJECT.
THINGS THAT WILL AID US IMMENSELY WITH OUR OWN GOALS.
GOOD TO HEAR IT.
I'LL SEE YOU TOMORROW.

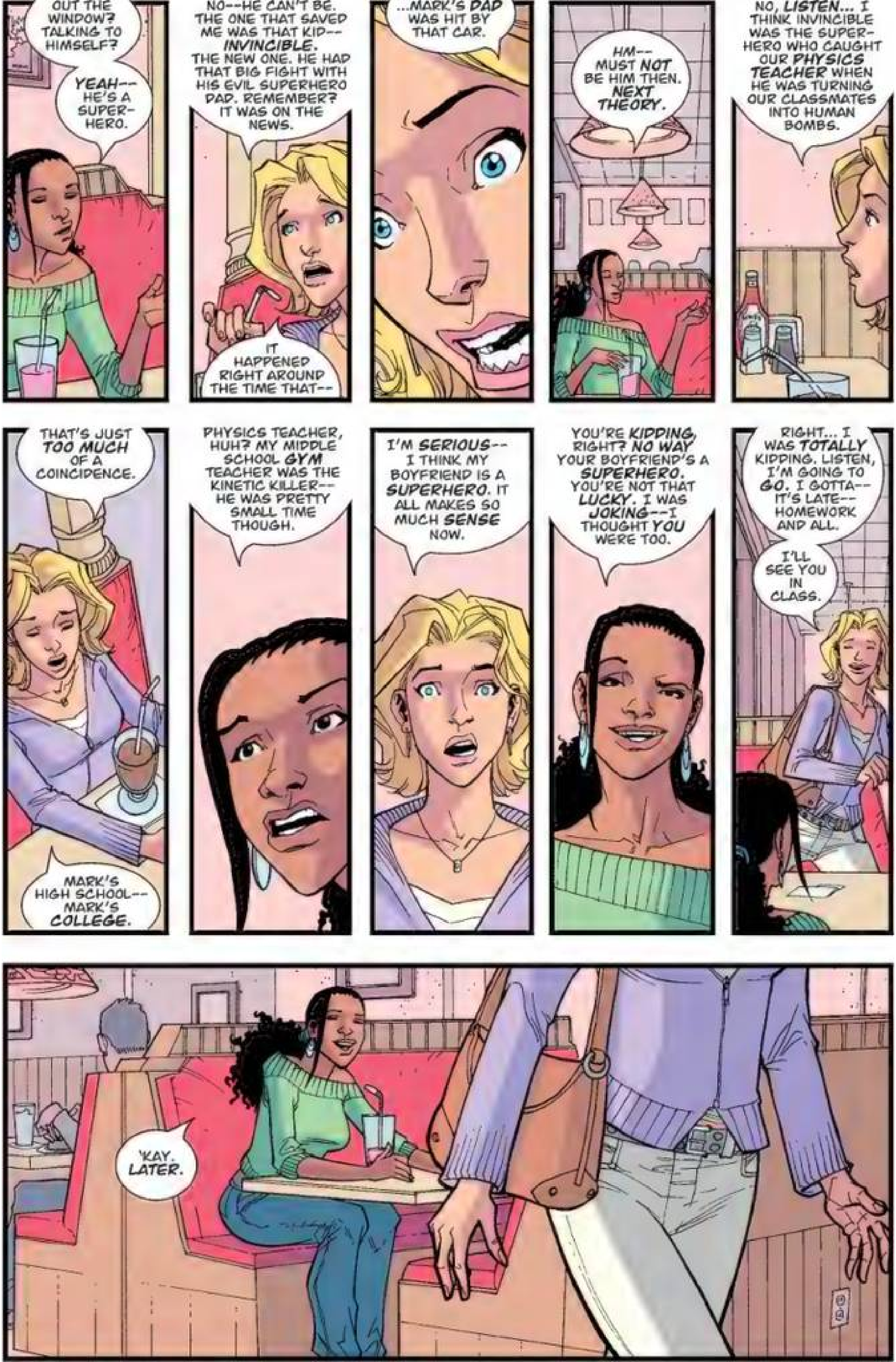

HI, BRIDGET, THANKS FOR COMING.
NO SWEAT, SISTER. YOU DECIDE AGAINST THE HOMEWORK TONIGHT?
NO, IT--I'M GLAD YOU CAME. I NEEDED TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT SOME STUFF.
WHAT'S WITH THE EMPTY BED? YOUR ROOMMATE DIE?
DROPPED OUT, COULDN'T GET FUNDING--SOMETHING. BUT ANYWAY, I REALLY WANTED TO TALK TO YOU.
THEN SPIT IT OUT, GIRL. I'M ALL EARS.
I KNOW WE JUST MET--BUT I'M HAVING PROBLEMS AND I KNOW YOU'VE BEEN WITH PAUL FOR TWO YEARS AND I JUST THOUGHT YOU'D BE BEST TO TALK TO.
MY BOYFRIEND, MARK... HE, WELL. I HAD THIS CRUSH ON HIM, YOU SEE. YOU KNOW WHAT THAT'S LIKE. I SAT AROUND ALL DAY--BUILDING HIM UP IN MY MIND. I HAD HISTORY CLASS WITH HIM--BUT I DIDN'T KNOW HIM.
SO I IMAGINED WHO HE WAS.
I THOUGHT ABOUT HOW HE WOULD REPLY TO THINGS I COULD SAY TO HIM. I IMAGINED WHAT HE DID FOR FUN. I MADE HIM IN MY HEAD TO BE THIS GREAT GUY--THEN I GAVE HIM A NOTE.
YOU DIDN'T. DID YOU?
I TOTALLY DID. I KNOW IT SOUNDS STUPID, BUT HEY--HE READ IT, AND CALLED ME. WE TALKED FOR LIKE... HOURS. IT WAS GREAT.
AND FROM THIS YOU--?
YEAH, WE STARTED DATING. THING IS, I WASN'T DISAPPOINTED, NOT ONE BIT.
HE WAS EVERYTHING I IMAGINED HE WAS AND MORE. HE WAS GREAT. HE WAS KIND, CONSIDERATE, SWEET--EVERYTHING. HE WASN'T TRYING TO GET INTO MY PANTS.
OKAY, OKAY--AT LEAST NOT AT FIRST.
AND WHEN HE DID--I PROBABLY SHOULD HAVE DONE IT... I CERTAINLY LIKED HIM ENOUGH. I JUST WASN'T READY--AND HE UNDERSTOOD. BUT ANYWAY--WHAT I'M SAYING IS HE WAS A GREAT GUY.
AND THEN...?

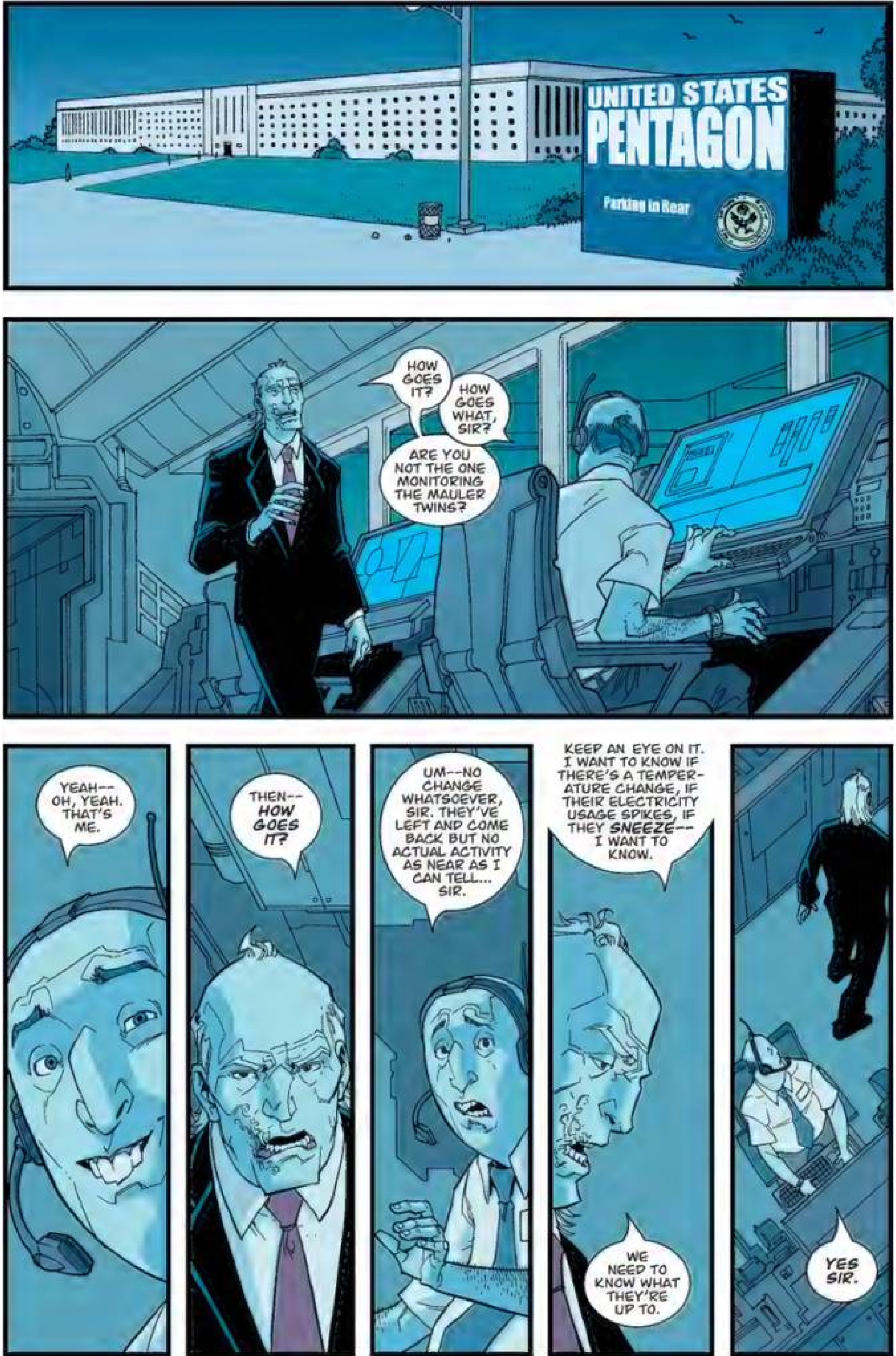

THEN HIS DAD DIED.
IT'S NOT WHAT YOU THINK-- I'M NOT COMPLAINING ABOUT THAT. THAT WOULD BE A HORRIBLE THING TO DO. IT HAPPENED A FEW MONTHS BACK. HE WAS OUT OF TOWN FOR A FEW WEEKS, AND THEN HE CAME BACK.
HE WAS UPSET, I GAVE HIM HIS SPACE AND AFTER A WEEK OR SO, WE STARTED SEEING EACH OTHER AGAIN.
THINGS WERE STILL GOOD.
THEN--THINGS CHANGED. HE, I DON'T KNOW, STARTED BEING LATE ALL THE TIME. HE ALWAYS SEEMED LIKE HE WAS... PREOCCUPIED.
HE SKIPPED CLASS A LOT TOWARDS THE END OF OUR SENIOR YEAR. HE'D DISAPPEAR FOR HOURS AT A TIME.
HE HAD THIS BEEPER ALL OF A SUDDEN, AND WAS ALWAYS GETTING CALLED AWAY.
DRUGS?
THAT'S WHAT I THOUGHT IT WAS. IT MADE SENSE WHEN I THOUGHT ABOUT IT.
HIS DAD DIED. IT WAS JUST HIM AND HIS MOM. I COULD SEE THEY NEEDED AN EXTRA INCOME. HIS DAD WAS AN AUTHOR, AND SALES PICKED UP WHEN HE DIED, BUT I DON'T KNOW HOW MUCH OF THAT MONEY HE GOT.
IF HE WAS HELPING HIS MOM MAKE ENDS MEET-- HOW COULD I FAULT HIM FOR IT? BUT IT MADE ME WORRY. WHO HE WAS DEALING WITH NOW-- HOW DANGEROUS IT WAS.
I MEAN--I DON'T REALLY KNOW ANYTHING. EVERYTHING I KNOW ABOUT DRUGS I LEARNED FROM MOVIES SO I DOUBT I'M AN EXPERT.
DON'T LOOK AT ME--THAT'S RACIST.
I DON'T KNOW ANYTHING EITHER. MY PARENTS ARE DOCTORS. YOU DIDN'T CALL THE BLACK GIRL TO GET DRUG INFO DID YOU?
NO--NO! IT'S NOT THAT AT ALL! I DIDN'T CALL YOU TO TALK ABOUT THAT. I DON'T KNOW THAT HE WAS EVER SELLING DRUGS... I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON.
I DON'T KNOW ANYTHING ANYMORE.
I'M THIRSTY. YOU WANT TO GO TO THAT DINER I TOLD YOU ABOUT?
SURE.

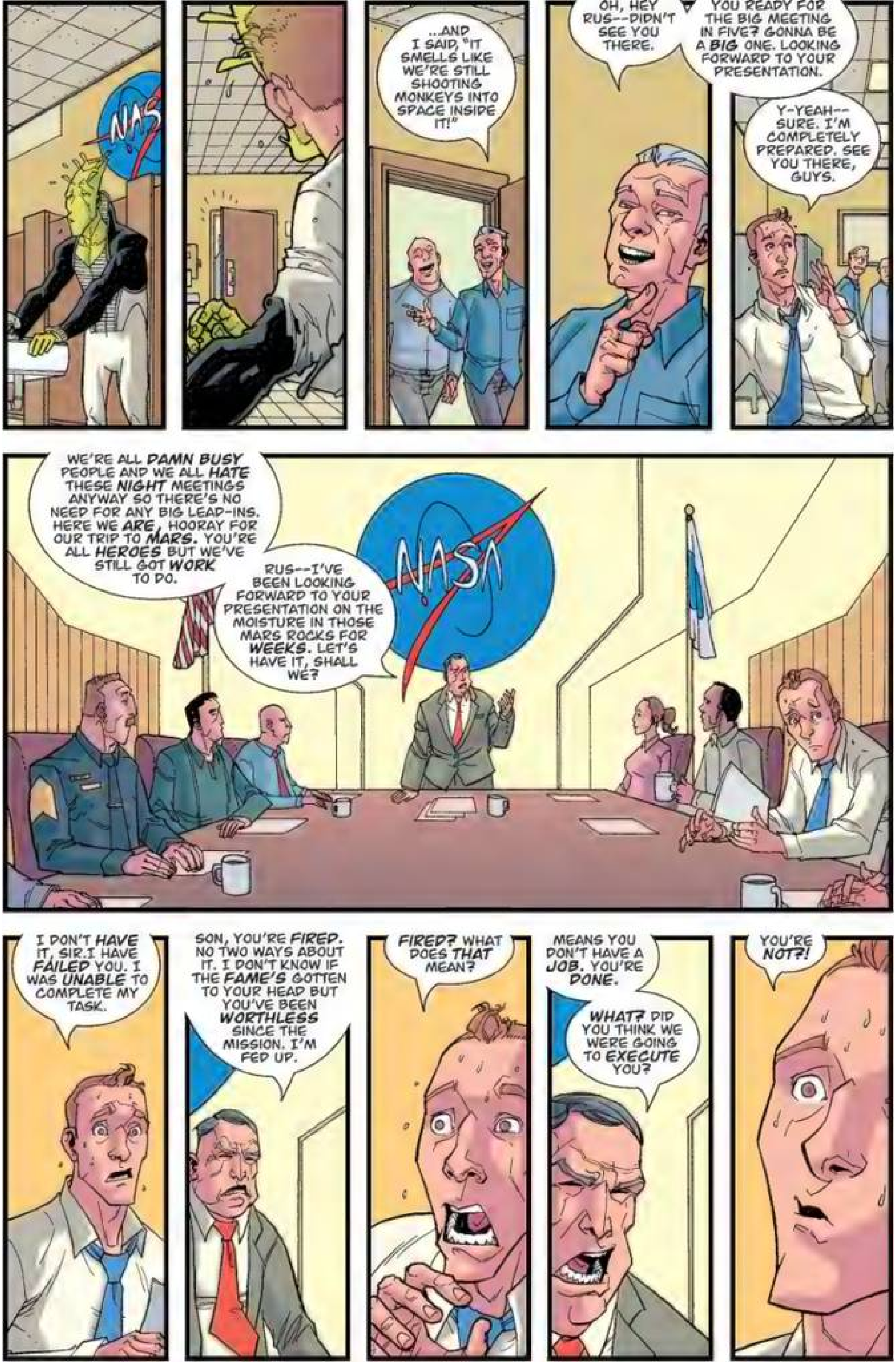

TAILOR shoppe
BRE
I'M THINKING ABOUT GETTING A JOB.
I'M NOT HIRING. SORRY.
I DON'T WANT TO WORK HERE, ART. DON'T BE SILLY.
OUCH.
I DON'T CARE WHERE I WORK. I JUST--I DON'T HAVE ANYTHING TO DO. WITH MARK AWAY AT SCHOOL I'VE GOT NOTHING TO DO.
THE HOUSE IS EMPTY. I SWEAR IF I DIDN'T HAVE YOU AND CLAIRE TO TALK TO I'D GO CRAZY.
DO YOU MISS HIM?
YEAH, OF COURSE. KINDA MAD TOO. HE'S A TWO SECOND FLIGHT AWAY AND HE STILL HASN'T VISITED SINCE SCHOOL STARTED.
NO. NOT MARK. HIM.
DO YOU MISS HIM?
I--YES. NO. I DON'T KNOW.
I DON'T KNOW.
I MISS HIM. I MISS THE NOLAN I KNEW--MARK'S FATHER. BUT I JUST--I DON'T KNOW IF ANY OF THAT NOLAN WAS REAL.
I MISS NOLAN. I MISS MY FRIEND.
HE WAS MY FRIEND. A GOOD FRIEND.
YOU CAN'T FAKE THAT--NOT THE WAY HE ACTED TOWARDS ME.
HE WAS MY FRIEND.
HE COULDN'T HAVE FAKED EVERY-THING.
NOT EVERY-THING.

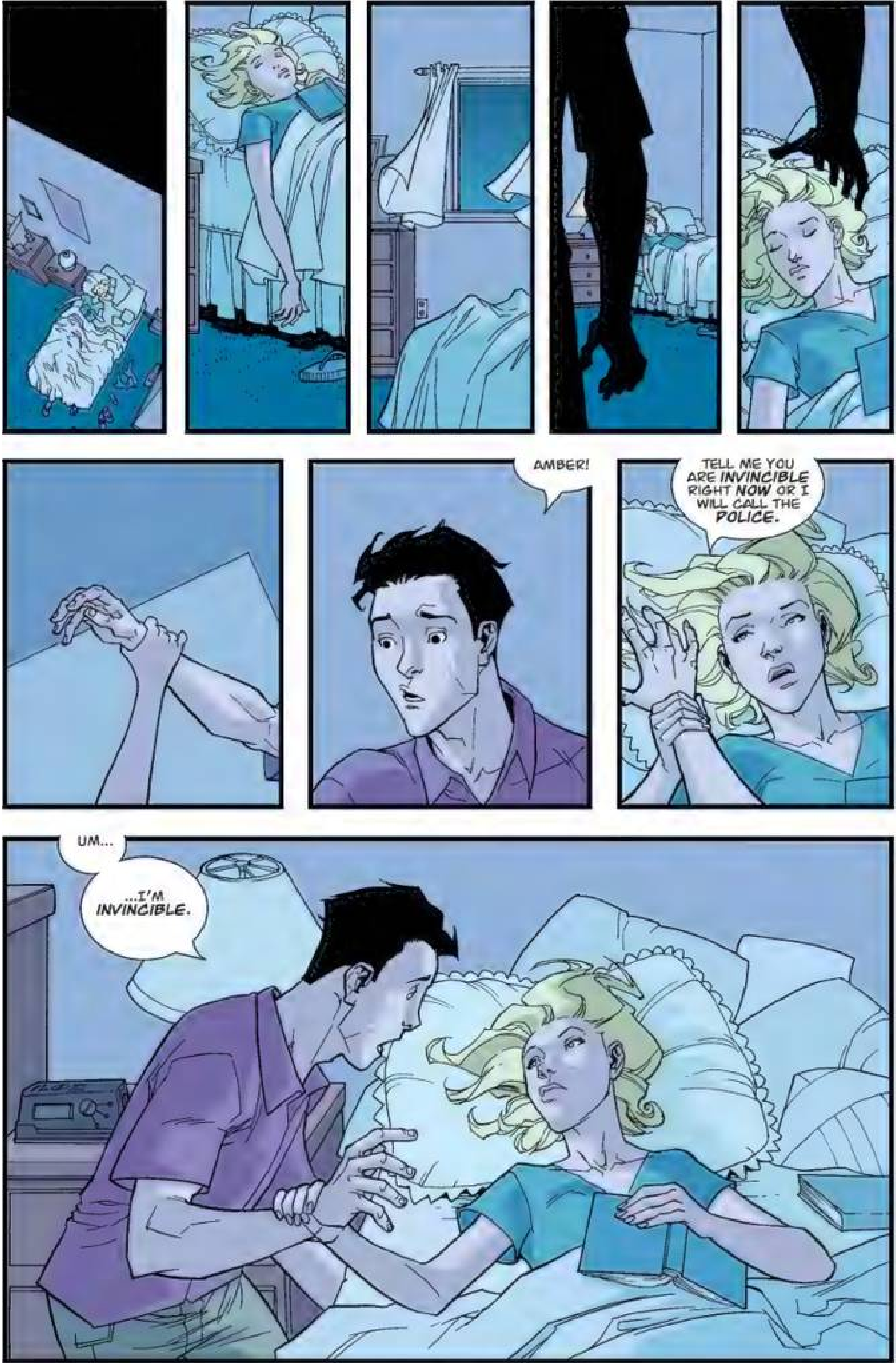

STILL HERE, SMART GUY? DON'T YOU HAVE SOMETHING BETTER TO DO?
NOT AT PRESENT. I THOUGHT I WAS ALONE HERE. HAVE YOU NOWHERE ELSE TO BE?
WHERE DO I HAVE TO GO? CHUCK E CHEESE ISN'T OPEN THIS LATE.
I AM STILL HARD AT WORK ON A SOLUTION TO YOUR CONDITION. I THINK I MAY HAVE FOUND ONE, ALTHOUGH IT'S TEMPORARY.
REALLY?
YES. WITH BLACK SAMPSON STILL IN A COMA, I THOUGHT HIS ARMOR MIGHT BE ALTERED TO ALLOW YOU TO WEAR IT.
YOU POSSESS THE SAME FIGHTING SKILLS IN THIS FORM AS YOUR MONSTER FORM--YOU JUST LACK THE STRENGTH. THE SUIT COULD--IT COULD--PROVIDE STRENGTH WITHOUT STUNTING YOUR AGING ANY FURTHER.
YOU GOING TO TRAIN ME TO USE THAT THING?
IF THAT IS YOUR WISH. I WOULD BE HAPPY TO.
YOU WOULD STILL BE ABLE TO TURN INTO YOUR MONSTER FORM IF YOU WERE IN ANY DANGER IN THE SUIT--IF THINGS GOT BAD--YOU COULD CHANGE--BUT THEORETICALLY YOU WOULD USE YOUR POWERS MUCH LESS.
IT'S THE ONLY SOLUTION I CAN COME UP WITH--CONSIDERING CECIL DENIED YOU A LEAVE OF ABSENCE.
WHAT'S UP? YOU'RE ACTING DIFFERENT--YOU'RE ACTING NERVOUS.
THAT IS IMPOSSIBLE. I LACK THE ABILITY TO BE NERVOUS.
WELL--SOMETHING IS GOING ON. YOU'RE NOT ACTING NORMAL.

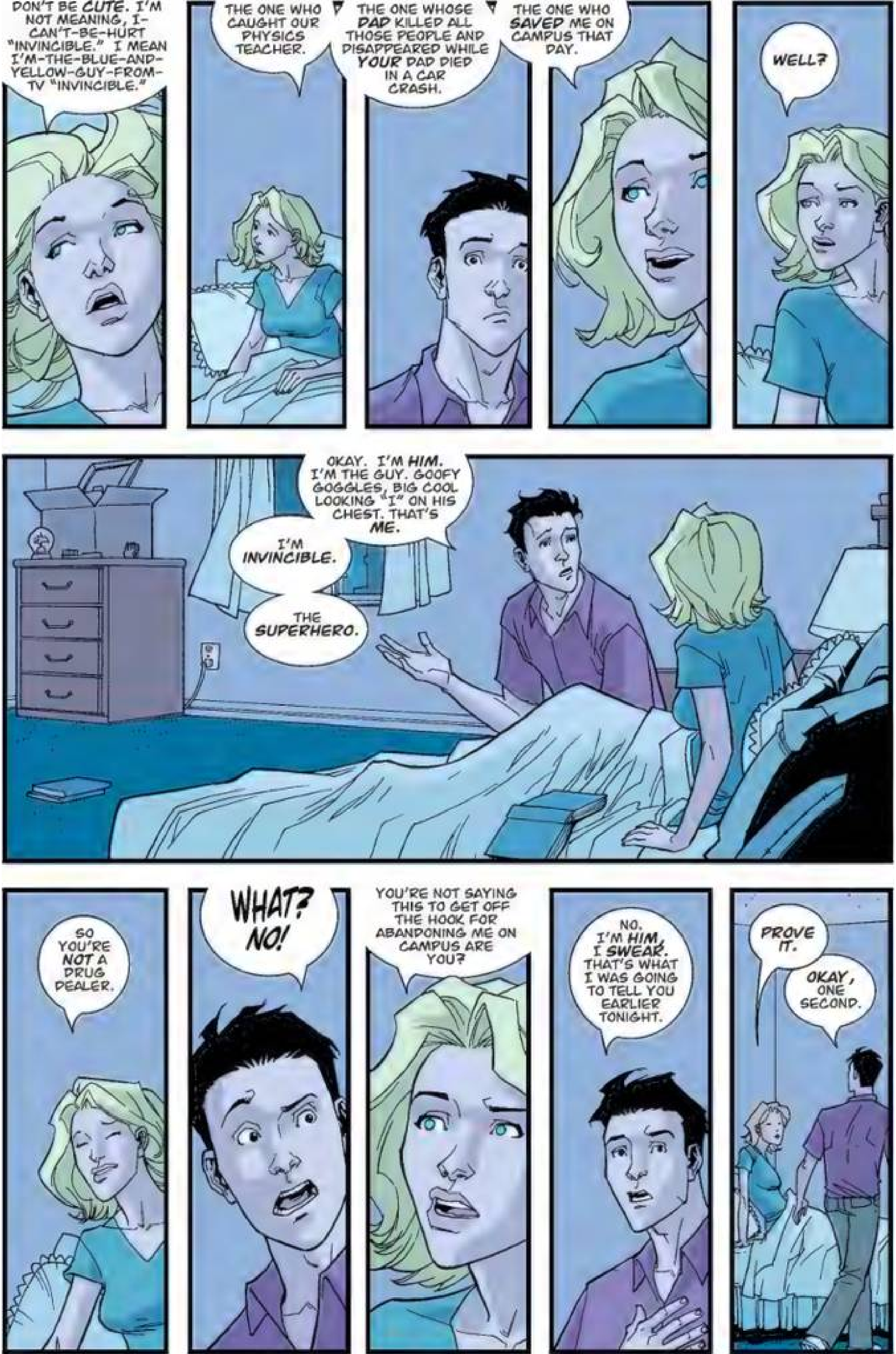

SO--YOU THINK YOUR BOYFRIEND BECAME A DRUG DEALER AFTER HIS DAD DIED.
CONTINUE.
NO--I USED TO THINK HE WAS DEALING DRUGS. NOW, I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO THINK. HE MAY, WELL--IT'S JUST...
LET ME START AT THE BEGINNING.
SEE, HIS SEMESTER STARTED BEFORE MINE. I VISITED HIM ON CAMPUS ON HIS FIRST DAY. THIS MONSTER ATTACKED THE STUDENTS.
IT WAS TEARING THE PLACE UP, PEOPLE WERE RUNNING AROUND IN EVERY DIRECTION TRYING TO GET AWAY. THEN, I TURN AROUND--AND MARK'S GONE.
NEXT THING I KNOW, THE MONSTER IS ABOUT TO ATTACK ME. IT WOULD HAVE TOO, IF THIS SUPERHERO HADN'T SWOOPED IN AND SAVED ME AT THE LAST MINUTE.
THEN--AFTER THE SUPERHERO FLIES OFF WITH THE MONSTER AND EVERYONE IS SAFE... MARK COMES RUNNING UP--TELLING ME HOW WORRIED HE WAS.
THE JERK.
MAYBE HE'S THE SUPER-HERO.
OKAY, YOU'RE RIGHT--IT'S STUPID. NEVER MIND.
CARRY ON.
NO--THAT'S NOT STUPID. I WANTED TO TALK TO YOU BECAUSE HE SHOWED UP AT MY DORM ROOM TONIGHT AFTER YOU GUYS DROPPED ME OFF.
HE SAID HE CAME IN THE WINDOW AND I DON'T HAVE A FIRE ESCAPE.
IN THE MIDDLE OF THE APOLOGY--HE STARTED TALKING TO HIMSELF--TOUCHED HIS EAR--AND THEN JUMPED OUT OF THE WINDOW.
I LOOKED OUT THE WINDOW AND HE WAS GONE. JUST GONE.
I THOUGHT HE WAS AN ALIEN.

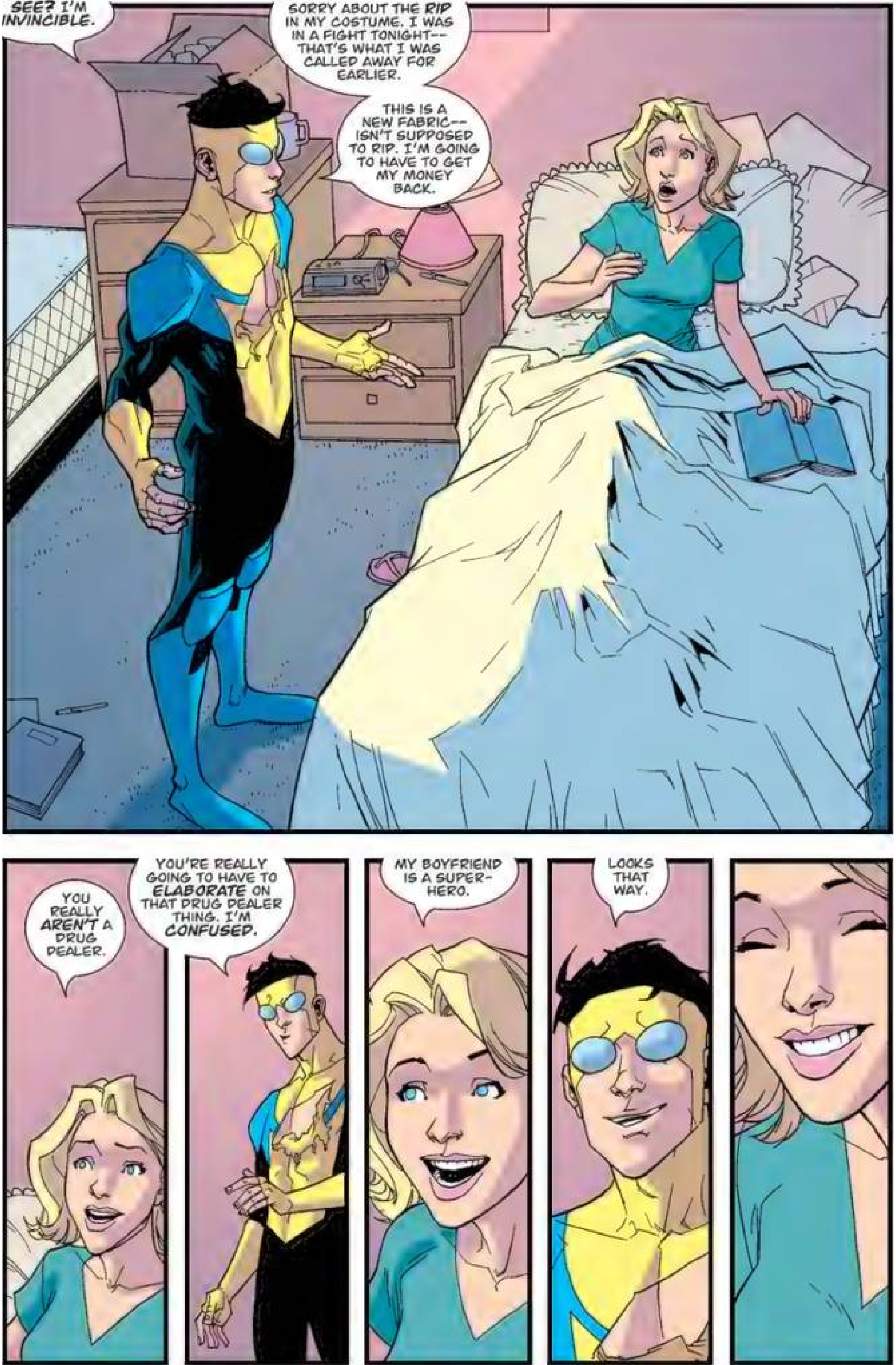

OUT THE WINDOW? TALKING TO HIMSELF?
YEAH-- HE'S A SUPER-HERO.
NO--HE CAN'T BE. THE ONE THAT SAVED ME WAS THAT KID-- INVINCIBLE. THE NEW ONE. HE HAD THAT BIG FIGHT WITH HIS EVIL SUPERHERO DAD. REMEMBER? IT WAS ON THE NEWS.
IT HAPPENED RIGHT AROUND THE TIME THAT--
...MARK'S DAD WAS HIT BY THAT CAR.
HM-- MUST NOT BE HIM THEN. NEXT THEORY.
NO, LISTEN... I THINK INVINCIBLE WAS THE SUPER-HERO WHO CAUGHT OUR PHYSICS TEACHER WHEN HE WAS TURNING OUR CLASSMATES INTO HUMAN BOMBS.
THAT'S JUST TOO MUCH OF A COINCIDENCE.
MARK'S HIGH SCHOOL-- MARK'S COLLEGE.
PHYSICS TEACHER, HUH? MY MIDDLE SCHOOL GYM TEACHER WAS THE KINETIC KILLER-- HE WAS PRETTY SMALL TIME THOUGH.
I'M SERIOUS-- I THINK MY BOYFRIEND IS A SUPERHERO. IT ALL MAKES SO MUCH SENSE NOW.
YOU'RE KIDDING, RIGHT? NO WAY YOUR BOYFRIEND'S A SUPERHERO. YOU'RE NOT THAT LUCKY. I WAS JOKING--I THOUGHT YOU WERE TOO.
RIGHT... I WAS TOTALLY KIDDING. LISTEN, I'M GOING TO GO. I GOTTA-- IT'S LATE-- HOMEWORK AND ALL.
I'LL SEE YOU IN CLASS.
'KAY. LATER.

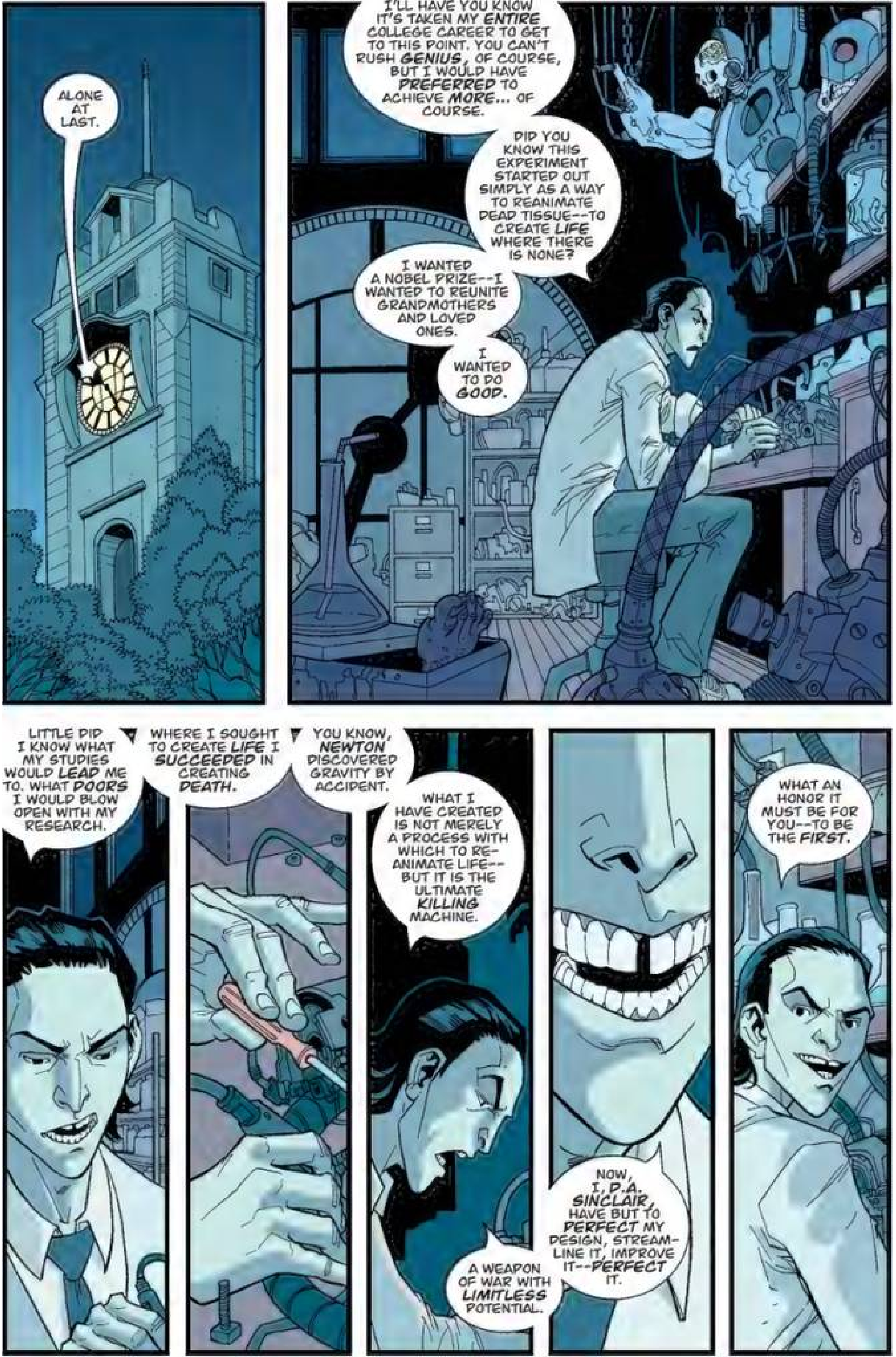

UNITED STATES PENTAGON
Parking in Rear
HOW GOES IT?
HOW GOES WHAT, SIR?
ARE YOU NOT THE ONE MONITORING THE MAULER TWINS?
YEAH-- OH, YEAH. THAT'S ME.
THEN-- *HOW GOES IT?*
UM--NO CHANGE WHATSOEVER, SIR. THEY'VE LEFT AND COME BACK BUT NO ACTUAL ACTIVITY AS NEAR AS I CAN TELL... SIR.
KEEP AN EYE ON IT. I WANT TO KNOW IF THERE'S A TEMPERATURE CHANGE, IF THEIR ELECTRICITY USAGE SPIKES, IF THEY *SNEEZE*-- I WANT TO KNOW.
WE NEED TO KNOW WHAT THEY'RE UP TO.
YES SIR.

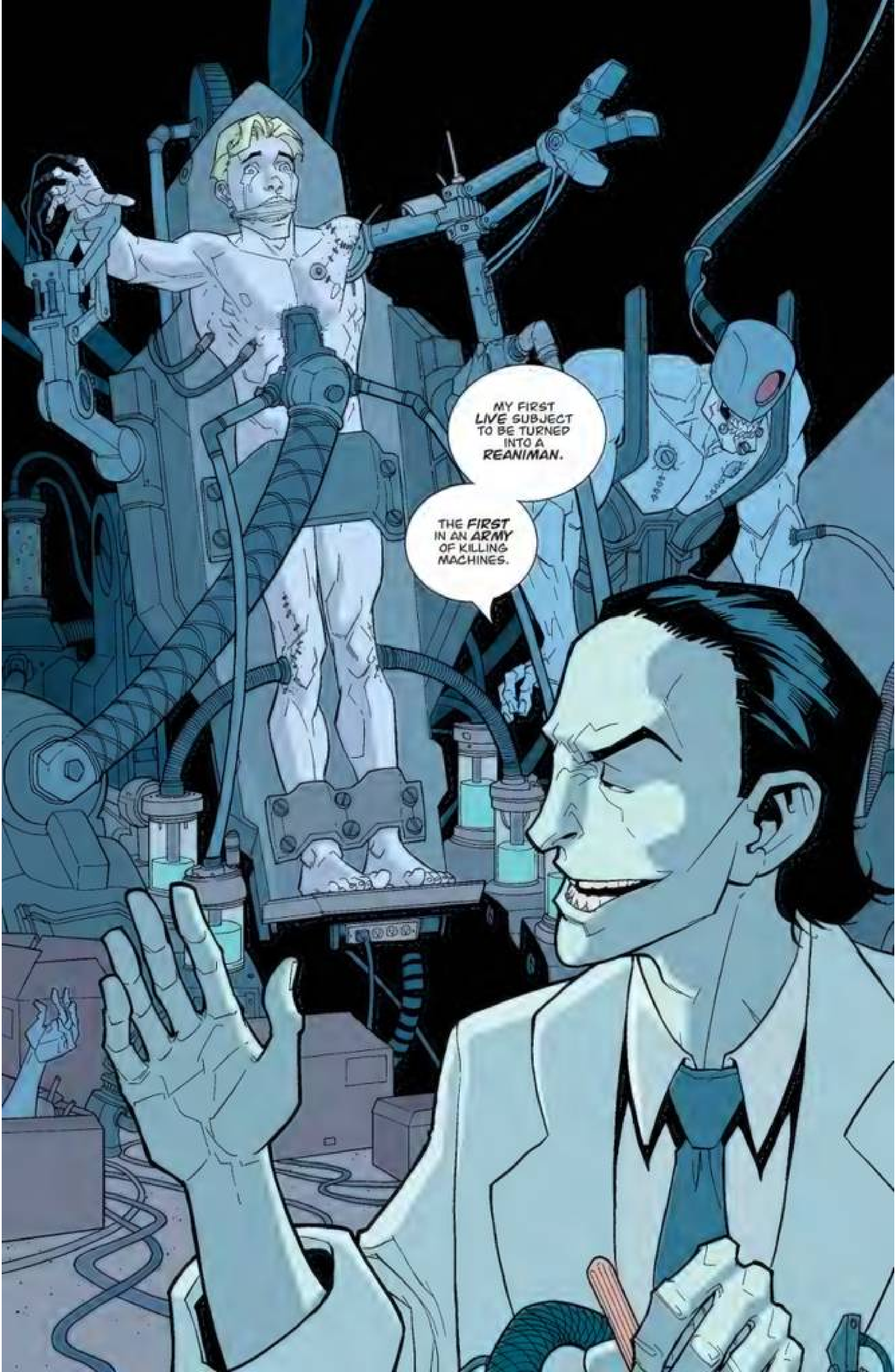

NASA
...AND I SAID, "IT SMELLS LIKE WE'RE STILL SHOOTING MONKEYS INTO SPACE INSIDE IT!"
OH, HEY RUS--DIDN'T SEE YOU THERE.
YOU READY FOR THE BIG MEETING IN FIVE? GONNA BE A BIG ONE. LOOKING FORWARD TO YOUR PRESENTATION.
Y-YEAH-- SURE. I'M COMPLETELY PREPARED. SEE YOU THERE, GUYS.
WE'RE ALL DAMN BUSY PEOPLE AND WE ALL HATE THESE NIGHT MEETINGS ANYWAY SO THERE'S NO NEED FOR ANY BIG LEAD-INS. HERE WE ARE, HOORAY FOR OUR TRIP TO MARS. YOU'RE ALL HEROES BUT WE'VE STILL GOT WORK TO DO.
NASA
RUS--I'VE BEEN LOOKING FORWARD TO YOUR PRESENTATION ON THE MOISTURE IN THOSE MARS ROCKS FOR WEEKS. LET'S HAVE IT, SHALL WE?
I DON'T HAVE IT, SIR. I HAVE FAILED YOU. I WAS UNABLE TO COMPLETE MY TASK.
SON, YOU'RE FIRED. NO TWO WAYS ABOUT IT. I DON'T KNOW IF THE FAME'S GOTTEN TO YOUR HEAD BUT YOU'VE BEEN WORTHLESS SINCE THE MISSION. I'M FED UP.
FIRED? WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?
MEANS YOU DON'T HAVE A JOB. YOU'RE DONE.
WHAT? DID YOU THINK WE WERE GOING TO EXECUTE YOU?
YOU'RE NOT?!


AMBER!
TELL ME YOU ARE INVINCIBLE RIGHT NOW OR I WILL CALL THE POLICE.
UM...
...I'M INVINCIBLE.

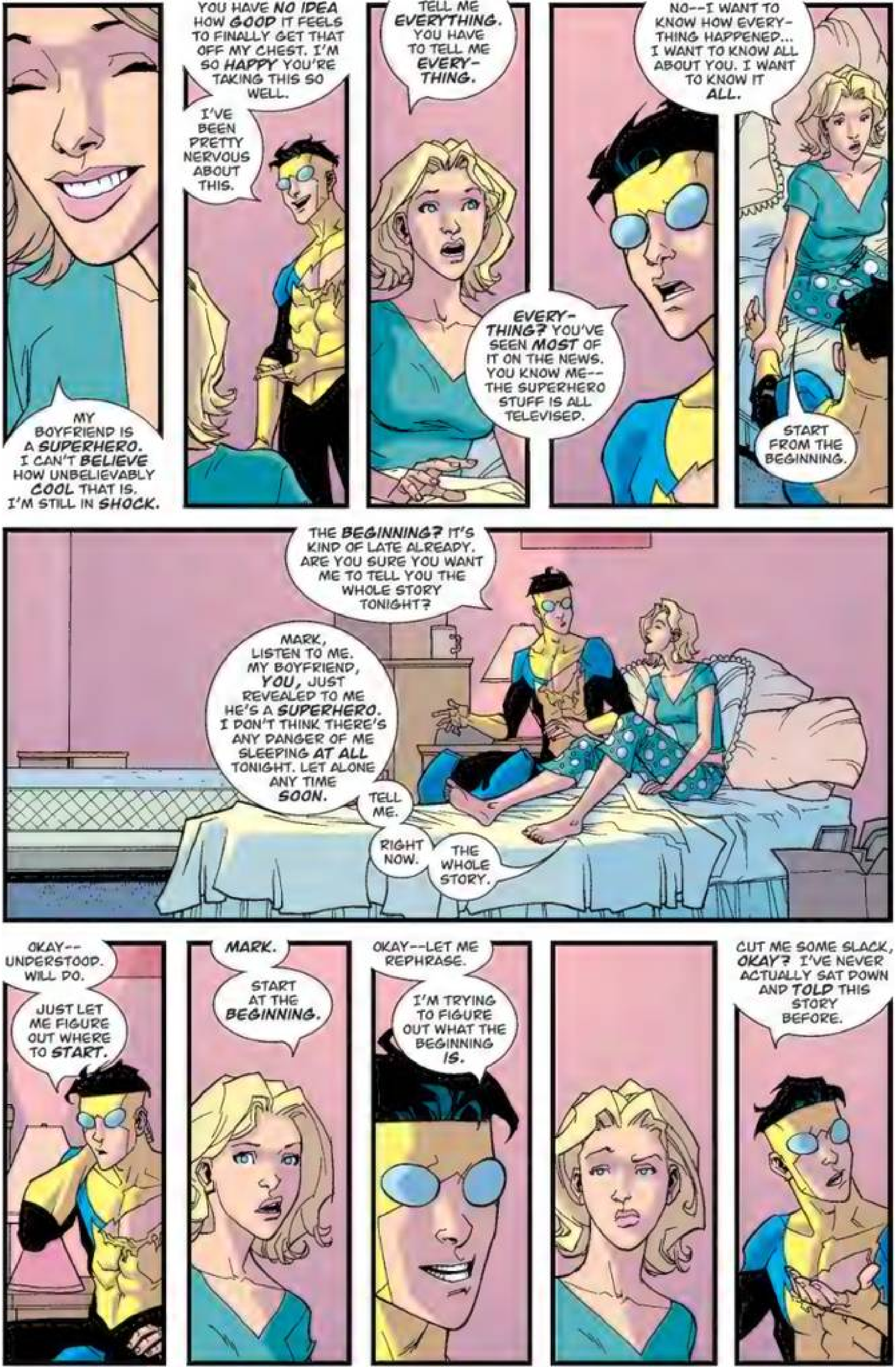

DON'T BE CUTE. I'M NOT MEANING, I-CAN'T-BE-HURT "INVINCIBLE." I MEAN I'M-THE-BLUE-AND-YELLOW-GUY-FROM-TV "INVINCIBLE."
THE ONE WHO CAUGHT OUR PHYSICS TEACHER.
THE ONE WHOSE DAD KILLED ALL THOSE PEOPLE AND DISAPPEARED WHILE YOUR DAD DIED IN A CAR CRASH.
THE ONE WHO SAVED ME ON CAMPUS THAT DAY.
WELL?
OKAY. I'M HIM. I'M THE GUY. GOOFY GOGGLES, BIG COOL LOOKING "I" ON HIS CHEST. THAT'S ME.
I'M INVINCIBLE.
THE SUPERHERO.
SO YOU'RE NOT A DRUG DEALER.
WHAT? NO!
YOU'RE NOT SAYING THIS TO GET OFF THE HOOK FOR ABANDONING ME ON CAMPUS ARE YOU?
NO. I'M HIM, I SWEAR. THAT'S WHAT I WAS GOING TO TELL YOU EARLIER TONIGHT.
PROVE IT.
OKAY, ONE SECOND.

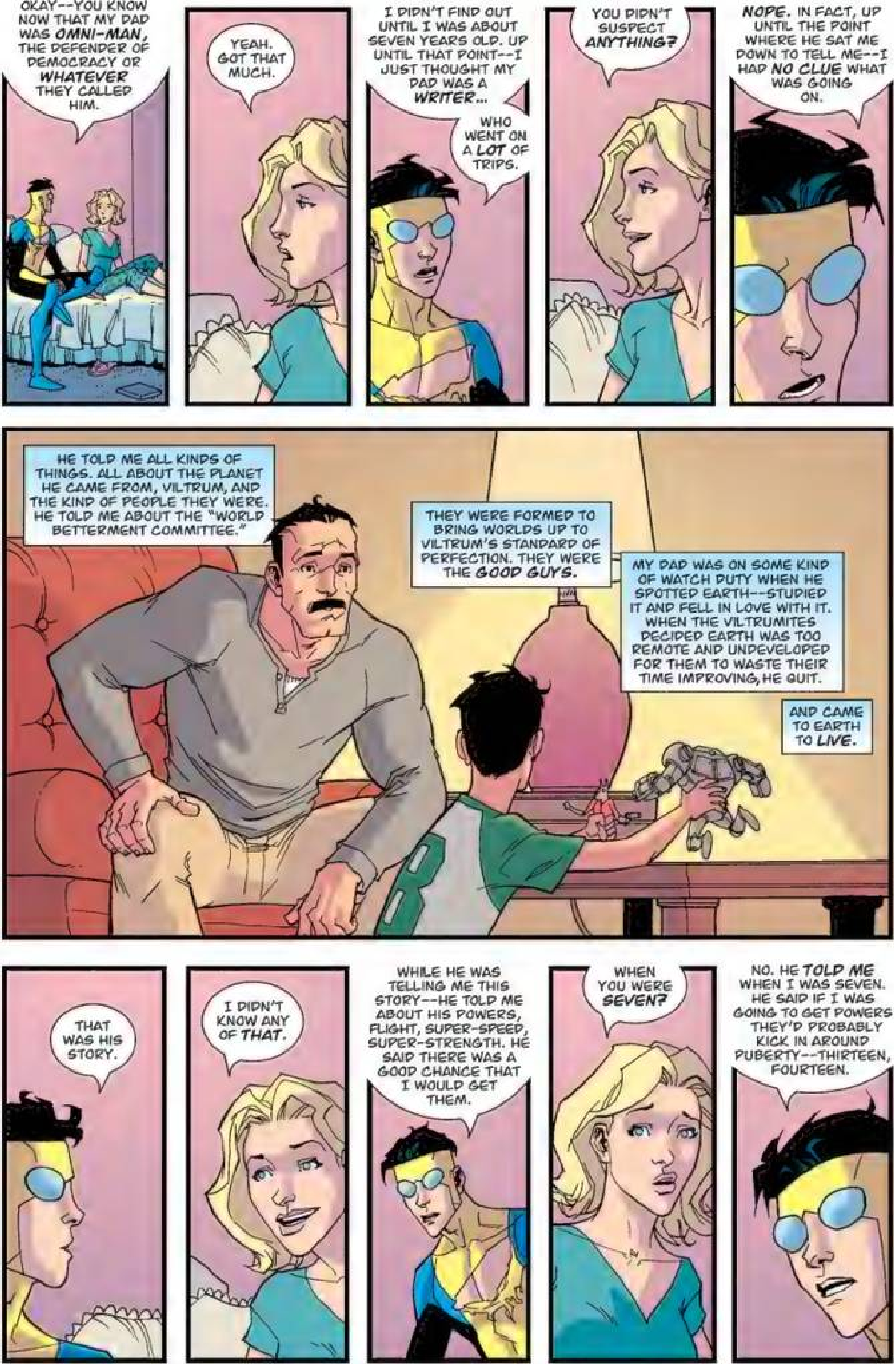

SEE? I'M INVINCIBLE.
SORRY ABOUT THE RIP IN MY COSTUME. I WAS IN A FIGHT TONIGHT-- THAT'S WHAT I WAS CALLED AWAY FOR EARLIER.
THIS IS A NEW FABRIC-- ISN'T SUPPOSED TO RIP. I'M GOING TO HAVE TO GET MY MONEY BACK.
YOU REALLY AREN'T A DRUG DEALER.
YOU'RE REALLY GOING TO HAVE TO ELABORATE ON THAT DRUG DEALER THING. I'M CONFUSED.
MY BOYFRIEND IS A SUPER-HERO.
LOOKS THAT WAY.

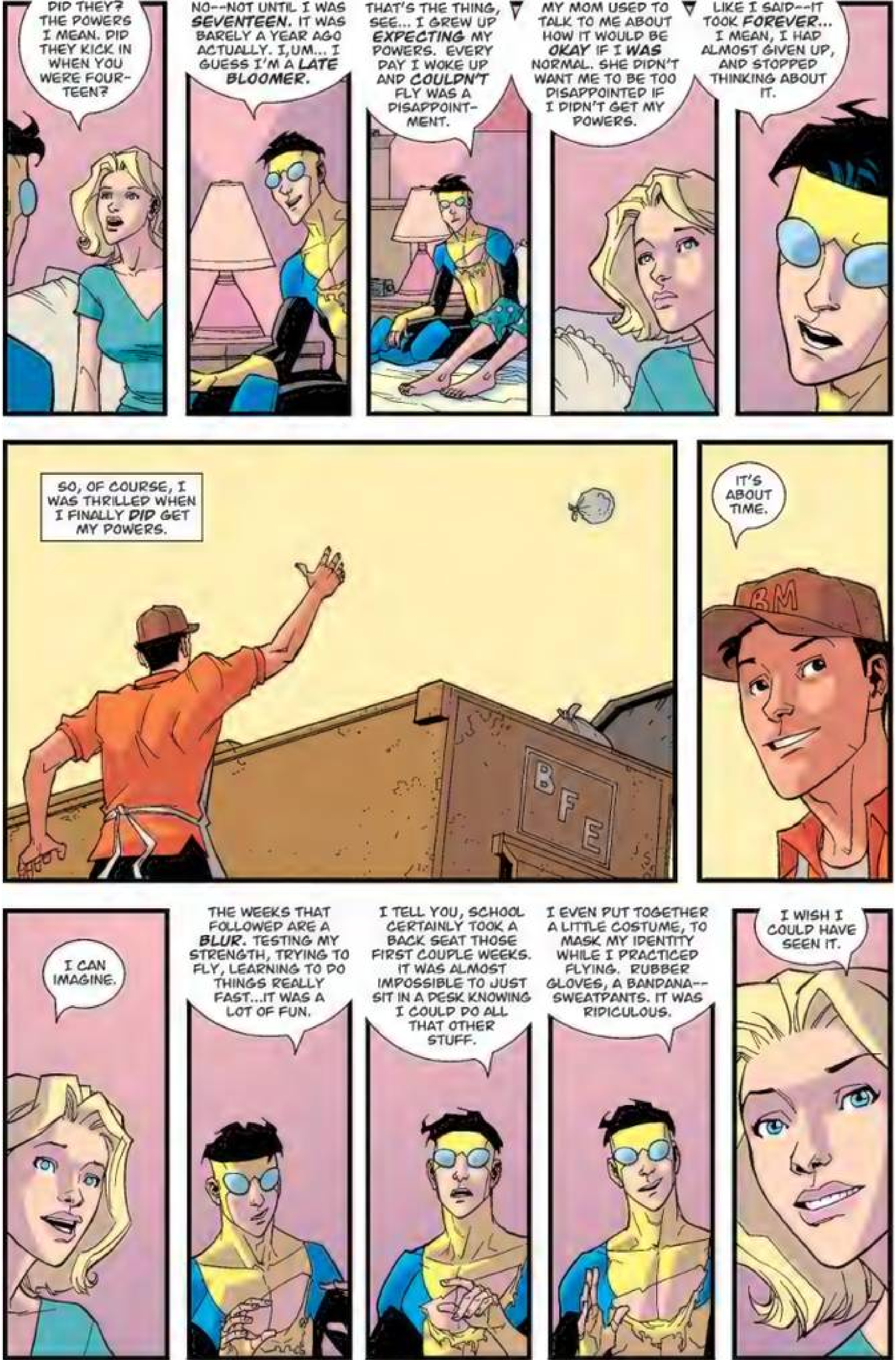

ALONE AT LAST.
I'LL HAVE YOU KNOW IT'S TAKEN MY ENTIRE COLLEGE CAREER TO GET TO THIS POINT. YOU CAN'T RUSH GENIUS, OF COURSE, BUT I WOULD HAVE PREFERRED TO ACHIEVE MORE... OF COURSE.
DID YOU KNOW THIS EXPERIMENT STARTED OUT SIMPLY AS A WAY TO REANIMATE DEAD TISSUE--TO CREATE LIFE WHERE THERE IS NONE?
I WANTED A NOBEL PRIZE--I WANTED TO REUNITE GRANDMOTHERS AND LOVED ONES.
I WANTED TO DO GOOD.
LITTLE DID I KNOW WHAT MY STUDIES WOULD LEAD ME TO. WHAT DOORS I WOULD BLOW OPEN WITH MY RESEARCH.
WHERE I SOUGHT TO CREATE LIFE I SUCCEEDED IN CREATING DEATH.
YOU KNOW, NEWTON DISCOVERED GRAVITY BY ACCIDENT.
WHAT I HAVE CREATED IS NOT MERELY A PROCESS WITH WHICH TO RE-ANIMATE LIFE--BUT IT IS THE ULTIMATE KILLING MACHINE.
A WEAPON OF WAR WITH LIMITLESS POTENTIAL.
NOW, I, D.A. SINCLAIR, HAVE BUT TO PERFECT MY DESIGN, STREAMLINE IT, IMPROVE IT--PERFECT IT.
WHAT AN HONOR IT MUST BE FOR YOU--TO BE THE FIRST.

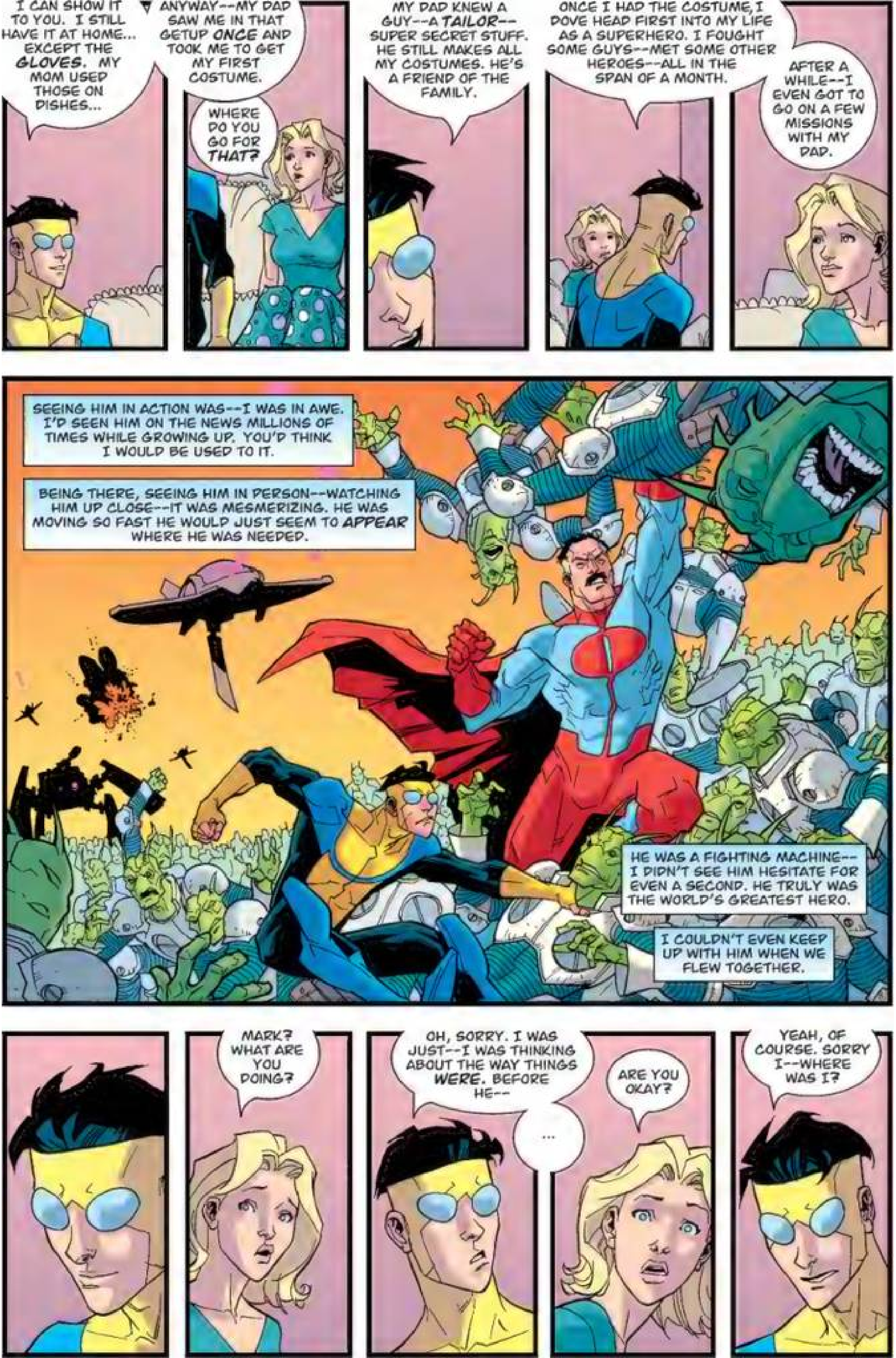

MY FIRST LIVE SUBJECT TO BE TURNED INTO A REANIMAN.
THE FIRST IN AN ARMY OF KILLING MACHINES.

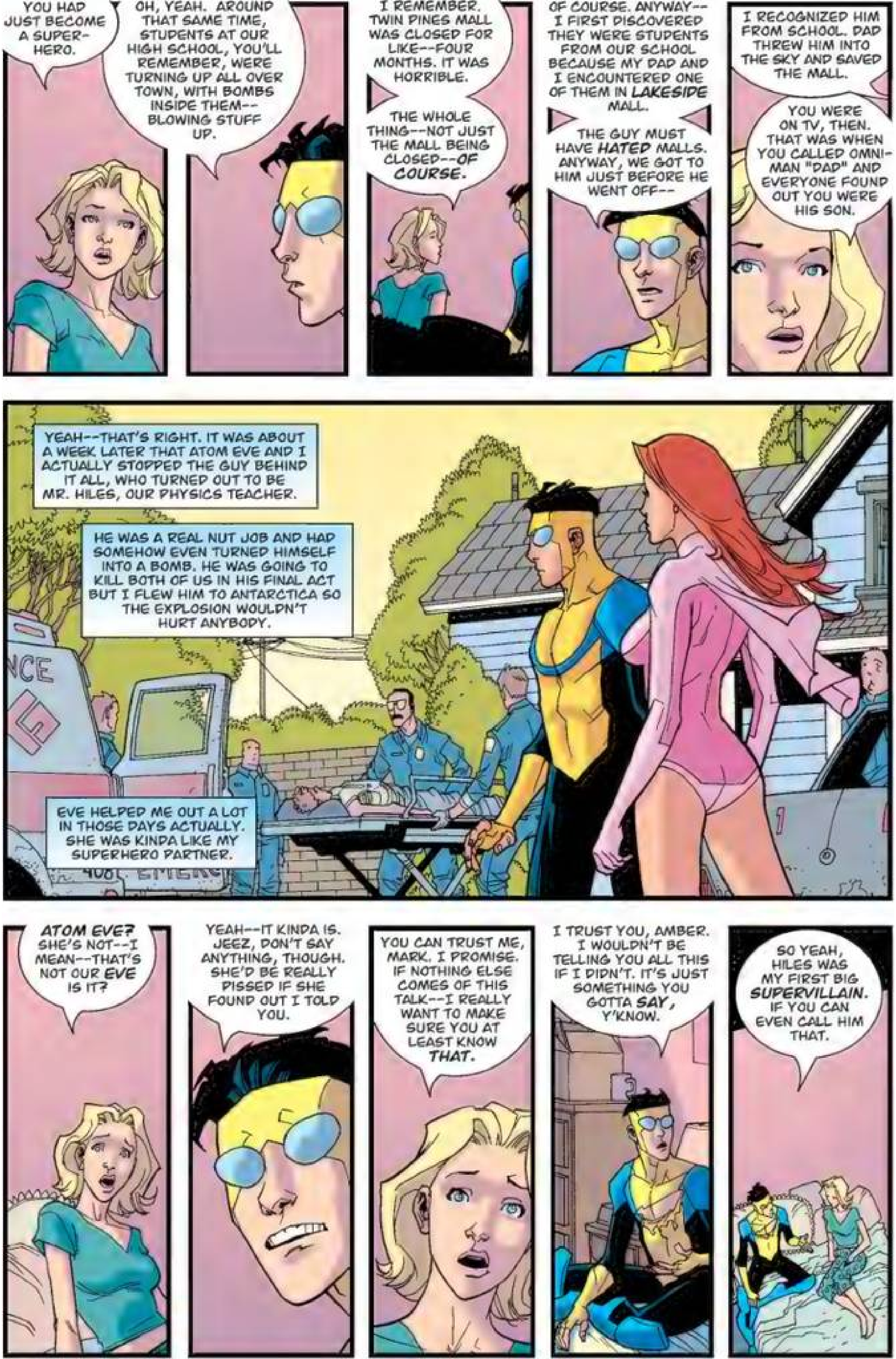
ISSUE ZERO

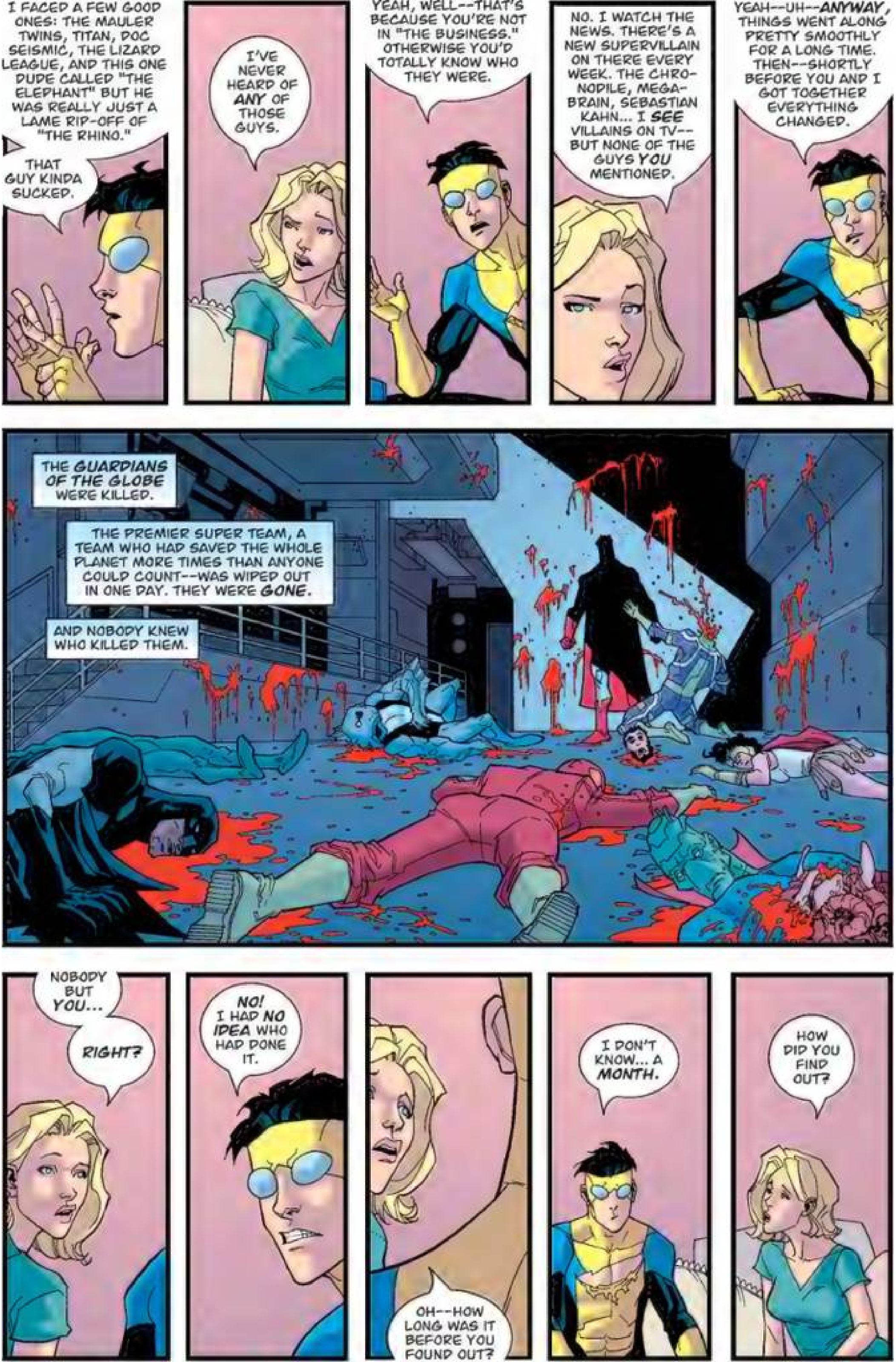

MY BOYFRIEND IS A SUPERHERO. I CAN'T BELIEVE HOW UNBELIEVABLY COOL THAT IS. I'M STILL IN SHOCK.
YOU HAVE NO IDEA HOW GOOD IT FEELS TO FINALLY GET THAT OFF MY CHEST. I'M SO HAPPY YOU'RE TAKING THIS SO WELL.
I'VE BEEN PRETTY NERVOUS ABOUT THIS.
TELL ME EVERYTHING. YOU HAVE TO TELL ME EVERYTHING.
EVERYTHING? YOU'VE SEEN MOST OF IT ON THE NEWS. YOU KNOW ME--THE SUPERHERO STUFF IS ALL TELEVISED.
NO--I WANT TO KNOW HOW EVERYTHING HAPPENED... I WANT TO KNOW ALL ABOUT YOU. I WANT TO KNOW IT ALL.
START FROM THE BEGINNING.
THE BEGINNING? IT'S KIND OF LATE ALREADY. ARE YOU SURE YOU WANT ME TO TELL YOU THE WHOLE STORY TONIGHT?
MARK, LISTEN TO ME. MY BOYFRIEND, YOU, JUST REVEALED TO ME HE'S A SUPERHERO. I DON'T THINK THERE'S ANY DANGER OF ME SLEEPING AT ALL TONIGHT. LET ALONE ANY TIME SOON.
TELL ME.
RIGHT NOW.
THE WHOLE STORY.
OKAY--UNDERSTOOD. WILL DO.
JUST LET ME FIGURE OUT WHERE TO START.
MARK.
START AT THE BEGINNING.
OKAY--LET ME REPHRASE.
I'M TRYING TO FIGURE OUT WHAT THE BEGINNING IS.
CUT ME SOME SLACK, OKAY? I'VE NEVER ACTUALLY SAT DOWN AND TOLD THIS STORY BEFORE.

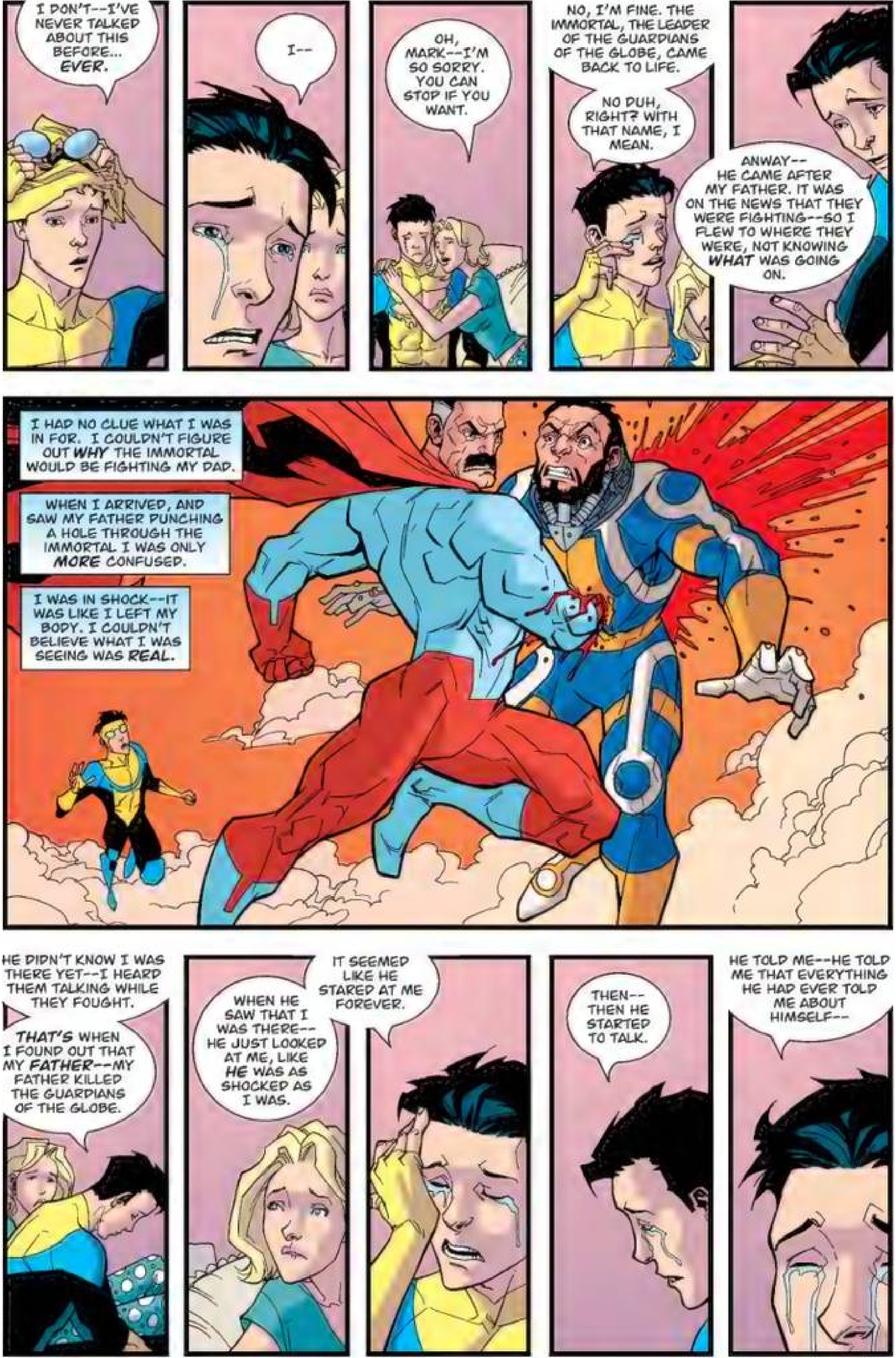

OKAY--YOU KNOW NOW THAT MY DAD WAS OMNI-MAN, THE DEFENDER OF DEMOCRACY OR WHATEVER THEY CALLED HIM.
YEAH. GOT THAT MUCH.
I DIDN'T FIND OUT UNTIL I WAS ABOUT SEVEN YEARS OLD. UP UNTIL THAT POINT--I JUST THOUGHT MY DAD WAS A WRITER...
WHO WENT ON A LOT OF TRIPS.
YOU DIDN'T SUSPECT ANYTHING?
NOPE. IN FACT, UP UNTIL THE POINT WHERE HE SAT ME DOWN TO TELL ME--I HAD NO CLUE WHAT WAS GOING ON.
HE TOLD ME ALL KINDS OF THINGS. ALL ABOUT THE PLANET HE CAME FROM, VILTRUM, AND THE KIND OF PEOPLE THEY WERE. HE TOLD ME ABOUT THE "WORLD BETTERMENT COMMITTEE."
THEY WERE FORMED TO BRING WORLDS UP TO VILTRUM'S STANDARD OF PERFECTION. THEY WERE THE GOOD GUYS.
MY DAD WAS ON SOME KIND OF WATCH DUTY WHEN HE SPOTTED EARTH--STUDIED IT AND FELL IN LOVE WITH IT. WHEN THE VILTRUMITES DECIDED EARTH WAS TOO REMOTE AND UNDEVELOPED FOR THEM TO WASTE THEIR TIME IMPROVING, HE QUIT.
AND CAME TO EARTH TO LIVE.
THAT WAS HIS STORY.
I DIDN'T KNOW ANY OF THAT.
WHILE HE WAS TELLING ME THIS STORY--HE TOLD ME ABOUT HIS POWERS, FLIGHT, SUPER-SPEED, SUPER-STRENGTH. HE SAID THERE WAS A GOOD CHANCE THAT I WOULD GET THEM.
WHEN YOU WERE SEVEN?
NO. HE TOLD ME WHEN I WAS SEVEN. HE SAID IF I WAS GOING TO GET POWERS THEY'D PROBABLY KICK IN AROUND PUBERTY--THIRTEEN, FOURTEEN.

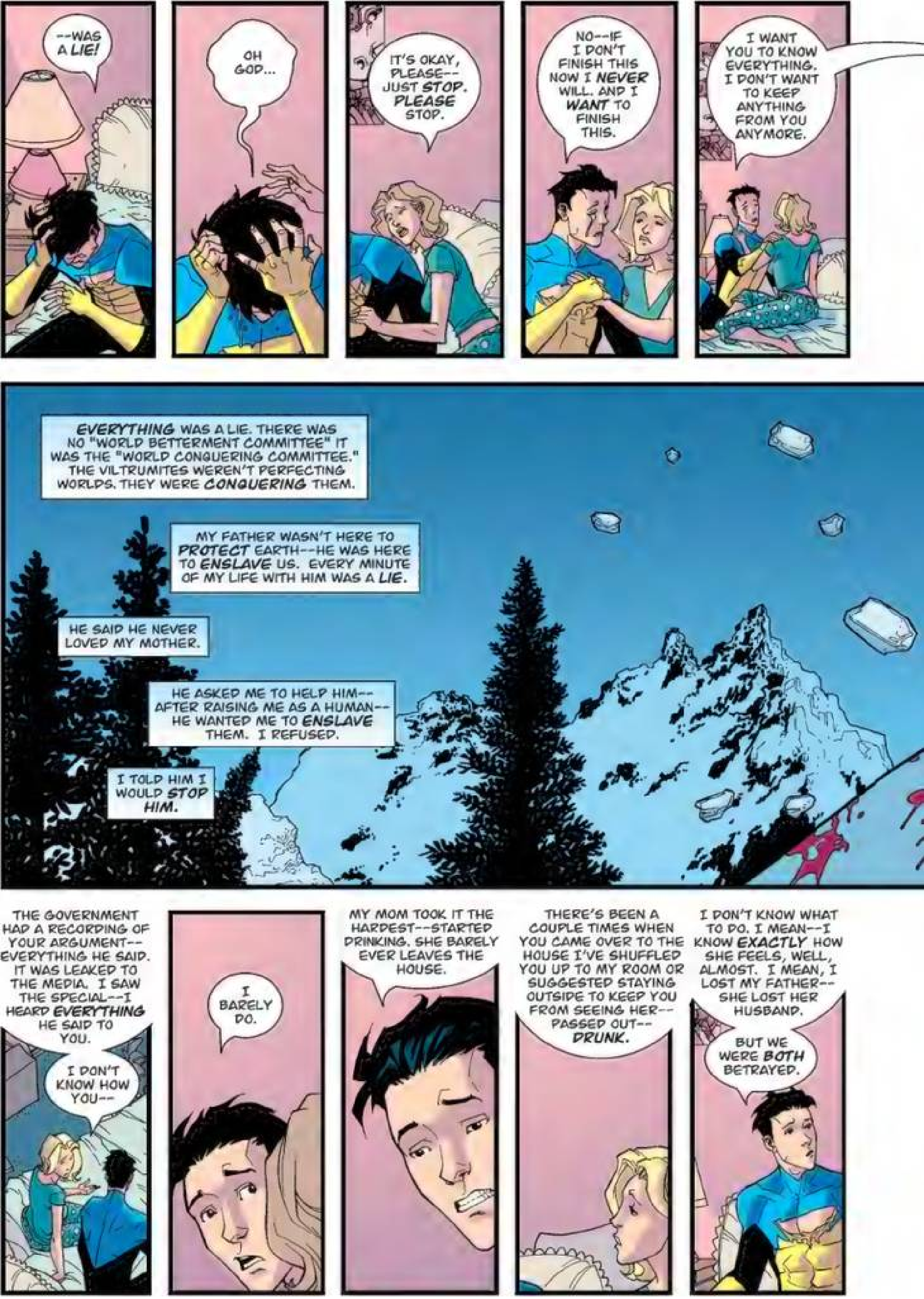

DID THEY? THE POWERS I MEAN. DID THEY KICK IN WHEN YOU WERE FOURTEEN?
NO--NOT UNTIL I WAS **SEVENTEEN**. IT WAS BARELY A YEAR AGO ACTUALLY. I, UM... I GUESS I'M A **LATE BLOOMER**.
THAT'S THE THING, SEE... I GREW UP **EXPECTING** MY POWERS. EVERY DAY I WOKE UP AND **COULDN'T** FLY WAS A DISAPPOINTMENT.
MY MOM USED TO TALK TO ME ABOUT HOW IT WOULD BE **OKAY** IF I **WAS** NORMAL. SHE DIDN'T WANT ME TO BE TOO DISAPPOINTED IF I DIDN'T GET MY POWERS.
LIKE I SAID--IT TOOK **FOREVER**... I MEAN, I HAD ALMOST GIVEN UP, AND STOPPED THINKING ABOUT IT.
SO, OF COURSE, I WAS THRILLED WHEN I FINALLY **DID** GET MY POWERS.
BFE
IT'S ABOUT TIME.
BM
I CAN IMAGINE.
THE WEEKS THAT FOLLOWED ARE A **BLUR**. TESTING MY STRENGTH, TRYING TO FLY, LEARNING TO DO THINGS REALLY FAST...IT WAS A LOT OF FUN.
I TELL YOU, SCHOOL CERTAINLY TOOK A BACK SEAT THOSE FIRST COUPLE WEEKS. IT WAS ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE TO JUST SIT IN A DESK KNOWING I COULD DO ALL THAT OTHER STUFF.
I EVEN PUT TOGETHER A LITTLE COSTUME, TO **MASK** MY IDENTITY WHILE I PRACTICED FLYING. RUBBER GLOVES, A BANDANA--SWEATPANTS. IT WAS RIDICULOUS.
I WISH I COULD HAVE SEEN IT.

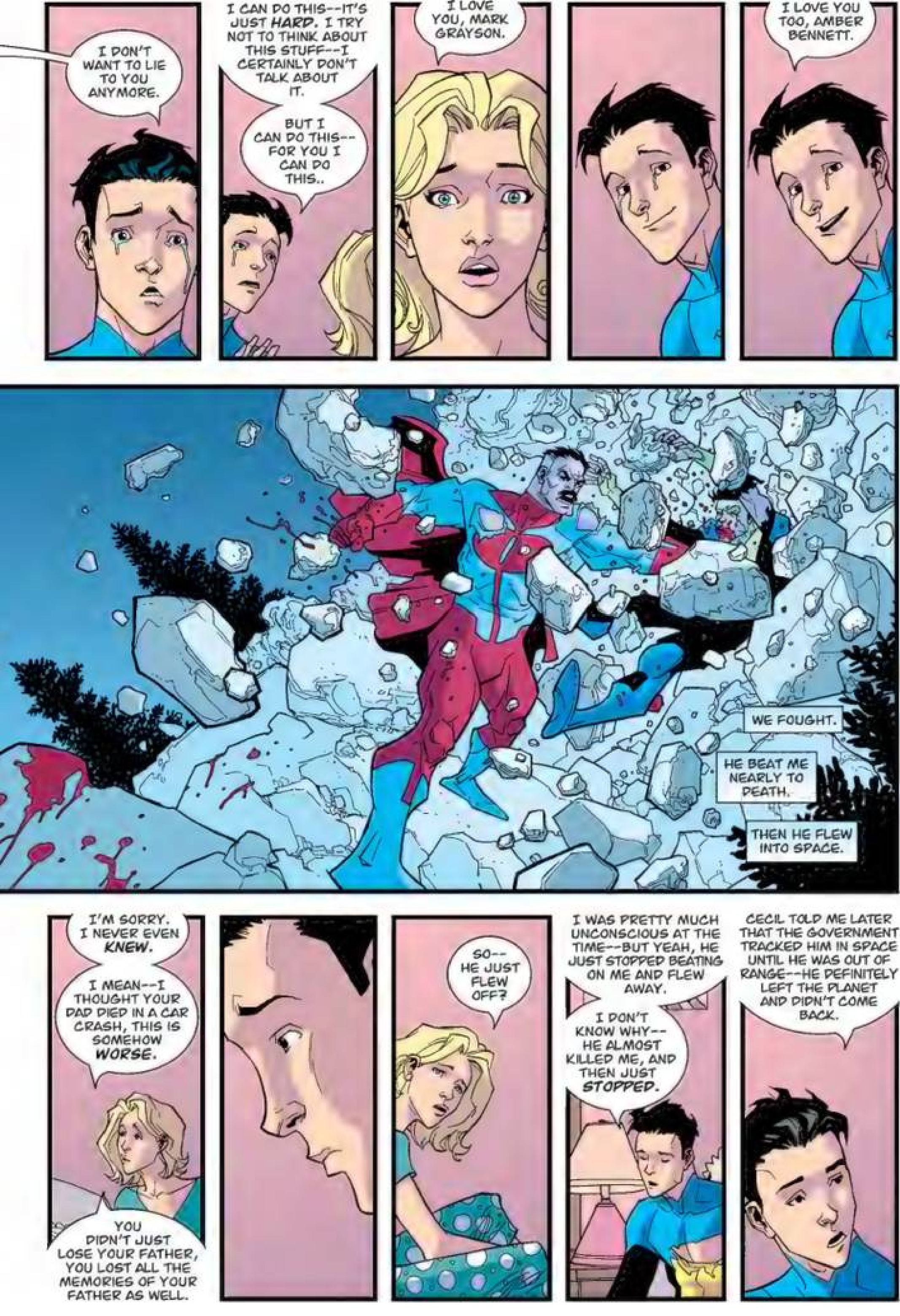

I CAN SHOW IT TO YOU. I STILL HAVE IT AT HOME... EXCEPT THE GLOVES. MY MOM USED THOSE ON DISHES...
ANYWAY--MY DAD SAW ME IN THAT GETUP ONCE AND TOOK ME TO GET MY FIRST COSTUME.
WHERE DO YOU GO FOR THAT?
MY DAD KNEW A GUY--A TAILOR--SUPER SECRET STUFF. HE STILL MAKES ALL MY COSTUMES. HE'S A FRIEND OF THE FAMILY.
ONCE I HAD THE COSTUME, I DOVE HEAD FIRST INTO MY LIFE AS A SUPERHERO. I FOUGHT SOME GUYS--MET SOME OTHER HEROES--ALL IN THE SPAN OF A MONTH.
AFTER A WHILE--I EVEN GOT TO GO ON A FEW MISSIONS WITH MY DAD.
SEEING HIM IN ACTION WAS--I WAS IN AWE. I'D SEEN HIM ON THE NEWS MILLIONS OF TIMES WHILE GROWING UP. YOU'D THINK I WOULD BE USED TO IT.
BEING THERE, SEEING HIM IN PERSON--WATCHING HIM UP CLOSE--IT WAS MESMERIZING. HE WAS MOVING SO FAST HE WOULD JUST SEEM TO APPEAR WHERE HE WAS NEEDED.
HE WAS A FIGHTING MACHINE--I DIDN'T SEE HIM HESITATE FOR EVEN A SECOND. HE TRULY WAS THE WORLD'S GREATEST HERO.
I COULDN'T EVEN KEEP UP WITH HIM WHEN WE FLEW TOGETHER.
MARK? WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
OH, SORRY. I WAS JUST--I WAS THINKING ABOUT THE WAY THINGS WERE. BEFORE HE--
...
ARE YOU OKAY?
YEAH, OF COURSE. SORRY I--WHERE WAS I?

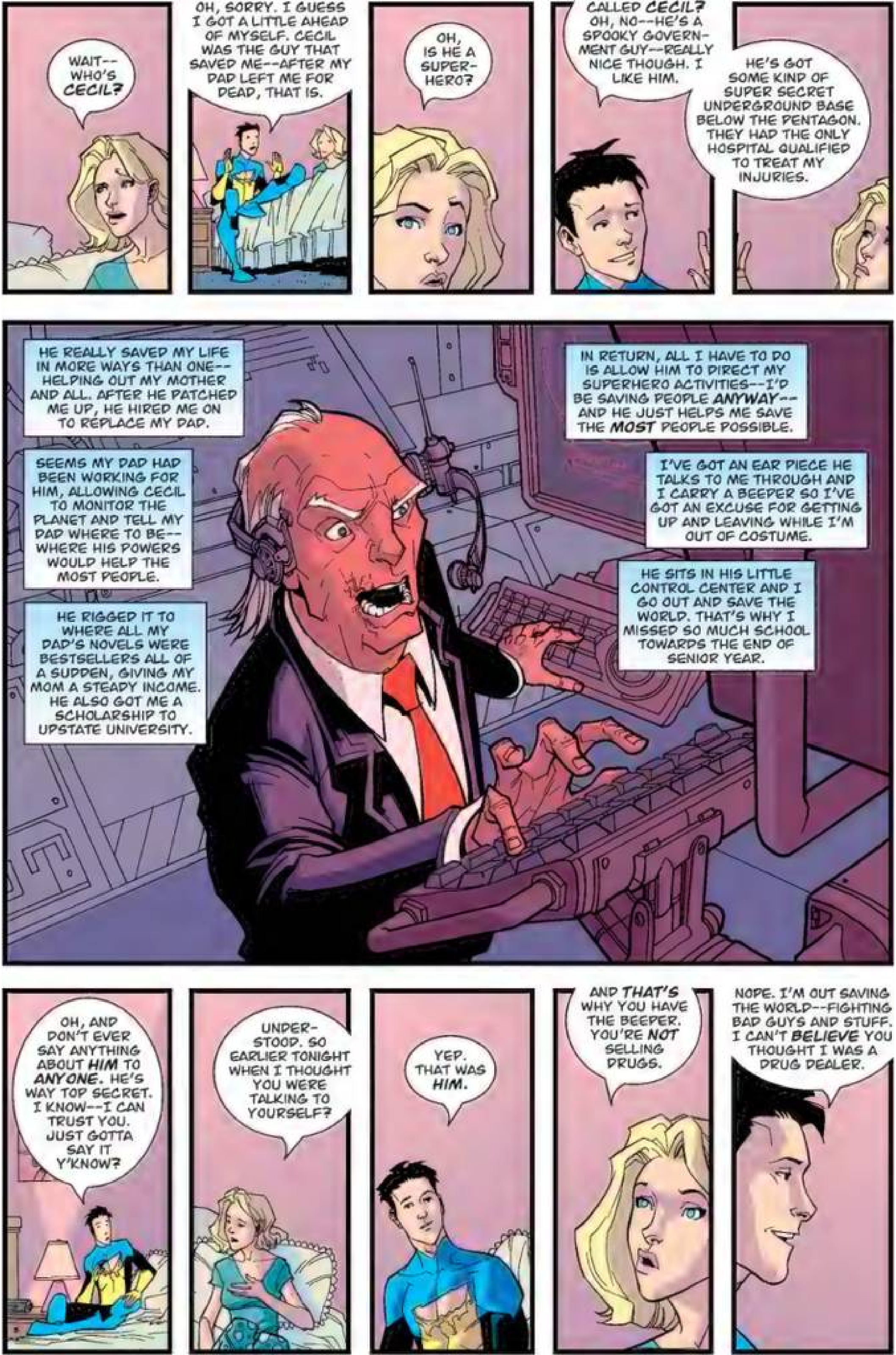

YOU HAD JUST BECOME A SUPER-HERO.
OH, YEAH. AROUND THAT SAME TIME, STUDENTS AT OUR HIGH SCHOOL, YOU'LL REMEMBER, WERE TURNING UP ALL OVER TOWN, WITH BOMBS INSIDE THEM--BLOWING STUFF UP.
I REMEMBER. TWIN PINES MALL WAS CLOSED FOR LIKE--FOUR MONTHS. IT WAS HORRIBLE.
THE WHOLE THING--NOT JUST THE MALL BEING CLOSED--OF COURSE.
OF COURSE. ANYWAY--I FIRST DISCOVERED THEY WERE STUDENTS FROM OUR SCHOOL BECAUSE MY DAD AND I ENCOUNTERED ONE OF THEM IN LAKESIDE MALL.
THE GUY MUST HAVE HATED MALLS. ANYWAY, WE GOT TO HIM JUST BEFORE HE WENT OFF--
I RECOGNIZED HIM FROM SCHOOL. DAD THREW HIM INTO THE SKY AND SAVED THE MALL.
YOU WERE ON TV, THEN. THAT WAS WHEN YOU CALLED OMNI-MAN "DAD" AND EVERYONE FOUND OUT YOU WERE HIS SON.
YEAH--THAT'S RIGHT. IT WAS ABOUT A WEEK LATER THAT ATOM EVE AND I ACTUALLY STOPPED THE GUY BEHIND IT ALL, WHO TURNED OUT TO BE MR. HILES, OUR PHYSICS TEACHER.
HE WAS A REAL NUT JOB AND HAD SOMEHOW EVEN TURNED HIMSELF INTO A BOMB. HE WAS GOING TO KILL BOTH OF US IN HIS FINAL ACT BUT I FLEW HIM TO ANTARCTICA SO THE EXPLOSION WOULDN'T HURT ANYBODY.
NCE
EVE HELPED ME OUT A LOT IN THOSE DAYS ACTUALLY. SHE WAS KINDA LIKE MY SUPERHERO PARTNER.
408 EMERG
ATOM EVE? SHE'S NOT--I MEAN--THAT'S NOT OUR EVE IS IT?
YEAH--IT KINDA IS. JEEZ, DON'T SAY ANYTHING, THOUGH. SHE'D BE REALLY PISSED IF SHE FOUND OUT I TOLD YOU.
YOU CAN TRUST ME, MARK. I PROMISE. IF NOTHING ELSE COMES OF THIS TALK--I REALLY WANT TO MAKE SURE YOU AT LEAST KNOW THAT.
I TRUST YOU, AMBER. I WOULDN'T BE TELLING YOU ALL THIS IF I DIDN'T. IT'S JUST SOMETHING YOU GOTTA SAY, Y'KNOW.
SO YEAH, HILES WAS MY FIRST BIG SUPERVILLAIN. IF YOU CAN EVEN CALL HIM THAT.

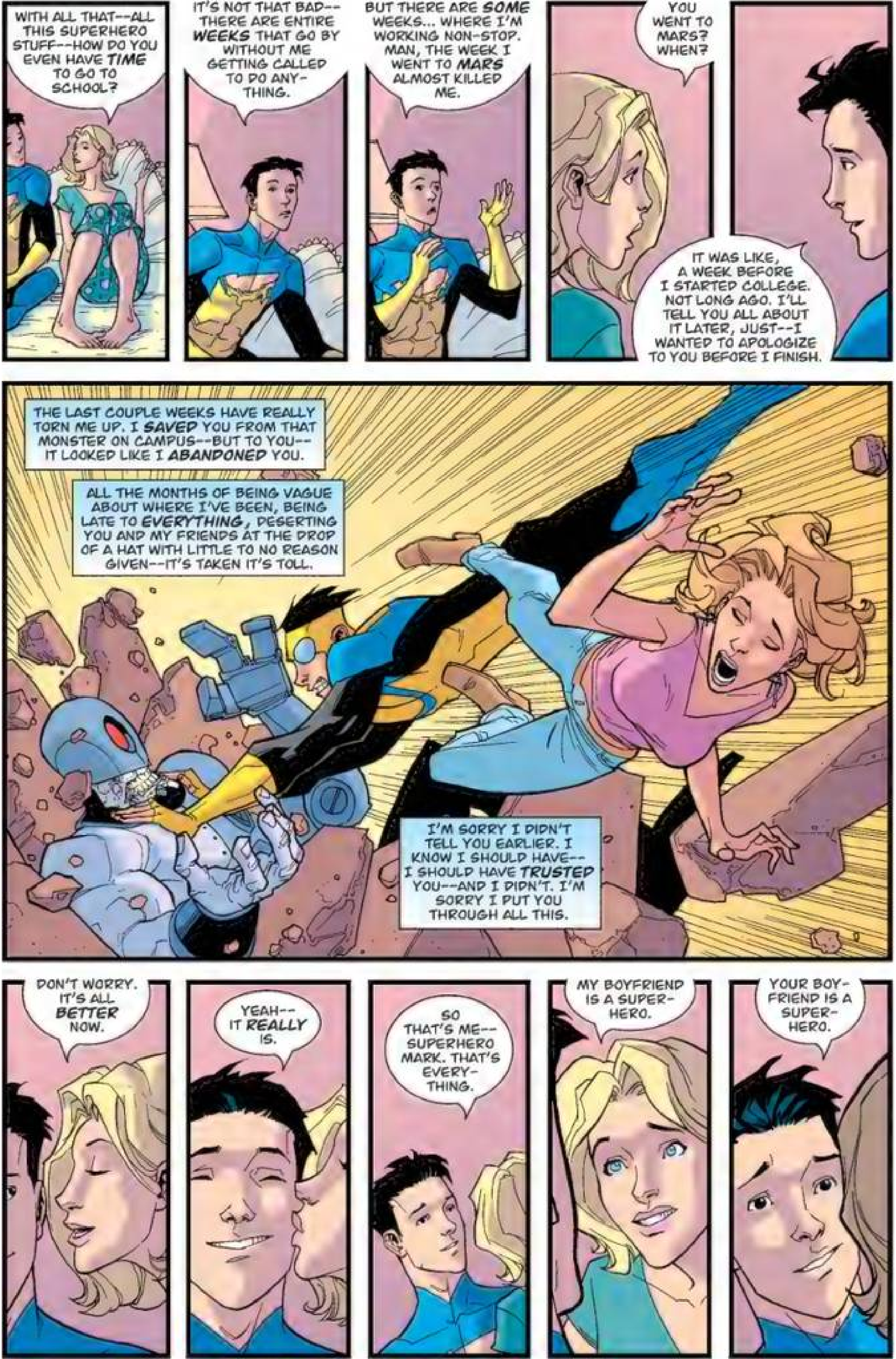

I FACED A FEW GOOD ONES: THE MAULER TWINS, TITAN, DOC SEISMIC, THE LIZARD LEAGUE, AND THIS ONE DUDE CALLED "THE ELEPHANT" BUT HE WAS REALLY JUST A LAME RIP-OFF OF "THE RHINO."
THAT GUY KINDA SUCKED.
I'VE NEVER HEARD OF ANY OF THOSE GUYS.
YEAH, WELL--THAT'S BECAUSE YOU'RE NOT IN "THE BUSINESS." OTHERWISE YOU'D TOTALLY KNOW WHO THEY WERE.
NO. I WATCH THE NEWS. THERE'S A NEW SUPERVILLAIN ON THERE EVERY WEEK. THE CHRONODILE, MEGA-BRAIN, SEBASTIAN KAHN... I SEE VILLAINS ON TV--BUT NONE OF THE GUYS YOU MENTIONED.
YEAH--UH--ANYWAY, THINGS WENT ALONG PRETTY SMOOTHLY FOR A LONG TIME. THEN--SHORTLY BEFORE YOU AND I GOT TOGETHER EVERYTHING CHANGED.
THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE WERE KILLED.
THE PREMIER SUPER TEAM, A TEAM WHO HAD SAVED THE WHOLE PLANET MORE TIMES THAN ANYONE COULD COUNT--WAS WIPED OUT IN ONE DAY. THEY WERE GONE.
AND NOBODY KNEW WHO KILLED THEM.
NOBODY BUT YOU...
RIGHT?
NO! I HAD NO IDEA WHO HAD DONE IT.
OH--HOW LONG WAS IT BEFORE YOU FOUND OUT?
I DON'T KNOW... A MONTH.
HOW DID YOU FIND OUT?

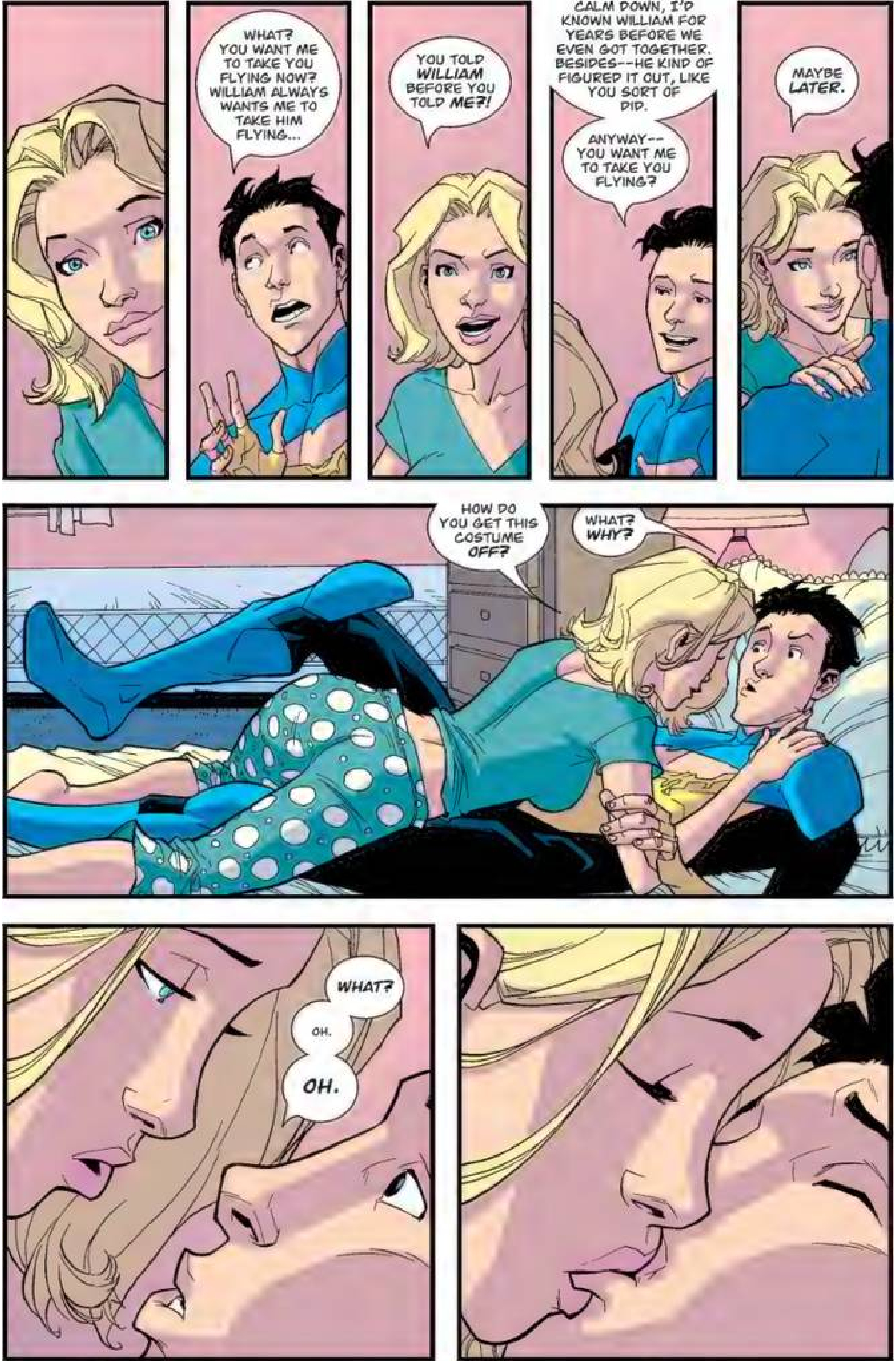

I DON'T--I'VE NEVER TALKED ABOUT THIS BEFORE... EVER.
I--
OH, MARK--I'M SO SORRY. YOU CAN STOP IF YOU WANT.
NO, I'M FINE. THE IMMORTAL, THE LEADER OF THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE, CAME BACK TO LIFE.
NO DUH, RIGHT? WITH THAT NAME, I MEAN.
ANWAY--HE CAME AFTER MY FATHER. IT WAS ON THE NEWS THAT THEY WERE FIGHTING--SO I FLEW TO WHERE THEY WERE, NOT KNOWING WHAT WAS GOING ON.
I HAD NO CLUE WHAT I WAS IN FOR. I COULDN'T FIGURE OUT WHY THE IMMORTAL WOULD BE FIGHTING MY DAD.
WHEN I ARRIVED, AND SAW MY FATHER PUNCHING A HOLE THROUGH THE IMMORTAL I WAS ONLY MORE CONFUSED.
I WAS IN SHOCK--IT WAS LIKE I LEFT MY BODY. I COULDN'T BELIEVE WHAT I WAS SEEING WAS REAL.
HE DIDN'T KNOW I WAS THERE YET--I HEARD THEM TALKING WHILE THEY FOUGHT.
THAT'S WHEN I FOUND OUT THAT MY FATHER--MY FATHER KILLED THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE.
WHEN HE SAW THAT I WAS THERE--HE JUST LOOKED AT ME, LIKE HE WAS AS SHOCKED AS I WAS.
IT SEEMED LIKE HE STARED AT ME FOREVER.
THEN--THEN HE STARTED TO TALK.
HE TOLD ME--HE TOLD ME THAT EVERYTHING HE HAD EVER TOLD ME ABOUT HIMSELF--


--WAS A LIE!
OH GOD...
IT'S OKAY, PLEASE--JUST STOP. PLEASE STOP.
NO--IF I DON'T FINISH THIS NOW I NEVER WILL. AND I WANT TO FINISH THIS.
I WANT YOU TO KNOW EVERYTHING. I DON'T WANT TO KEEP ANYTHING FROM YOU ANYMORE.
EVERYTHING WAS A LIE. THERE WAS NO "WORLD BETTERMENT COMMITTEE" IT WAS THE "WORLD CONQUERING COMMITTEE." THE VILTRUMITES WEREN'T PERFECTING WORLDS. THEY WERE CONQUERING THEM.
MY FATHER WASN'T HERE TO PROTECT EARTH--HE WAS HERE TO ENSLAVE US. EVERY MINUTE OF MY LIFE WITH HIM WAS A LIE.
HE SAID HE NEVER LOVED MY MOTHER.
HE ASKED ME TO HELP HIM--AFTER RAISING ME AS A HUMAN--HE WANTED ME TO ENSLAVE THEM. I REFUSED.
I TOLD HIM I WOULD STOP HIM.
THE GOVERNMENT HAD A RECORDING OF YOUR ARGUMENT--EVERYTHING HE SAID. IT WAS LEAKED TO THE MEDIA. I SAW THE SPECIAL--I HEARD EVERYTHING HE SAID TO YOU.
I DON'T KNOW HOW YOU--
I BARELY DO.
MY MOM TOOK IT THE HARDEST--STARTED DRINKING. SHE BARELY EVER LEAVES THE HOUSE.
THERE'S BEEN A COUPLE TIMES WHEN YOU CAME OVER TO THE HOUSE I'VE SHUFFLED YOU UP TO MY ROOM OR SUGGESTED STAYING OUTSIDE TO KEEP YOU FROM SEEING HER--PASSED OUT--DRUNK.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO. I MEAN--I KNOW EXACTLY HOW SHE FEELS, WELL, ALMOST. I MEAN, I LOST MY FATHER--SHE LOST HER HUSBAND.
BUT WE WERE BOTH BETRAYED.

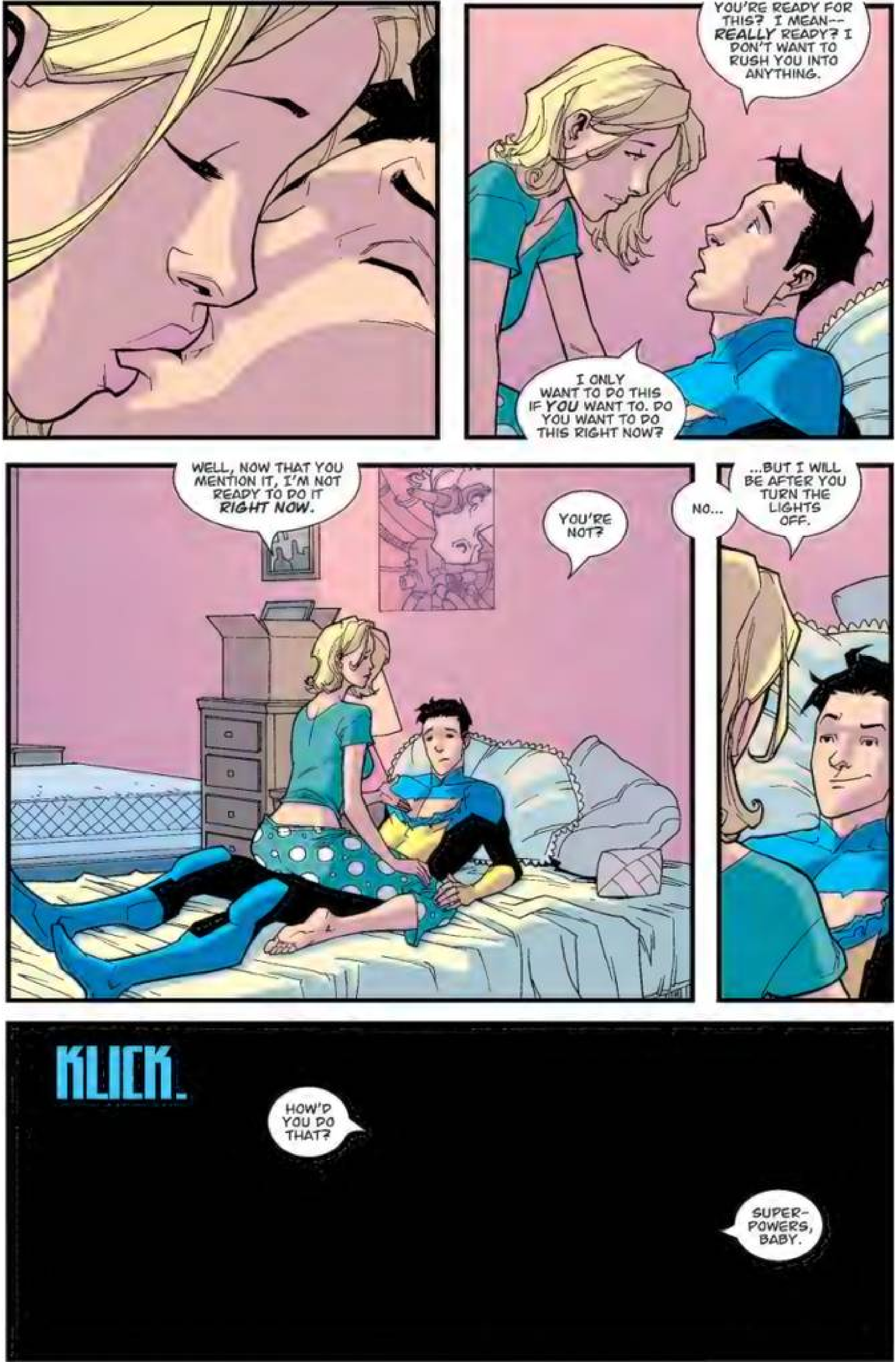

I DON'T WANT TO LIE TO YOU ANYMORE.
I CAN DO THIS--IT'S JUST **HARD**. I TRY NOT TO THINK ABOUT THIS STUFF--I CERTAINLY DON'T TALK ABOUT IT.
BUT I CAN DO THIS-- FOR YOU I CAN DO THIS..
I LOVE YOU, MARK GRAYSON.
I LOVE YOU TOO, AMBER BENNETT.
WE FOUGHT.
HE BEAT ME NEARLY TO DEATH.
THEN HE FLEW INTO SPACE.
I'M SORRY. I NEVER EVEN ***KNEW***.
I MEAN--I THOUGHT YOUR DAD DIED IN A CAR CRASH, THIS IS SOMEHOW ***WORSE***.
YOU DIDN'T JUST LOSE YOUR FATHER, YOU LOST ALL THE MEMORIES OF YOUR FATHER AS WELL.
SO-- HE JUST FLEW OFF?
I WAS PRETTY MUCH UNCONSCIOUS AT THE TIME--BUT YEAH, HE JUST STOPPED BEATING ON ME AND FLEW AWAY.
I DON'T KNOW WHY-- HE ALMOST KILLED ME, AND THEN JUST ***STOPPED***.
CECIL TOLD ME LATER THAT THE GOVERNMENT TRACKED HIM IN SPACE UNTIL HE WAS OUT OF RANGE--HE DEFINITELY LEFT THE PLANET AND DIDN'T COME BACK.


WAIT-- WHO'S CECIL?
OH, SORRY. I GUESS I GOT A LITTLE AHEAD OF MYSELF. CECIL WAS THE GUY THAT SAVED ME--AFTER MY DAD LEFT ME FOR DEAD, THAT IS.
OH, IS HE A SUPERHERO?
CALLED CECIL? OH, NO--HE'S A SPOOKY GOVERNMENT GUY--REALLY NICE THOUGH. I LIKE HIM.
HE'S GOT SOME KIND OF SUPER SECRET UNDERGROUND BASE BELOW THE PENTAGON. THEY HAD THE ONLY HOSPITAL QUALIFIED TO TREAT MY INJURIES.
HE REALLY SAVED MY LIFE IN MORE WAYS THAN ONE-- HELPING OUT MY MOTHER AND ALL. AFTER HE PATCHED ME UP, HE HIRED ME ON TO REPLACE MY DAD.
SEEMS MY DAD HAD BEEN WORKING FOR HIM, ALLOWING CECIL TO MONITOR THE PLANET AND TELL MY DAD WHERE TO BE-- WHERE HIS POWERS WOULD HELP THE MOST PEOPLE.
HE RIGGED IT TO WHERE ALL MY DAD'S NOVELS WERE BESTSELLERS ALL OF A SUDDEN, GIVING MY MOM A STEADY INCOME. HE ALSO GOT ME A SCHOLARSHIP TO UPSTATE UNIVERSITY.
IN RETURN, ALL I HAVE TO DO IS ALLOW HIM TO DIRECT MY SUPERHERO ACTIVITIES--I'D BE SAVING PEOPLE ANYWAY-- AND HE JUST HELPS ME SAVE THE MOST PEOPLE POSSIBLE.
I'VE GOT AN EAR PIECE HE TALKS TO ME THROUGH AND I CARRY A BEEPER SO I'VE GOT AN EXCUSE FOR GETTING UP AND LEAVING WHILE I'M OUT OF COSTUME.
HE SITS IN HIS LITTLE CONTROL CENTER AND I GO OUT AND SAVE THE WORLD. THAT'S WHY I MISSED SO MUCH SCHOOL TOWARDS THE END OF SENIOR YEAR.
OH, AND DON'T EVER SAY ANYTHING ABOUT HIM TO ANYONE. HE'S WAY TOP SECRET. I KNOW--I CAN TRUST YOU. JUST GOTTA SAY IT Y'KNOW?
UNDERSTOOD. SO EARLIER TONIGHT WHEN I THOUGHT YOU WERE TALKING TO YOURSELF?
YEP. THAT WAS HIM.
AND THAT'S WHY YOU HAVE THE BEEPER. YOU'RE NOT SELLING DRUGS.
NOPE. I'M OUT SAVING THE WORLD--FIGHTING BAD GUYS AND STUFF. I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU THOUGHT I WAS A DRUG DEALER.


WITH ALL THAT--ALL THIS SUPERHERO STUFF--HOW DO YOU EVEN HAVE TIME TO GO TO SCHOOL?
IT'S NOT THAT BAD--THERE ARE ENTIRE WEEKS THAT GO BY WITHOUT ME GETTING CALLED TO DO ANYTHING.
BUT THERE ARE SOME WEEKS... WHERE I'M WORKING NON-STOP. MAN, THE WEEK I WENT TO MARS ALMOST KILLED ME.
YOU WENT TO MARS? WHEN?
IT WAS LIKE, A WEEK BEFORE I STARTED COLLEGE. NOT LONG AGO. I'LL TELL YOU ALL ABOUT IT LATER, JUST--I WANTED TO APOLOGIZE TO YOU BEFORE I FINISH.
THE LAST COUPLE WEEKS HAVE REALLY TORN ME UP. I SAVED YOU FROM THAT MONSTER ON CAMPUS--BUT TO YOU--IT LOOKED LIKE I ABANDONED YOU.
ALL THE MONTHS OF BEING VAGUE ABOUT WHERE I'VE BEEN, BEING LATE TO EVERYTHING, DESERTING YOU AND MY FRIENDS AT THE DROP OF A HAT WITH LITTLE TO NO REASON GIVEN--IT'S TAKEN IT'S TOLL.
I'M SORRY I DIDN'T TELL YOU EARLIER. I KNOW I SHOULD HAVE--I SHOULD HAVE TRUSTED YOU--AND I DIDN'T. I'M SORRY I PUT YOU THROUGH ALL THIS.
DON'T WORRY. IT'S ALL BETTER NOW.
YEAH--IT REALLY IS.
SO THAT'S ME--SUPERHERO MARK. THAT'S EVERYTHING.
MY BOYFRIEND IS A SUPERHERO.
YOUR BOYFRIEND IS A SUPERHERO.

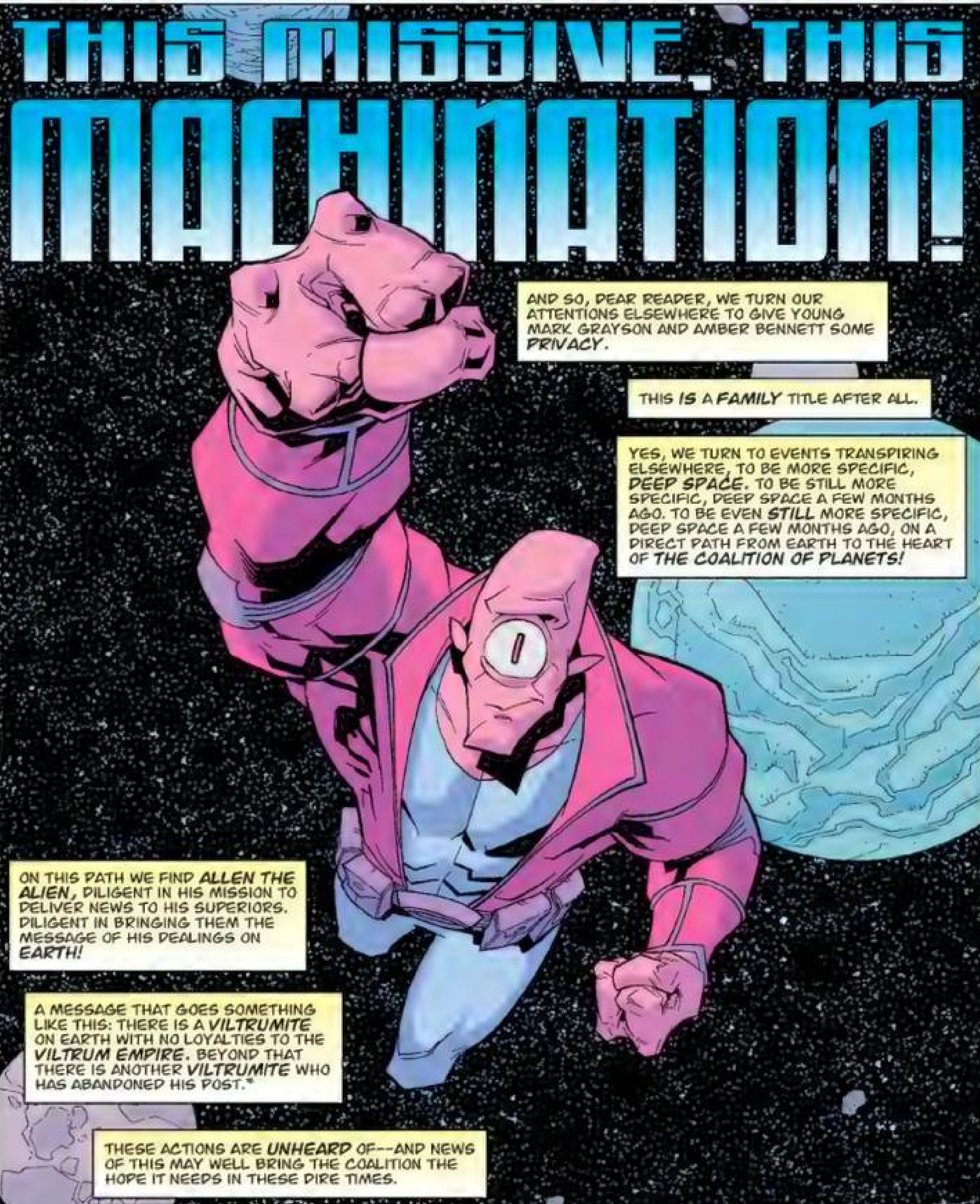

WHAT? YOU WANT ME TO TAKE YOU FLYING NOW? WILLIAM ALWAYS WANTS ME TO TAKE HIM FLYING...
YOU TOLD **WILLIAM** BEFORE YOU TOLD **ME?!**
CALM DOWN, I'D KNOWN WILLIAM FOR YEARS BEFORE WE EVEN GOT TOGETHER. BESIDES--HE KIND OF FIGURED IT OUT, LIKE YOU SORT OF DID.
ANYWAY-- YOU WANT ME TO TAKE YOU FLYING?
MAYBE **LATER.**
HOW DO YOU GET THIS COSTUME **OFF?**
WHAT? **WHY?**
WHAT?
OH.
OH.

ISSUE TWENTY-THREE

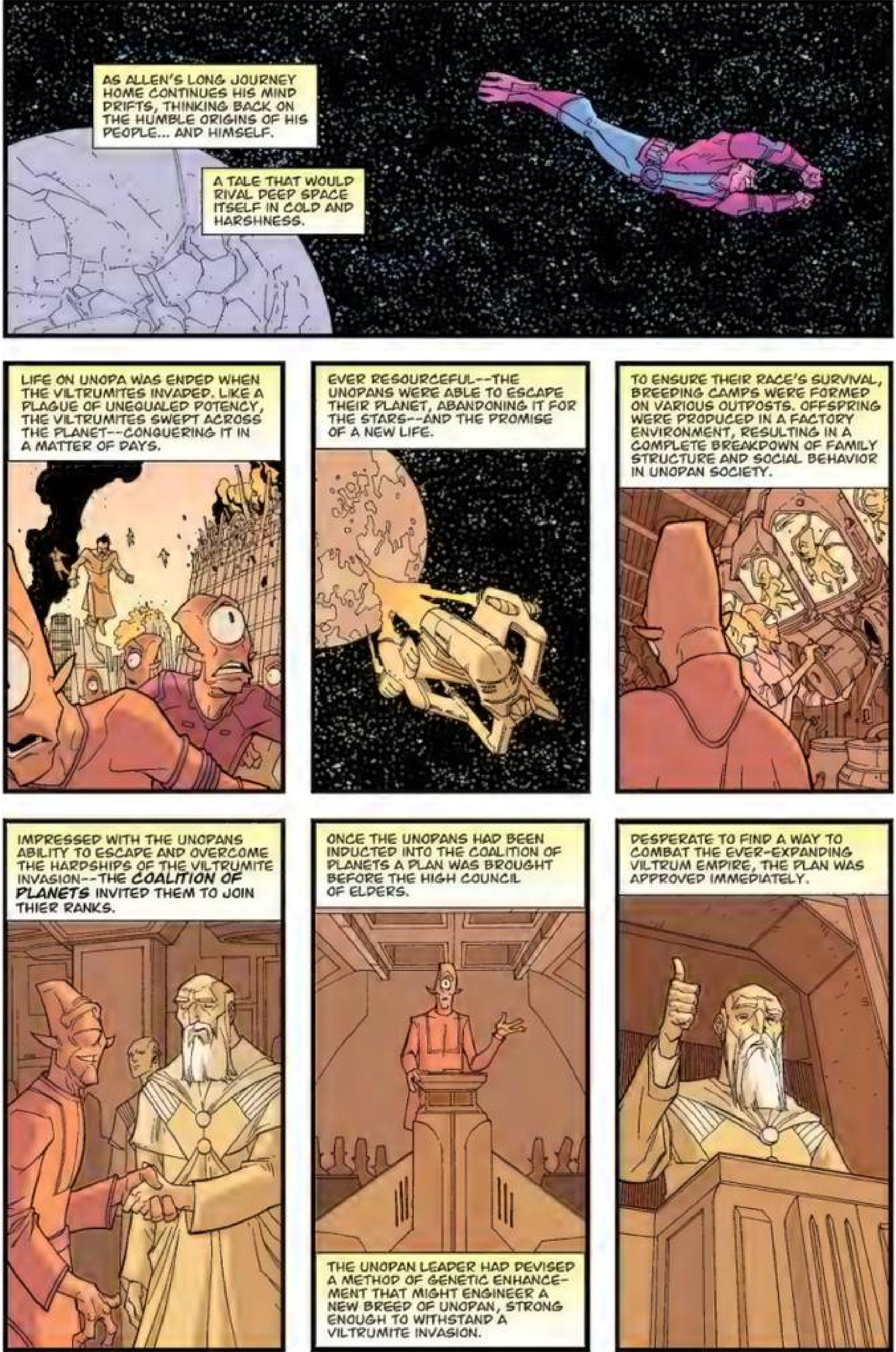

YOU'RE READY FOR THIS? I MEAN-- REALLY READY? I DON'T WANT TO RUSH YOU INTO ANYTHING.
I ONLY WANT TO DO THIS IF YOU WANT TO. DO YOU WANT TO DO THIS RIGHT NOW?
WELL, NOW THAT YOU MENTION IT, I'M NOT READY TO DO IT RIGHT NOW.
YOU'RE NOT?
NO...
...BUT I WILL BE AFTER YOU TURN THE LIGHTS OFF.
KLICK.
HOW'D YOU DO THAT?
SUPER-POWERS, BABY.

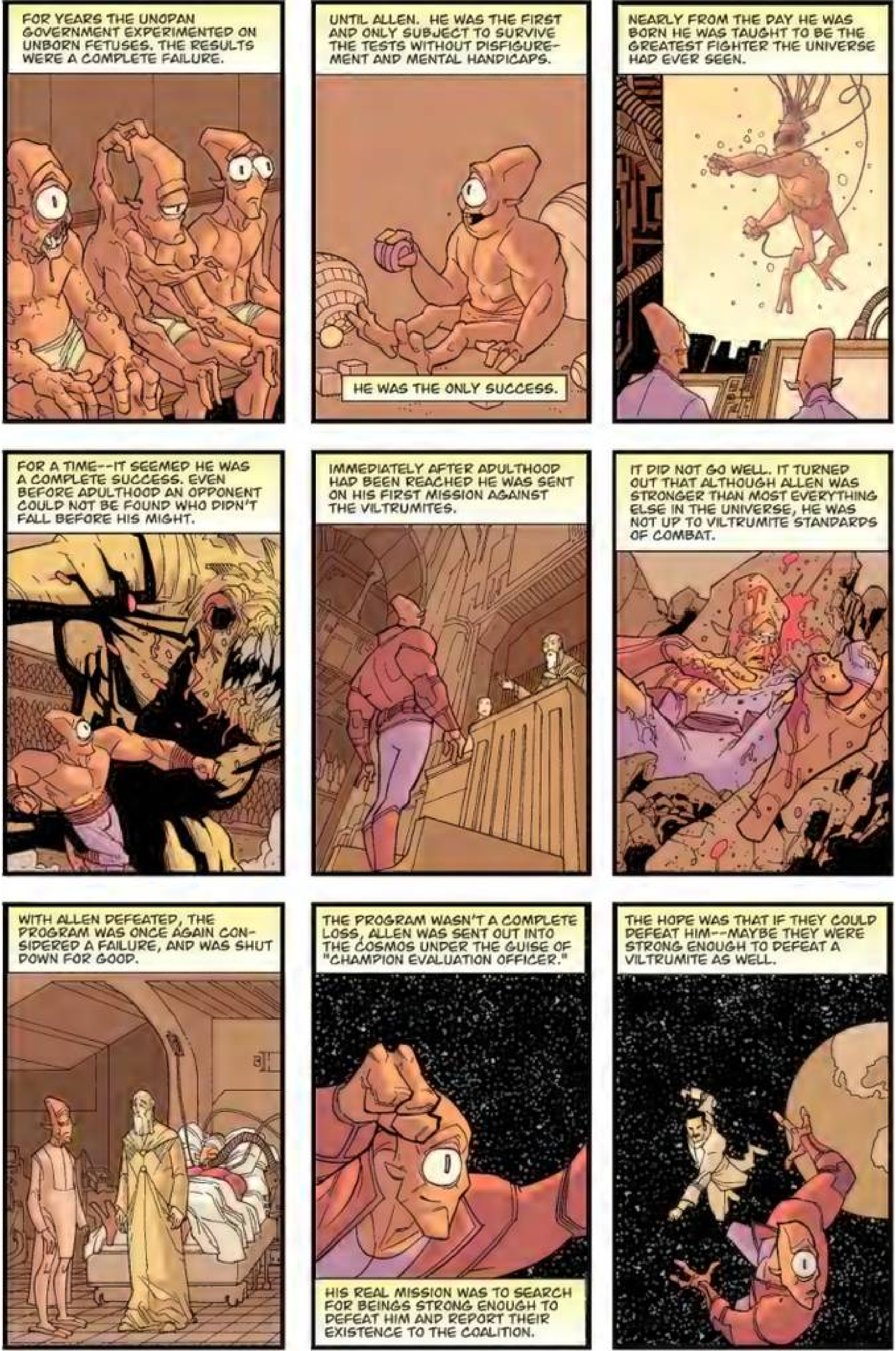
BORN OF A RACE ENDANGERED, CAST OUT OF THEIR HOMEWORLD LIKE A BAND OF GYPSIES, TESTED AND EXPERIMENTED ON TO INCREASE HIS STRENGTH AND SPEED, UNTIL HE EMERGED A GUARDIAN OF THE SPACEWAYS.

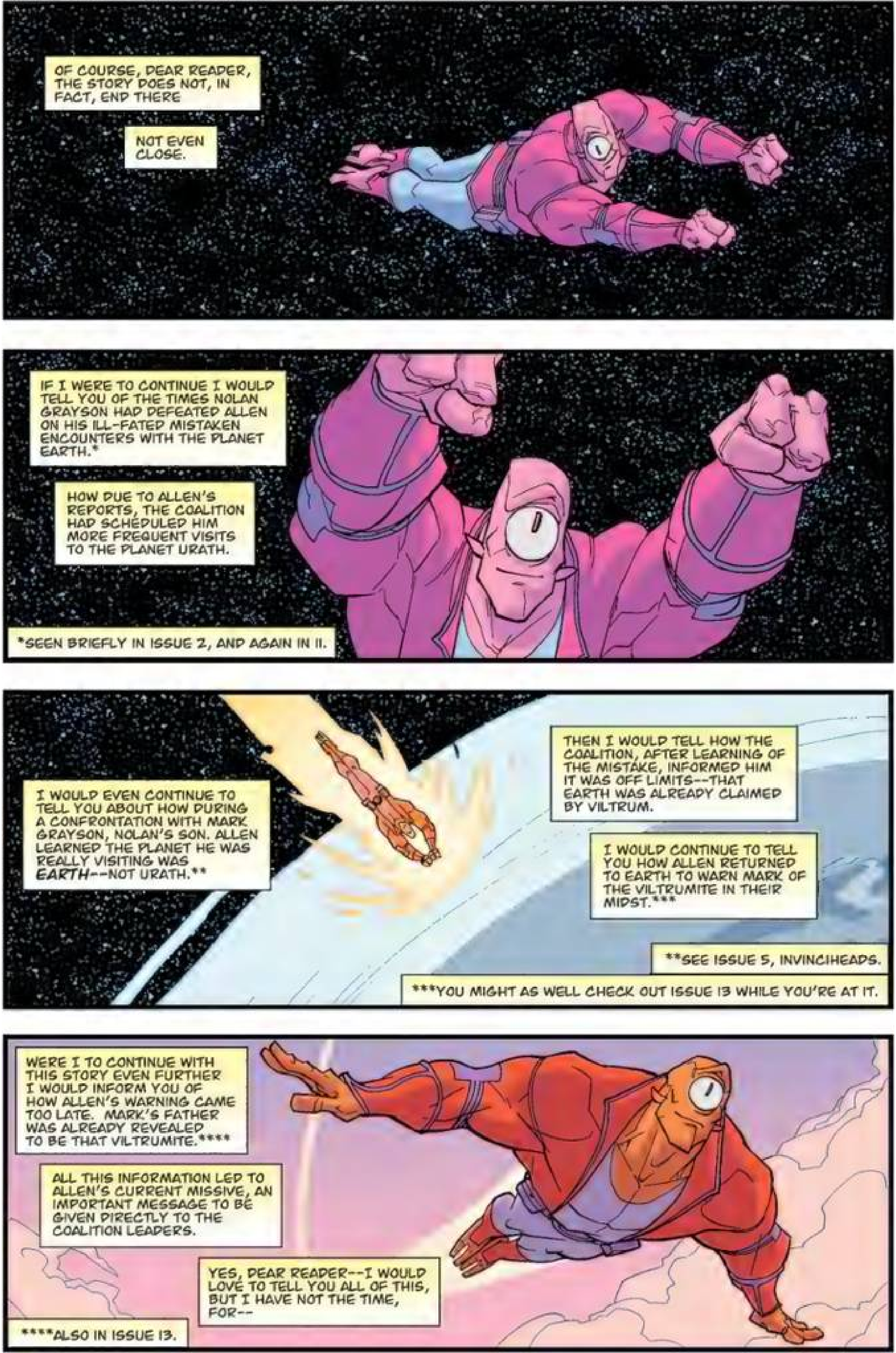
IMAGE COMICS PRESENTS: **ALLEN THE ALIEN** *IN:*

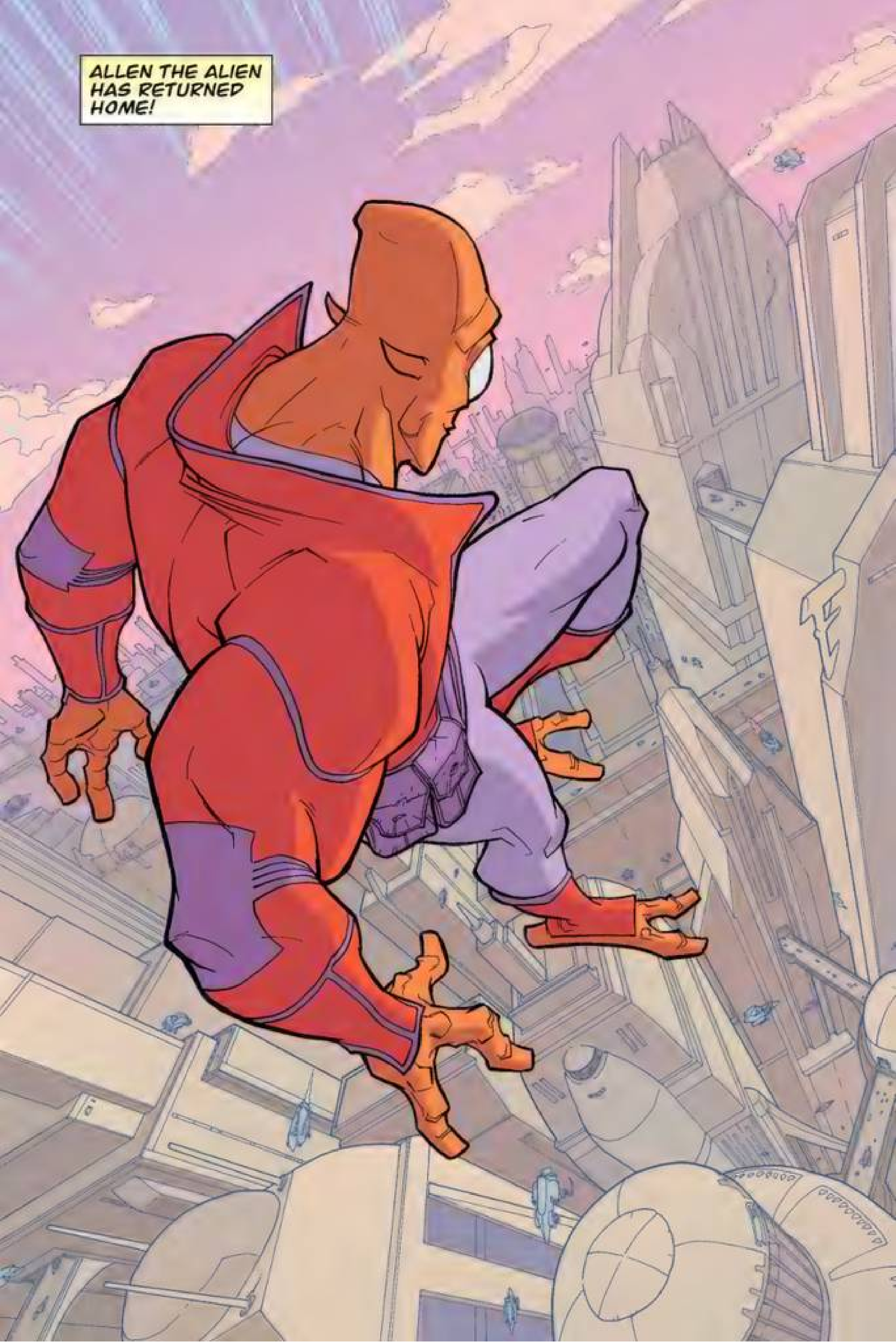

THIS MISSIVE, THIS MACHINATION!
AND SO, DEAR READER, WE TURN OUR ATTENTIONS ELSEWHERE TO GIVE YOUNG MARK GRAYSON AND AMBER BENNETT SOME *PRIVACY*.
THIS *IS* A *FAMILY* TITLE AFTER ALL.
YES, WE TURN TO EVENTS TRANSPIRING ELSEWHERE, TO BE MORE SPECIFIC, *DEEP SPACE*. TO BE STILL MORE SPECIFIC, DEEP SPACE A FEW MONTHS AGO. TO BE EVEN *STILL* MORE SPECIFIC, DEEP SPACE A FEW MONTHS AGO, ON A DIRECT PATH FROM EARTH TO THE HEART OF *THE COALITION OF PLANETS!*
ON THIS PATH WE FIND *ALLEN THE ALIEN*, DILIGENT IN HIS MISSION TO DELIVER NEWS TO HIS SUPERIORS. DILIGENT IN BRINGING THEM THE MESSAGE OF HIS DEALINGS ON *EARTH!*
A MESSAGE THAT GOES SOMETHING LIKE THIS: THERE IS A *VILTRUMITE* ON EARTH WITH NO LOYALTIES TO THE *VILTRUM EMPIRE*. BEYOND THAT THERE IS ANOTHER *VILTRUMITE* WHO HAS ABANDONED HIS POST.*
THESE ACTIONS ARE *UNHEARD* OF--AND NEWS OF THIS MAY WELL BRING THE COALITION THE HOPE IT NEEDS IN THESE DIRE TIMES.
*SEE ISSUE 13, TRUE BELIEVERS.

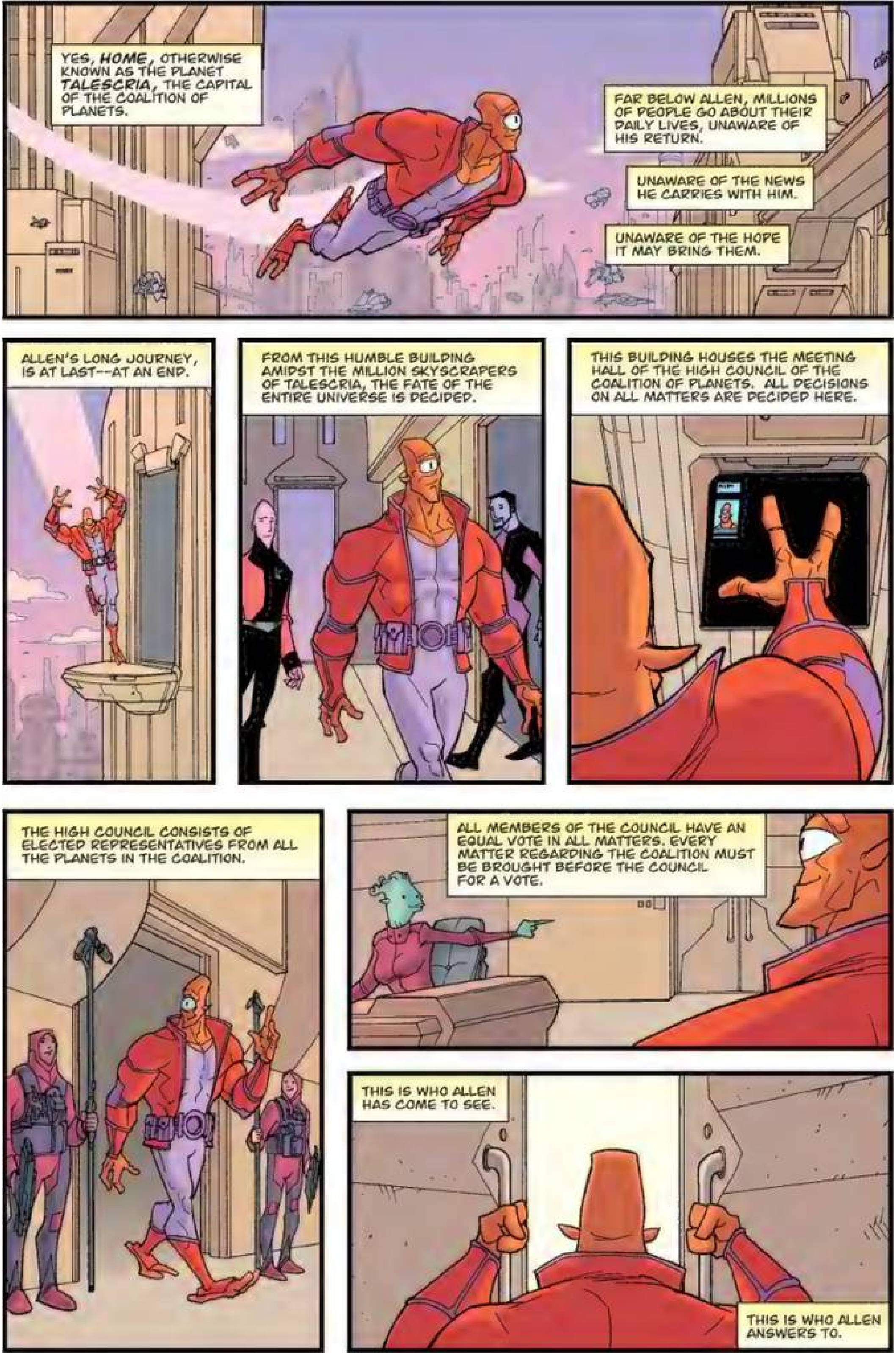
ROBERT KIRKMAN WRITER
RYAN OTTLEY ARTIST
BILL CRABTREE COLORIST
RUS WOOTON LETTERER
CORY WALKER INSPIRATION
ERIC STEPHENSON EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
ERIK LARSEN PUBLISHER

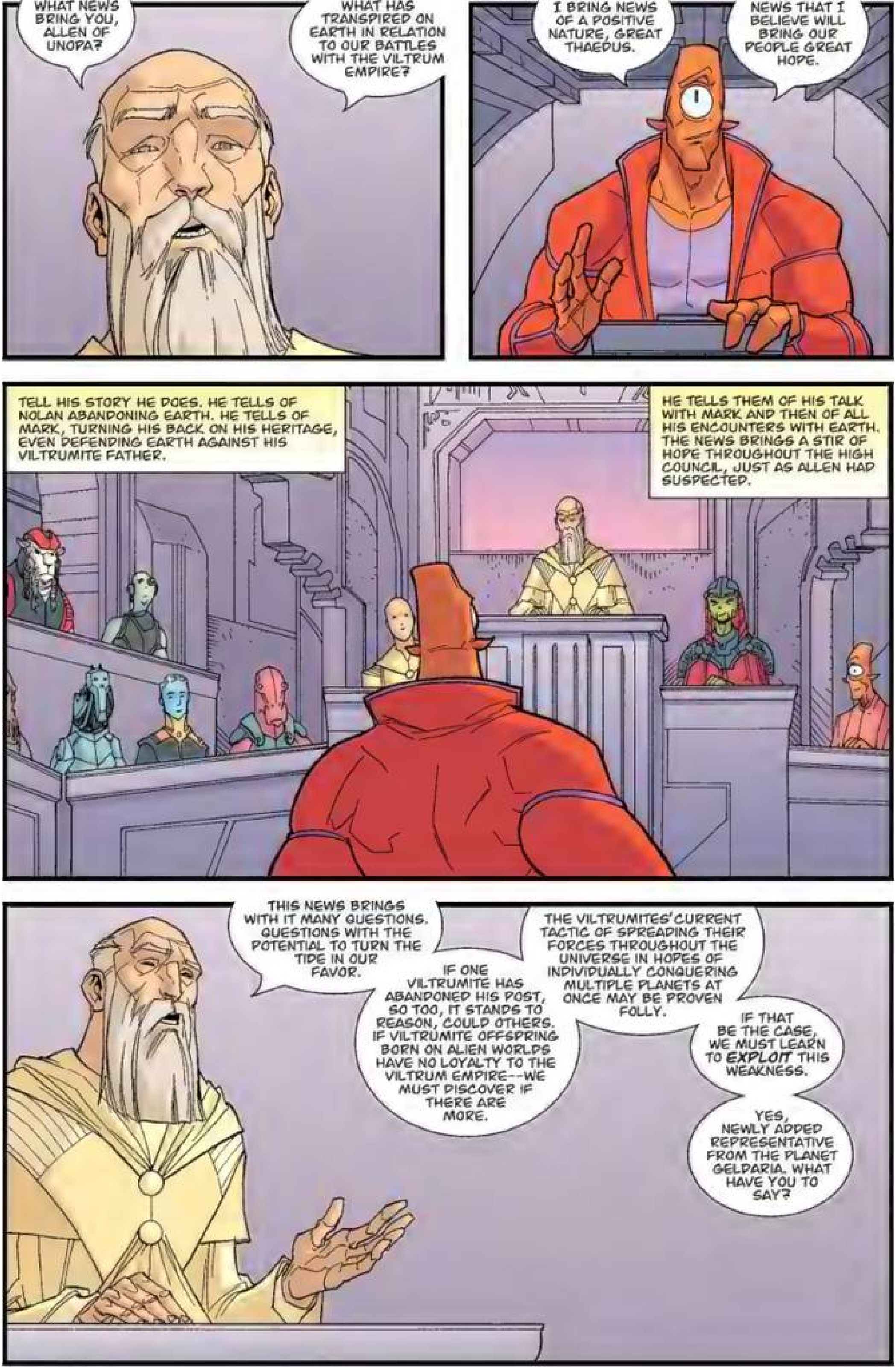

AS ALLEN'S LONG JOURNEY HOME CONTINUES HIS MIND DRIFTS, THINKING BACK ON THE HUMBLE ORIGINS OF HIS PEOPLE... AND HIMSELF.
A TALE THAT WOULD RIVAL DEEP SPACE ITSELF IN COLD AND HARSHNESS.
LIFE ON UNOPA WAS ENDED WHEN THE VILTRUMITES INVADED. LIKE A PLAGUE OF UNEQUALED POTENCY, THE VILTRUMITES SWEPT ACROSS THE PLANET--CONQUERING IT IN A MATTER OF DAYS.
EVER RESOURCEFUL--THE UNOPANS WERE ABLE TO ESCAPE THEIR PLANET, ABANDONING IT FOR THE STARS--AND THE PROMISE OF A NEW LIFE.
TO ENSURE THEIR RACE'S SURVIVAL, BREEDING CAMPS WERE FORMED ON VARIOUS OUTPOSTS. OFFSPRING WERE PRODUCED IN A FACTORY ENVIRONMENT, RESULTING IN A COMPLETE BREAKDOWN OF FAMILY STRUCTURE AND SOCIAL BEHAVIOR IN UNOPAN SOCIETY.
IMPRESSED WITH THE UNOPANS ABILITY TO ESCAPE AND OVERCOME THE HARDSHIPS OF THE VILTRUMITE INVASION--THE ***COALITION OF PLANETS*** INVITED THEM TO JOIN THIER RANKS.
ONCE THE UNOPANS HAD BEEN INDUCTED INTO THE COALITION OF PLANETS A PLAN WAS BROUGHT BEFORE THE HIGH COUNCIL OF ELDERS.
THE UNOPAN LEADER HAD DEVISED A METHOD OF GENETIC ENHANCEMENT THAT MIGHT ENGINEER A NEW BREED OF UNOPAN, STRONG ENOUGH TO WITHSTAND A VILTRUMITE INVASION.
DESPERATE TO FIND A WAY TO COMBAT THE EVER-EXPANDING VILTRUM EMPIRE, THE PLAN WAS APPROVED IMMEDIATELY.

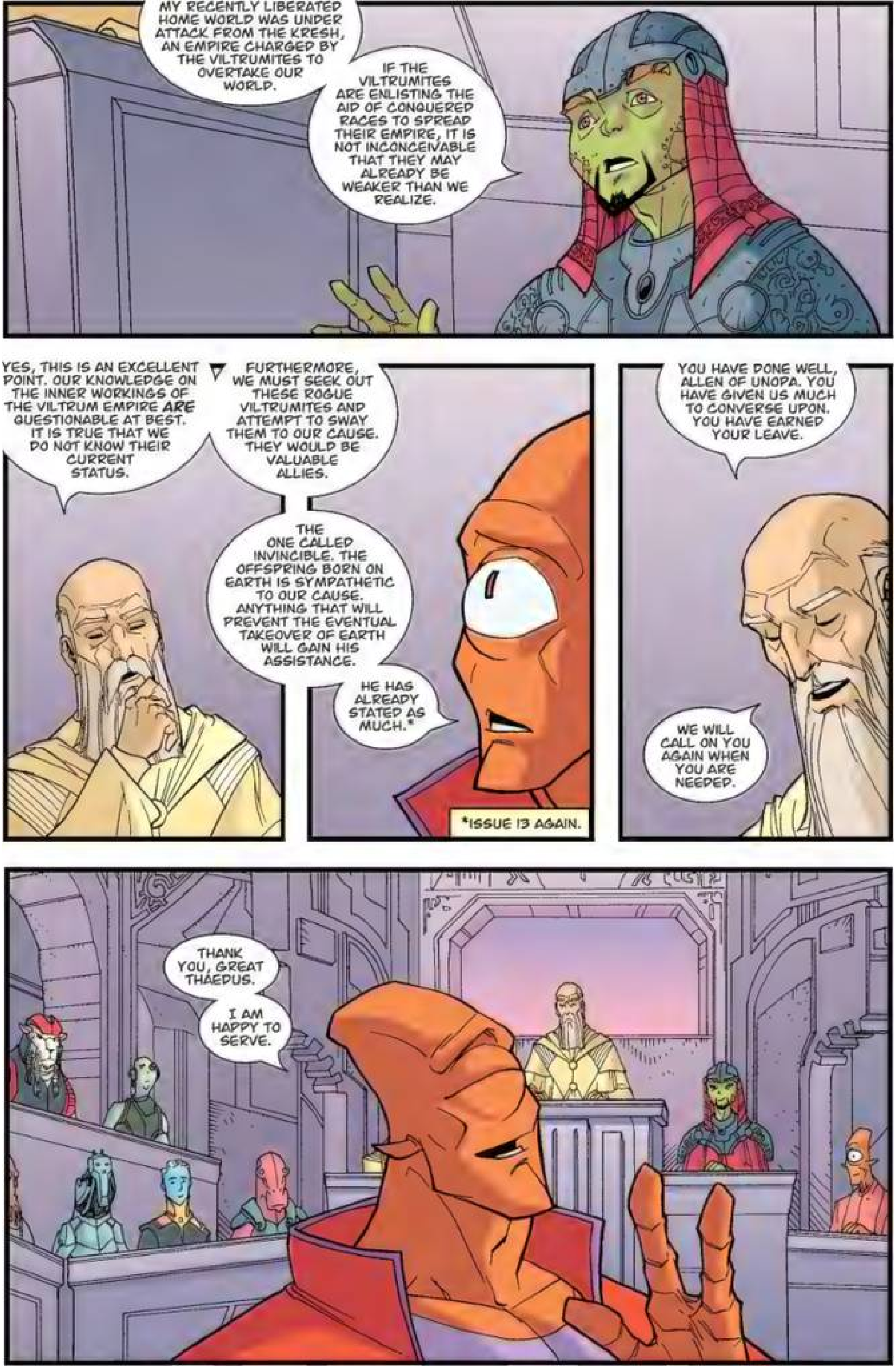

FOR YEARS THE UNOPAN GOVERNMENT EXPERIMENTED ON UNBORN FETUSES. THE RESULTS WERE A COMPLETE FAILURE.
UNTIL ALLEN. HE WAS THE FIRST AND ONLY SUBJECT TO SURVIVE THE TESTS WITHOUT DISFIGUREMENT AND MENTAL HANDICAPS.
HE WAS THE ONLY SUCCESS.
NEARLY FROM THE DAY HE WAS BORN HE WAS TAUGHT TO BE THE GREATEST FIGHTER THE UNIVERSE HAD EVER SEEN.
FOR A TIME--IT SEEMED HE WAS A COMPLETE SUCCESS. EVEN BEFORE ADULTHOOD AN OPPONENT COULD NOT BE FOUND WHO DIDN'T FALL BEFORE HIS MIGHT.
IMMEDIATELY AFTER ADULTHOOD HAD BEEN REACHED HE WAS SENT ON HIS FIRST MISSION AGAINST THE VILTRUMITES.
IT DID NOT GO WELL. IT TURNED OUT THAT ALTHOUGH ALLEN WAS STRONGER THAN MOST EVERYTHING ELSE IN THE UNIVERSE, HE WAS NOT UP TO VILTRUMITE STANDARDS OF COMBAT.
WITH ALLEN DEFEATED, THE PROGRAM WAS ONCE AGAIN CONSIDERED A FAILURE, AND WAS SHUT DOWN FOR GOOD.
THE PROGRAM WASN'T A COMPLETE LOSS, ALLEN WAS SENT OUT INTO THE COSMOS UNDER THE GUISE OF "CHAMPION EVALUATION OFFICER."
HIS REAL MISSION WAS TO SEARCH FOR BEINGS STRONG ENOUGH TO DEFEAT HIM AND REPORT THEIR EXISTENCE TO THE COALITION.
THE HOPE WAS THAT IF THEY COULD DEFEAT HIM--MAYBE THEY WERE STRONG ENOUGH TO DEFEAT A VILTRUMITE AS WELL.

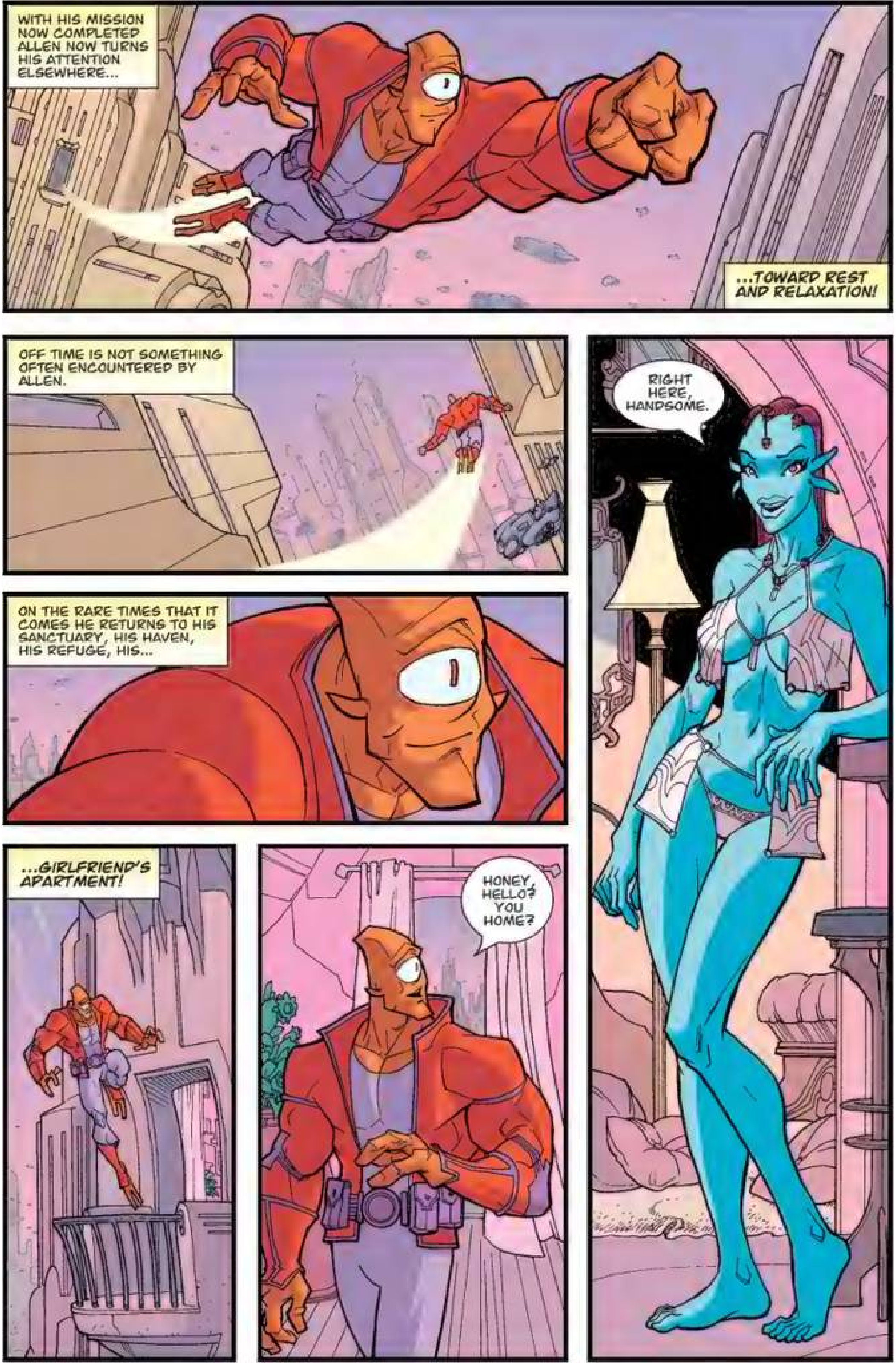

OF COURSE, DEAR READER, THE STORY DOES NOT, IN FACT, END THERE
NOT EVEN CLOSE.
IF I WERE TO CONTINUE I WOULD TELL YOU OF THE TIMES NOLAN GRAYSON HAD DEFEATED ALLEN ON HIS ILL-FATED MISTAKEN ENCOUNTERS WITH THE PLANET EARTH.*
HOW DUE TO ALLEN'S REPORTS, THE COALITION HAD SCHEDULED HIM MORE FREQUENT VISITS TO THE PLANET URATH.
*SEEN BRIEFLY IN ISSUE 2, AND AGAIN IN 11.
I WOULD EVEN CONTINUE TO TELL YOU ABOUT HOW DURING A CONFRONTATION WITH MARK GRAYSON, NOLAN'S SON. ALLEN LEARNED THE PLANET HE WAS REALLY VISITING WAS EARTH--NOT URATH.**
THEN I WOULD TELL HOW THE COALITION, AFTER LEARNING OF THE MISTAKE, INFORMED HIM IT WAS OFF LIMITS--THAT EARTH WAS ALREADY CLAIMED BY VILTRUM.
I WOULD CONTINUE TO TELL YOU HOW ALLEN RETURNED TO EARTH TO WARN MARK OF THE VILTRUMITE IN THEIR MIDST.***
**SEE ISSUE 5, INVINCIHEADS.
***YOU MIGHT AS WELL CHECK OUT ISSUE 13 WHILE YOU'RE AT IT.
WERE I TO CONTINUE WITH THIS STORY EVEN FURTHER I WOULD INFORM YOU OF HOW ALLEN'S WARNING CAME TOO LATE. MARK'S FATHER WAS ALREADY REVEALED TO BE THAT VILTRUMITE.****
ALL THIS INFORMATION LED TO ALLEN'S CURRENT MISSIVE, AN IMPORTANT MESSAGE TO BE GIVEN DIRECTLY TO THE COALITION LEADERS.
YES, DEAR READER--I WOULD LOVE TO TELL YOU ALL OF THIS, BUT I HAVE NOT THE TIME, FOR--
****ALSO IN ISSUE 13.

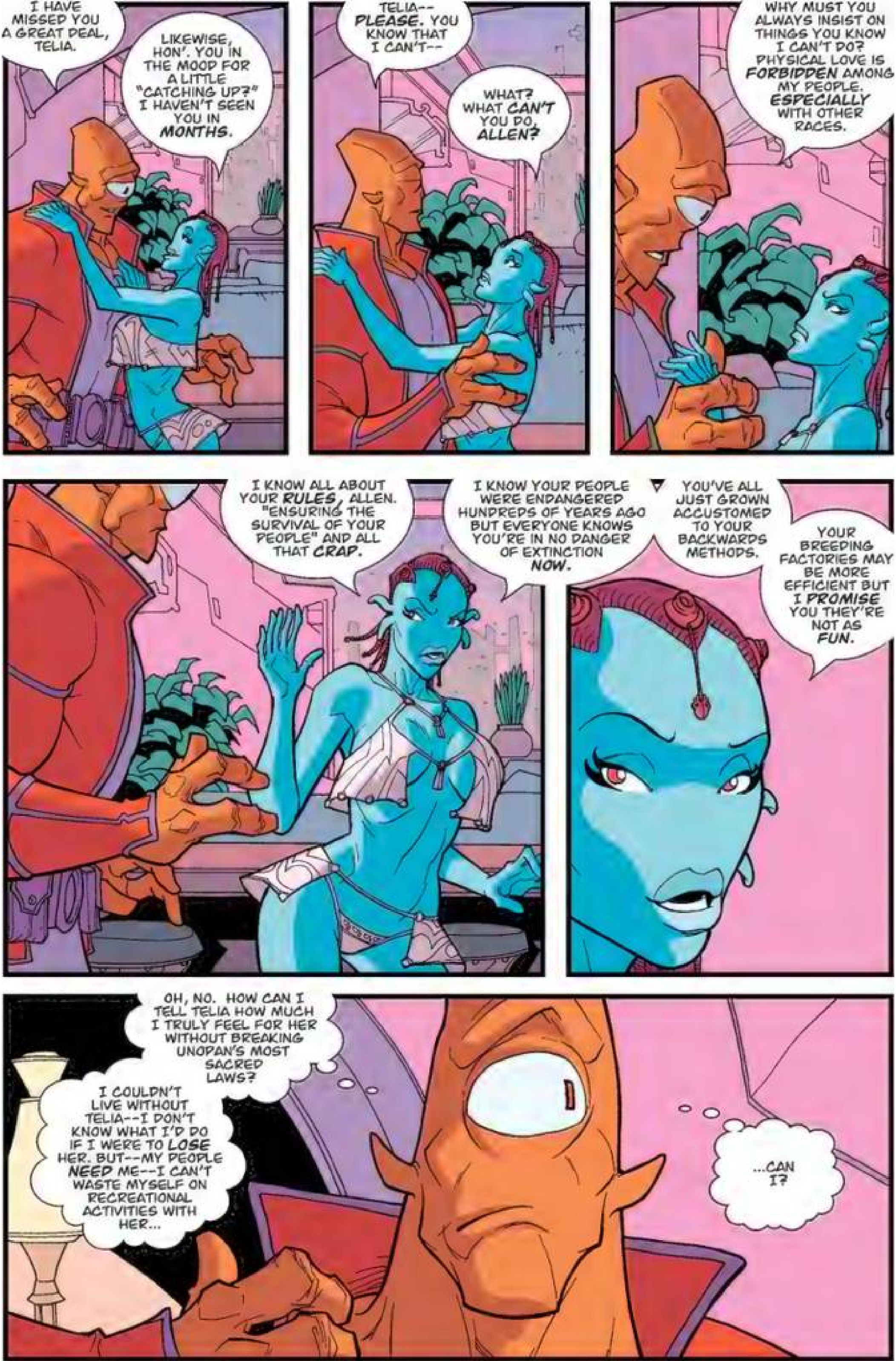

ALLEN THE ALIEN HAS RETURNED HOME!

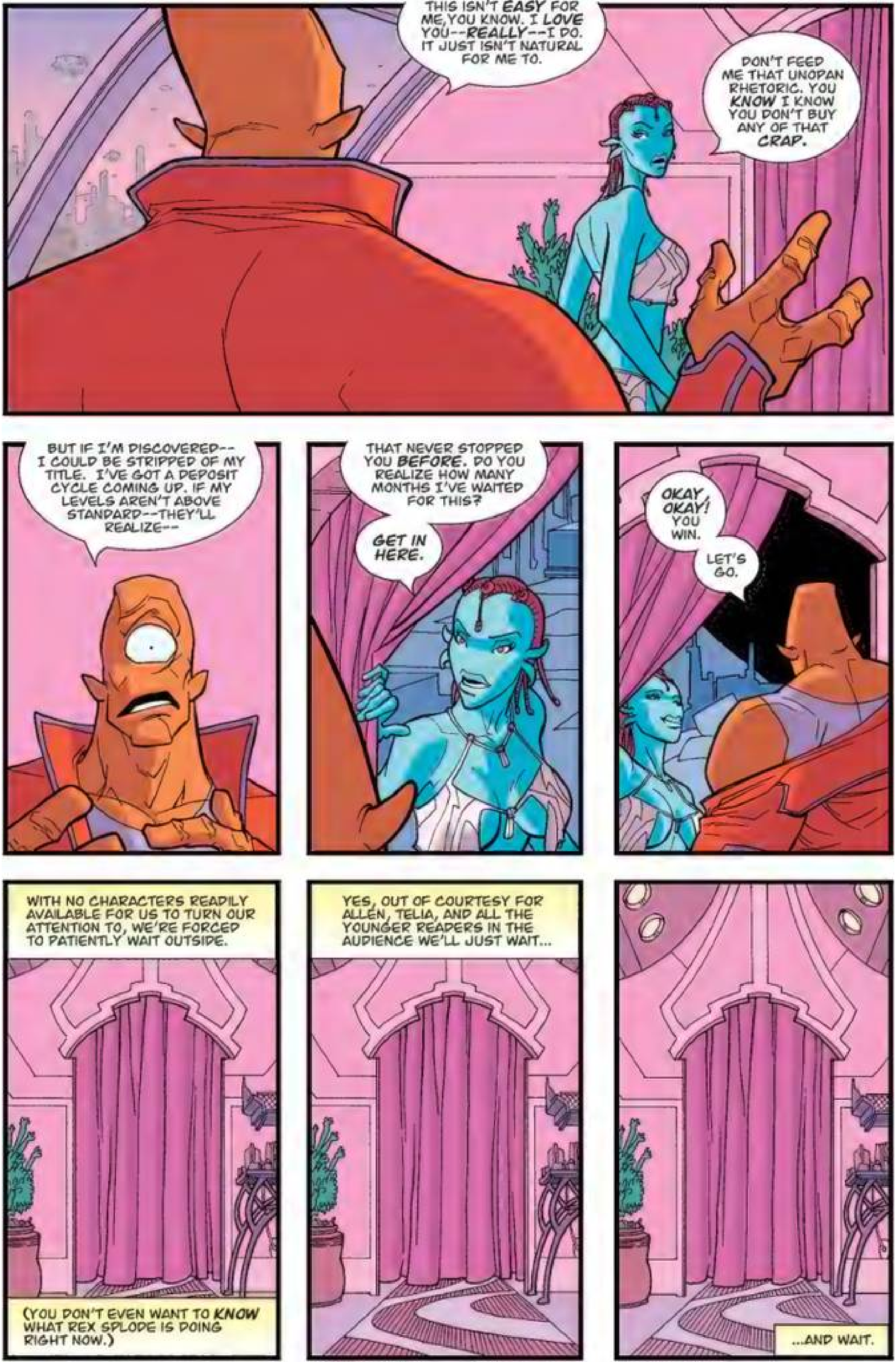

YES, HOME, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE PLANET TALESCRIA, THE CAPITAL OF THE COALITION OF PLANETS.
FAR BELOW ALLEN, MILLIONS OF PEOPLE GO ABOUT THEIR DAILY LIVES, UNAWARE OF HIS RETURN.
UNAWARE OF THE NEWS HE CARRIES WITH HIM.
UNAWARE OF THE HOPE IT MAY BRING THEM.
ALLEN'S LONG JOURNEY, IS AT LAST--AT AN END.
FROM THIS HUMBLE BUILDING AMIDST THE MILLION SKYSCRAPERS OF TALESCRIA, THE FATE OF THE ENTIRE UNIVERSE IS DECIDED.
THIS BUILDING HOUSES THE MEETING HALL OF THE HIGH COUNCIL OF THE COALITION OF PLANETS. ALL DECISIONS ON ALL MATTERS ARE DECIDED HERE.
THE HIGH COUNCIL CONSISTS OF ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES FROM ALL THE PLANETS IN THE COALITION.
ALL MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL HAVE AN EQUAL VOTE IN ALL MATTERS. EVERY MATTER REGARDING THE COALITION MUST BE BROUGHT BEFORE THE COUNCIL FOR A VOTE.
THIS IS WHO ALLEN HAS COME TO SEE.
THIS IS WHO ALLEN ANSWERS TO.

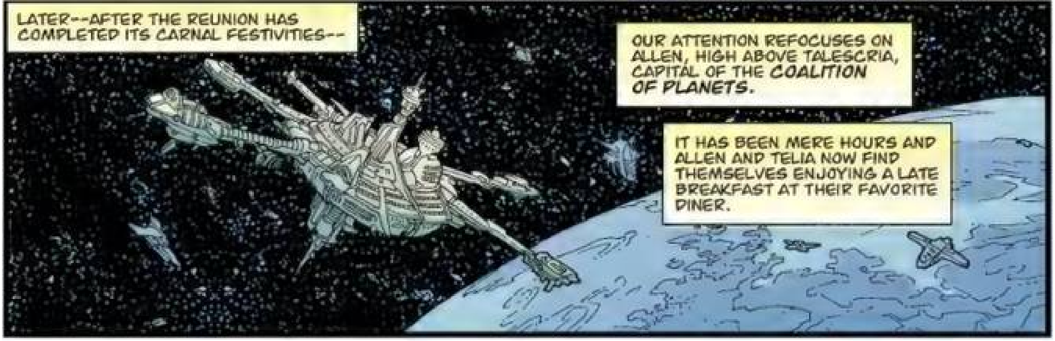

WHAT NEWS BRING YOU, ALLEN OF UNOPA?
WHAT HAS TRANSPIRED ON EARTH IN RELATION TO OUR BATTLES WITH THE VILTRUM EMPIRE?
I BRING NEWS OF A POSITIVE NATURE, GREAT THAEDUS.
NEWS THAT I BELIEVE WILL BRING OUR PEOPLE GREAT HOPE.
TELL HIS STORY HE DOES. HE TELLS OF NOLAN ABANDONING EARTH. HE TELLS OF MARK, TURNING HIS BACK ON HIS HERITAGE, EVEN DEFENDING EARTH AGAINST HIS VILTRUMITE FATHER.
HE TELLS THEM OF HIS TALK WITH MARK AND THEN OF ALL HIS ENCOUNTERS WITH EARTH. THE NEWS BRINGS A STIR OF HOPE THROUGHOUT THE HIGH COUNCIL, JUST AS ALLEN HAD SUSPECTED.
THIS NEWS BRINGS WITH IT MANY QUESTIONS. QUESTIONS WITH THE POTENTIAL TO TURN THE TIDE IN OUR FAVOR.
IF ONE VILTRUMITE HAS ABANDONED HIS POST, SO TOO, IT STANDS TO REASON, COULD OTHERS. IF VILTRUMITE OFFSPRING BORN ON ALIEN WORLDS HAVE NO LOYALTY TO THE VILTRUM EMPIRE--WE MUST DISCOVER IF THERE ARE MORE.
THE VILTRUMITES' CURRENT TACTIC OF SPREADING THEIR FORCES THROUGHOUT THE UNIVERSE IN HOPES OF INDIVIDUALLY CONQUERING MULTIPLE PLANETS AT ONCE MAY BE PROVEN FOLLY.
IF THAT BE THE CASE, WE MUST LEARN TO *EXPLOIT* THIS WEAKNESS.
YES, NEWLY ADDED REPRESENTATIVE FROM THE PLANET GELDARIA. WHAT HAVE YOU TO SAY?

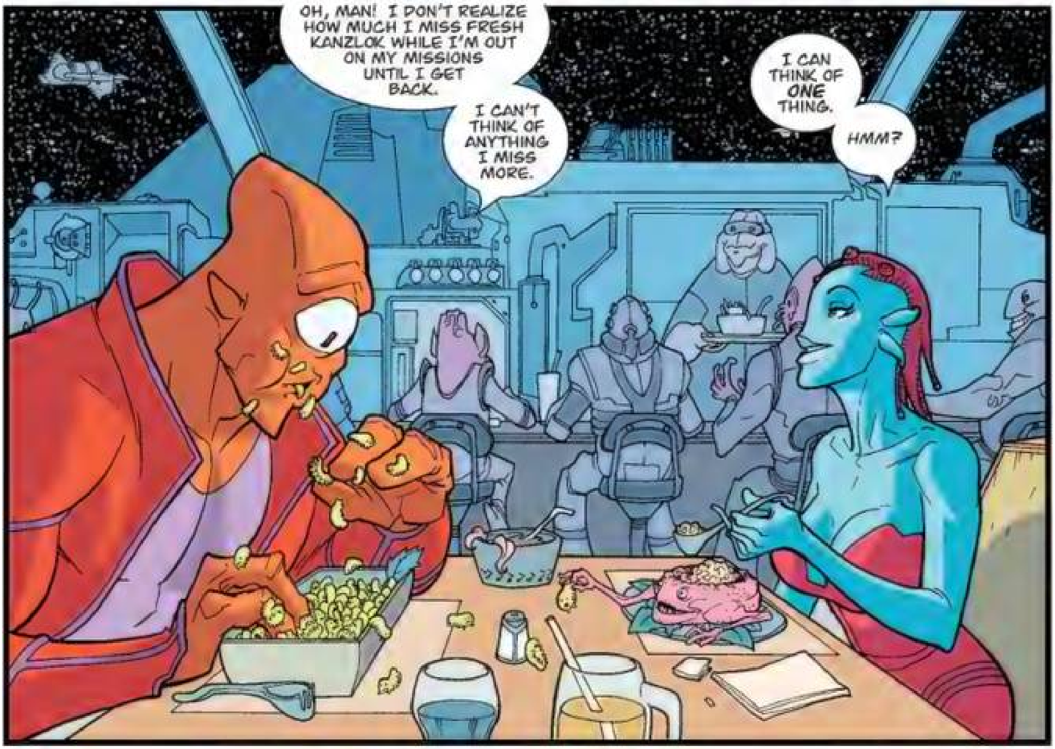

MY RECENTLY LIBERATED HOME WORLD WAS UNDER ATTACK FROM THE KRESH, AN EMPIRE CHARGED BY THE VILTRUMITES TO OVERTAKE OUR WORLD.
IF THE VILTRUMITES ARE ENLISTING THE AID OF CONQUERED RACES TO SPREAD THEIR EMPIRE, IT IS NOT INCONCEIVABLE THAT THEY MAY ALREADY BE WEAKER THAN WE REALIZE.
YES, THIS IS AN EXCELLENT POINT. OUR KNOWLEDGE ON THE INNER WORKINGS OF THE VILTRUM EMPIRE *ARE* QUESTIONABLE AT BEST. IT IS TRUE THAT WE DO NOT KNOW THEIR CURRENT STATUS.
FURTHERMORE, WE MUST SEEK OUT THESE ROGUE VILTRUMITES AND ATTEMPT TO SWAY THEM TO OUR CAUSE. THEY WOULD BE VALUABLE ALLIES.
THE ONE CALLED INVINCIBLE. THE OFFSPRING BORN ON EARTH IS SYMPATHETIC TO OUR CAUSE. ANYTHING THAT WILL PREVENT THE EVENTUAL TAKEOVER OF EARTH WILL GAIN HIS ASSISTANCE.
HE HAS ALREADY STATED AS MUCH.*
*ISSUE 13 AGAIN.
YOU HAVE DONE WELL, ALLEN OF UNOPA. YOU HAVE GIVEN US MUCH TO CONVERSE UPON. YOU HAVE EARNED YOUR LEAVE.
WE WILL CALL ON YOU AGAIN WHEN YOU ARE NEEDED.
THANK YOU, GREAT THAEDUS.
I AM HAPPY TO SERVE.

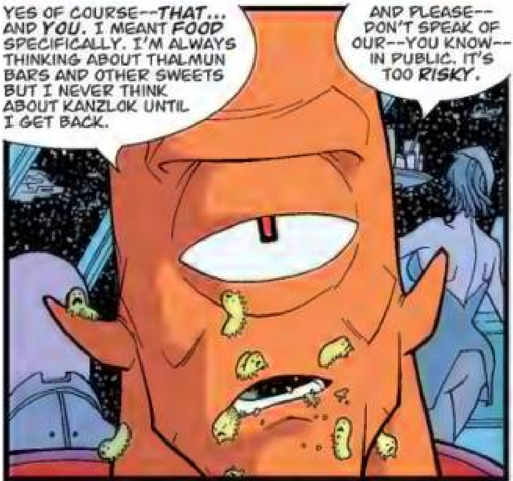

WITH HIS MISSION NOW COMPLETED ALLEN NOW TURNS HIS ATTENTION ELSEWHERE...
...TOWARD REST AND RELAXATION!
OFF TIME IS NOT SOMETHING OFTEN ENCOUNTERED BY ALLEN.
ON THE RARE TIMES THAT IT COMES HE RETURNS TO HIS SANCTUARY, HIS HAVEN, HIS REFUGE, HIS...
...GIRLFRIEND'S APARTMENT!
HONEY, HELLO? YOU HOME?
RIGHT HERE, HANDSOME.

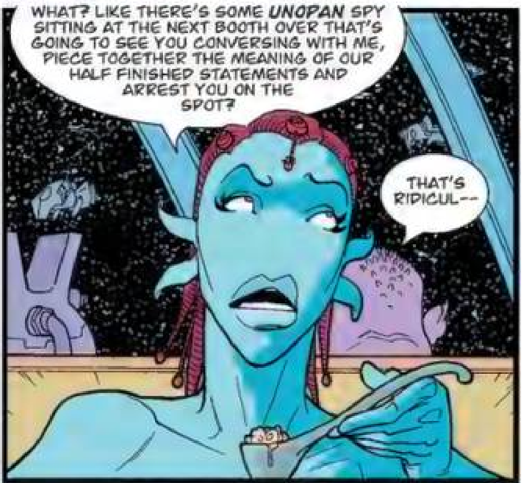

I HAVE MISSED YOU A GREAT DEAL, TELIA.
LIKEWISE, HON'. YOU IN THE MOOD FOR A LITTLE "CATCHING UP?" I HAVEN'T SEEN YOU IN MONTHS.
TELIA-- PLEASE. YOU KNOW THAT I CAN'T--
WHAT? WHAT CAN'T YOU DO, ALLEN?
WHY MUST YOU ALWAYS INSIST ON THINGS YOU KNOW I CAN'T DO? PHYSICAL LOVE IS FORBIDDEN AMONG MY PEOPLE. ESPECIALLY WITH OTHER RACES.
I KNOW ALL ABOUT YOUR RULES, ALLEN. "ENSURING THE SURVIVAL OF YOUR PEOPLE" AND ALL THAT CRAP.
I KNOW YOUR PEOPLE WERE ENDANGERED HUNDREDS OF YEARS AGO BUT EVERYONE KNOWS YOU'RE IN NO DANGER OF EXTINCTION NOW.
YOU'VE ALL JUST GROWN ACCUSTOMED TO YOUR BACKWARDS METHODS.
YOUR BREEDING FACTORIES MAY BE MORE EFFICIENT BUT I PROMISE YOU THEY'RE NOT AS FUN.
OH, NO. HOW CAN I TELL TELIA HOW MUCH I TRULY FEEL FOR HER WITHOUT BREAKING UNOPAN'S MOST SACRED LAWS?
I COULDN'T LIVE WITHOUT TELIA--I DON'T KNOW WHAT I'D DO IF I WERE TO LOSE HER. BUT--MY PEOPLE NEED ME--I CAN'T WASTE MYSELF ON RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES WITH HER...
...CAN I?

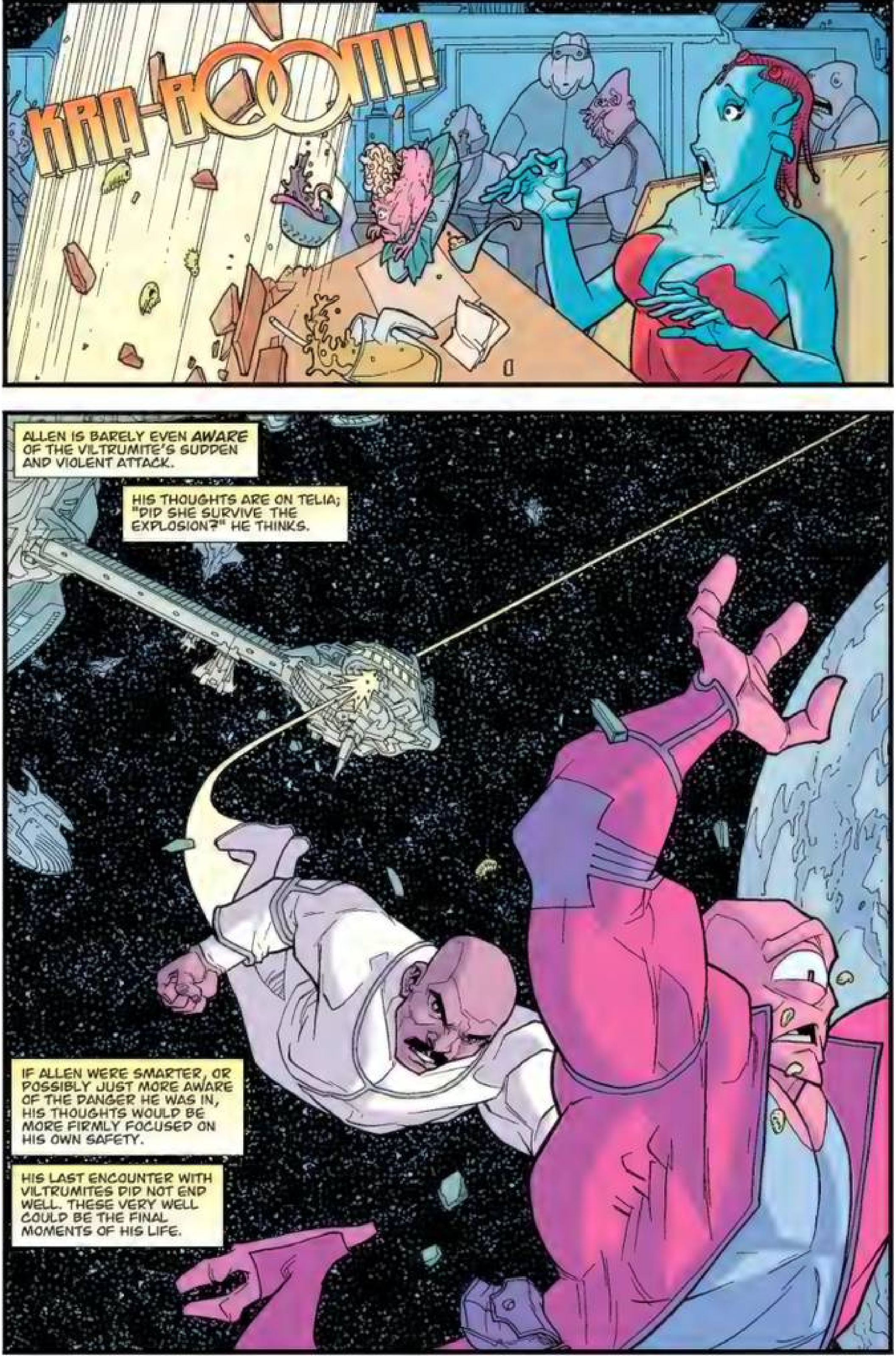

THIS ISN'T EASY FOR ME, YOU KNOW. I LOVE YOU--REALLY--I DO. IT JUST ISN'T NATURAL FOR ME TO.
DON'T FEED ME THAT UNOPAN RHETORIC. YOU KNOW I KNOW YOU DON'T BUY ANY OF THAT CRAP.
BUT IF I'M DISCOVERED-- I COULD BE STRIPPED OF MY TITLE. I'VE GOT A DEPOSIT CYCLE COMING UP. IF MY LEVELS AREN'T ABOVE STANDARD--THEY'LL REALIZE--
THAT NEVER STOPPED YOU BEFORE. DO YOU REALIZE HOW MANY MONTHS I'VE WAITED FOR THIS?
GET IN HERE.
OKAY, OKAY! YOU WIN.
LET'S GO.
WITH NO CHARACTERS READILY AVAILABLE FOR US TO TURN OUR ATTENTION TO, WE'RE FORCED TO PATIENTLY WAIT OUTSIDE.
(YOU DON'T EVEN WANT TO KNOW WHAT REX SPLODE IS DOING RIGHT NOW.)
YES, OUT OF COURTESY FOR ALLEN, TELIA, AND ALL THE YOUNGER READERS IN THE AUDIENCE WE'LL JUST WAIT...
...AND WAIT.

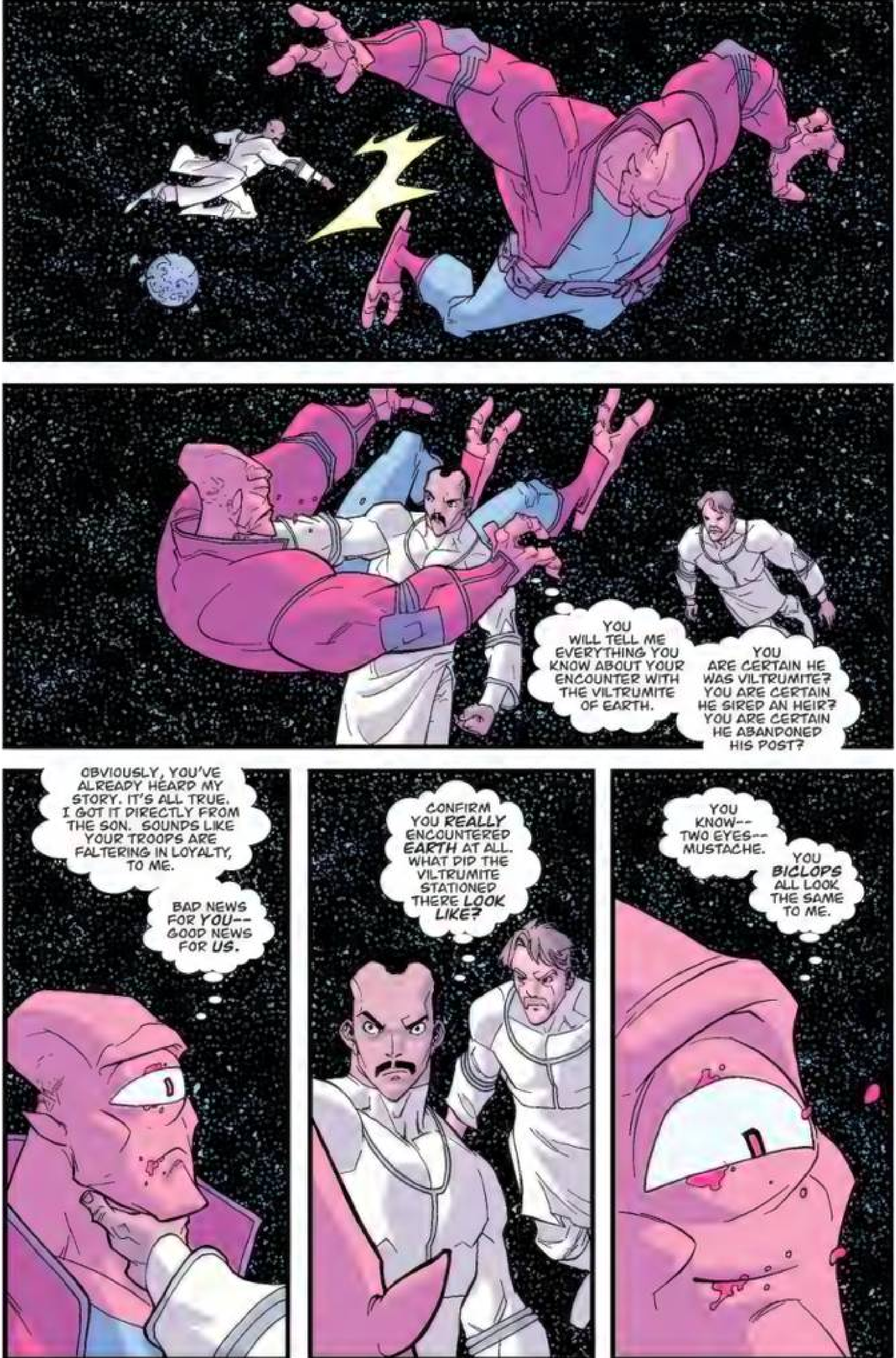

LATER--AFTER THE REUNION HAS COMPLETED ITS CARNAL FESTIVITIES--
OUR ATTENTION REFOCUSES ON ALLEN, HIGH ABOVE TALESCRIA, CAPITAL OF THE COALITION OF PLANETS.
IT HAS BEEN MERE HOURS AND ALLEN AND TELIA NOW FIND THEMSELVES ENJOYING A LATE BREAKFAST AT THEIR FAVORITE DINER.

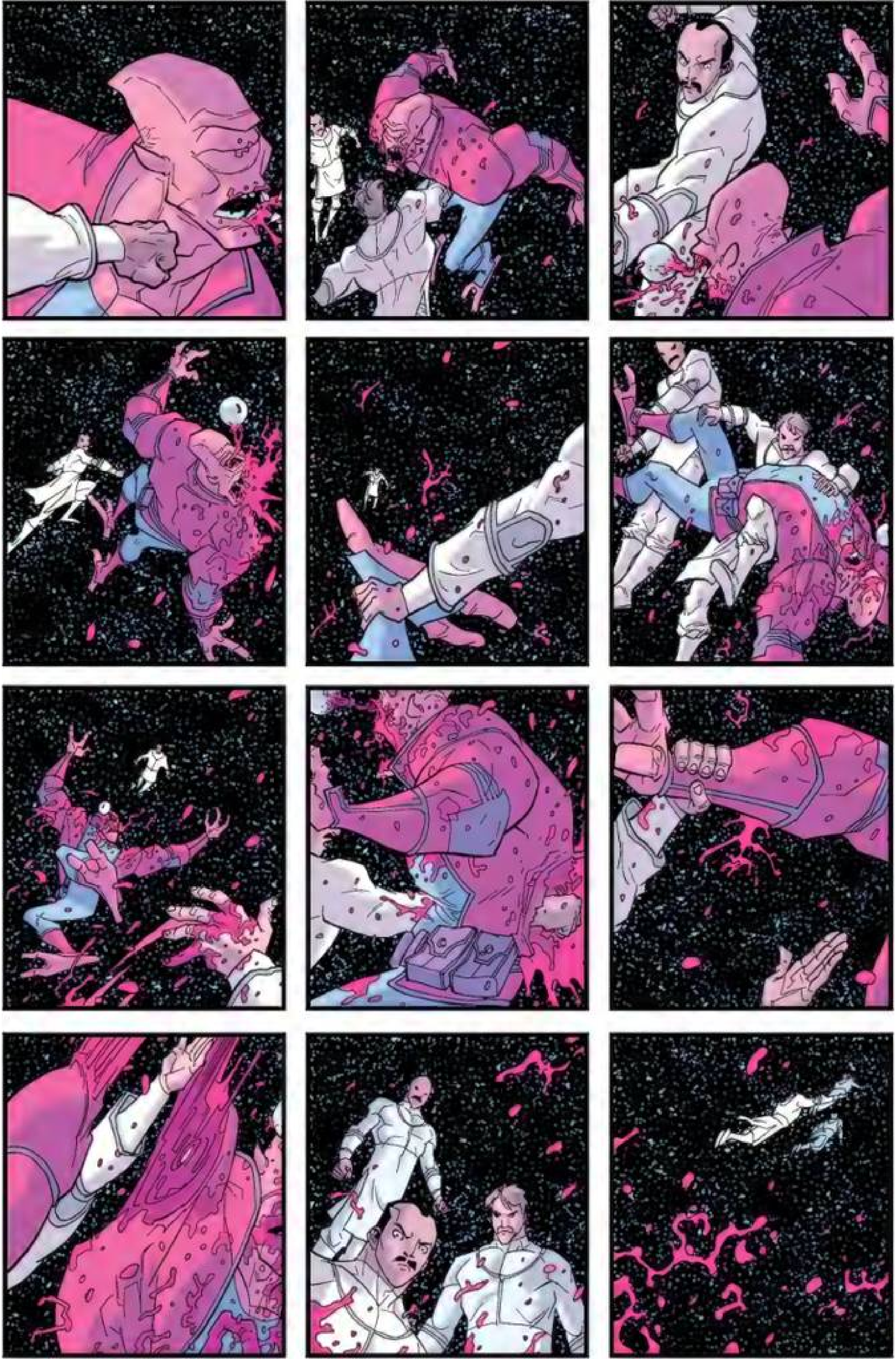

OH, MAN! I DON'T REALIZE HOW MUCH I MISS FRESH KANZLOK WHILE I'M OUT ON MY MISSIONS UNTIL I GET BACK.
I CAN'T THINK OF ANYTHING I MISS MORE.
I CAN THINK OF ONE THING.
HMM?

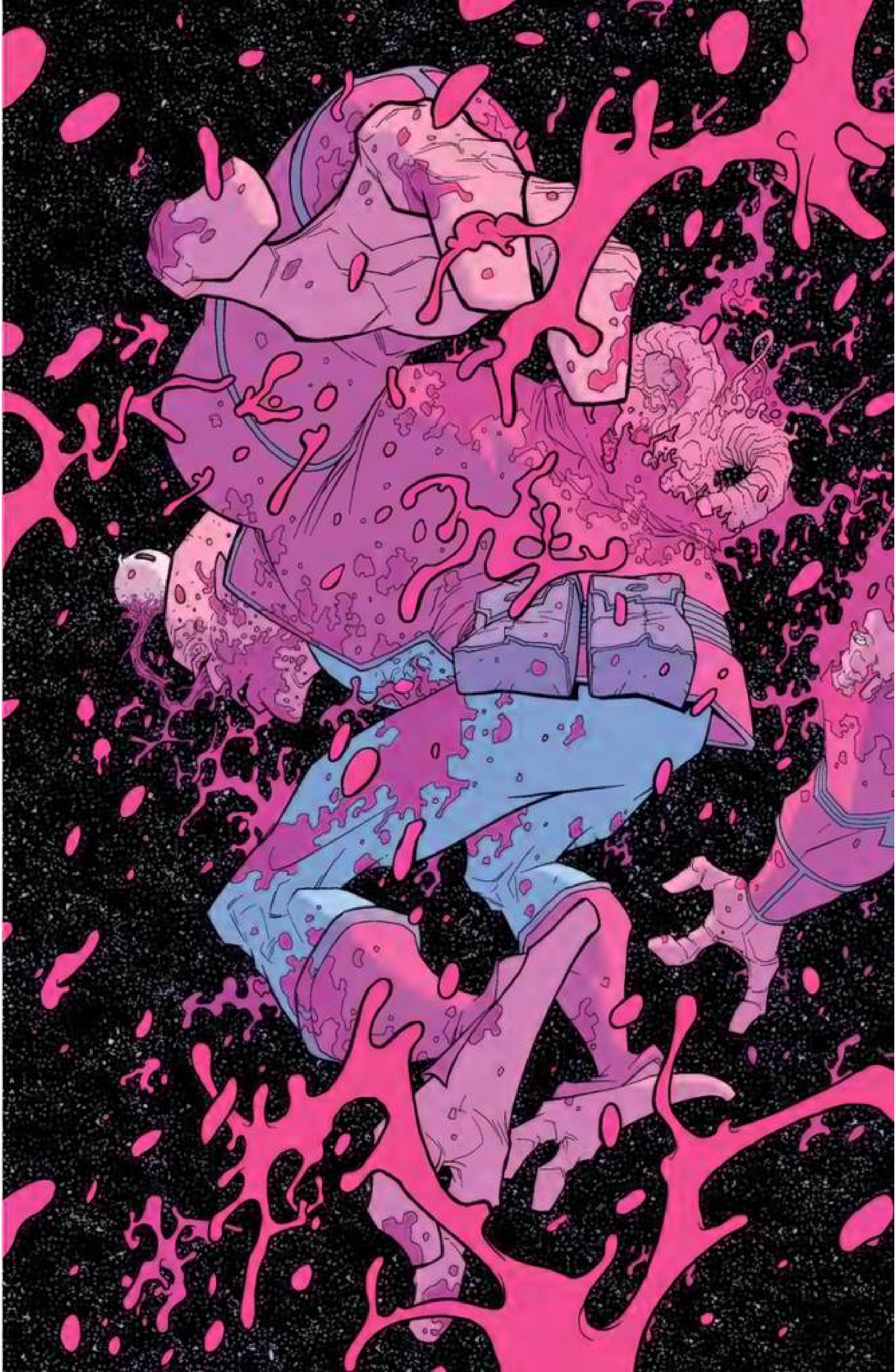

YES OF COURSE--THAT... AND YOU. I MEANT FOOD SPECIFICALLY. I'M ALWAYS THINKING ABOUT THALMUN BARS AND OTHER SWEETS BUT I NEVER THINK ABOUT KANZLOK UNTIL I GET BACK.
AND PLEASE--DON'T SPEAK OF OUR--YOU KNOW--IN PUBLIC. IT'S TOO RISKY.

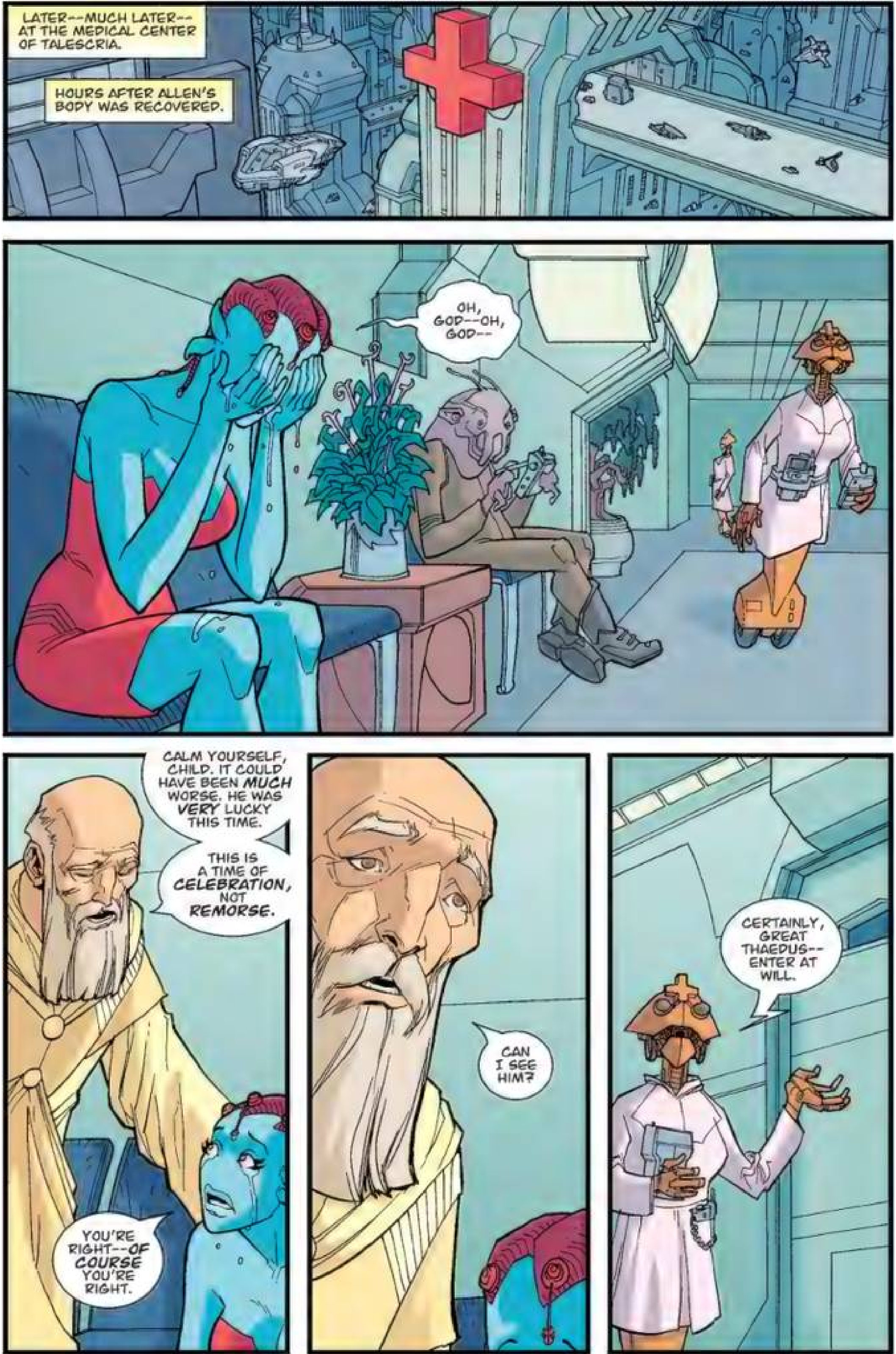

WHAT? LIKE THERE'S SOME UNOPAN SPY SITTING AT THE NEXT BOOTH OVER THAT'S GOING TO SEE YOU CONVERSING WITH ME, PIECE TOGETHER THE MEANING OF OUR HALF FINISHED STATEMENTS AND ARREST YOU ON THE SPOT?
THAT'S RIDICUL--

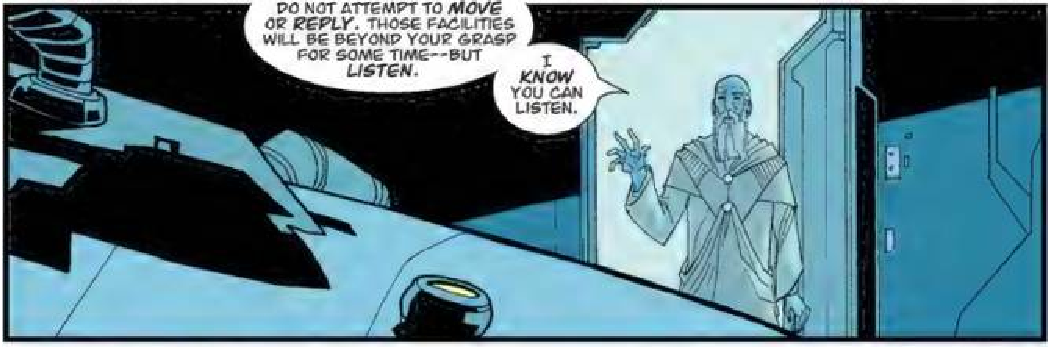

KRA-BOOM!!
ALLEN IS BARELY EVEN *AWARE* OF THE VILTRUMITE'S SUDDEN AND VIOLENT ATTACK.
HIS THOUGHTS ARE ON TELIA; "DID SHE SURVIVE THE EXPLOSION?" HE THINKS.
IF ALLEN WERE SMARTER, OR POSSIBLY JUST MORE AWARE OF THE DANGER HE WAS IN, HIS THOUGHTS WOULD BE MORE FIRMLY FOCUSED ON HIS OWN SAFETY.
HIS LAST ENCOUNTER WITH VILTRUMITES DID NOT END WELL. THESE VERY WELL COULD BE THE FINAL MOMENTS OF HIS LIFE.

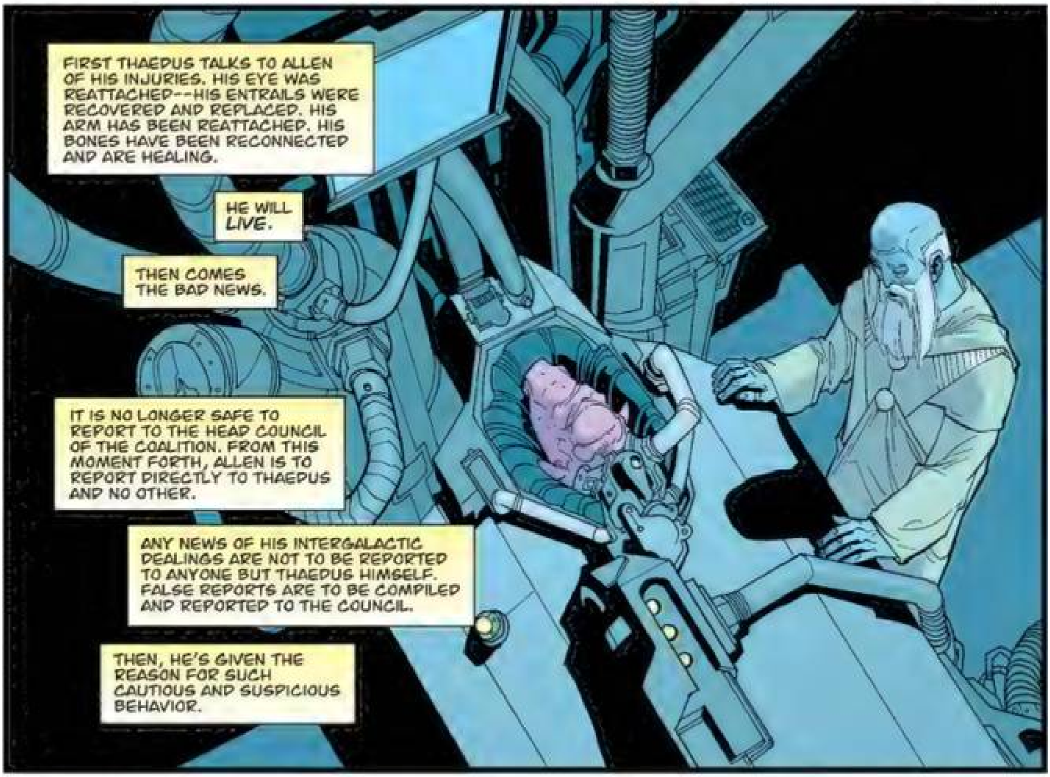

YOU WILL TELL ME EVERYTHING YOU KNOW ABOUT YOUR ENCOUNTER WITH THE VILTRUMITE OF EARTH.
YOU ARE CERTAIN HE WAS VILTRUMITE? YOU ARE CERTAIN HE SIRED AN HEIR? YOU ARE CERTAIN HE ABANDONED HIS POST?
OBVIOUSLY, YOU'VE ALREADY HEARD MY STORY. IT'S ALL TRUE. I GOT IT DIRECTLY FROM THE SON. SOUNDS LIKE YOUR TROOPS ARE FALTERING IN LOYALTY, TO ME.
BAD NEWS FOR YOU-- GOOD NEWS FOR US.
CONFIRM YOU REALLY ENCOUNTERED EARTH AT ALL. WHAT DID THE VILTRUMITE STATIONED THERE LOOK LIKE?
YOU KNOW-- TWO EYES-- MUSTACHE.
YOU BICLOPS ALL LOOK THE SAME TO ME.

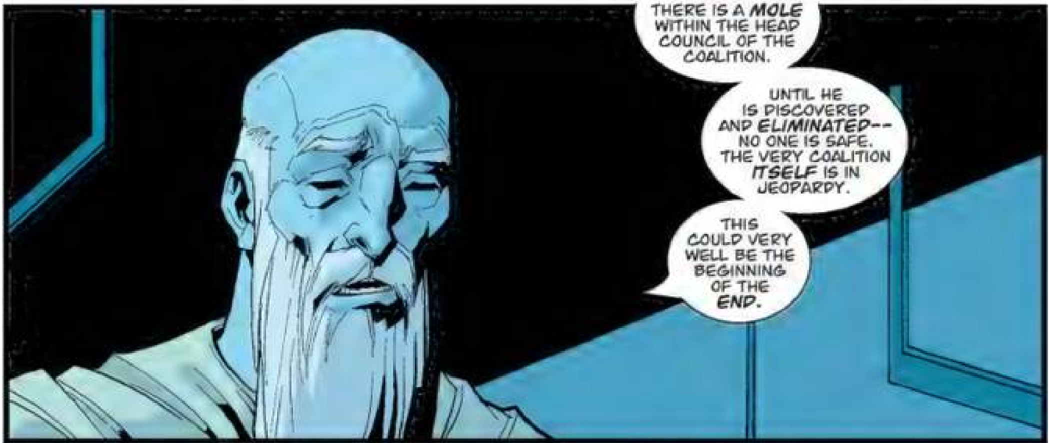


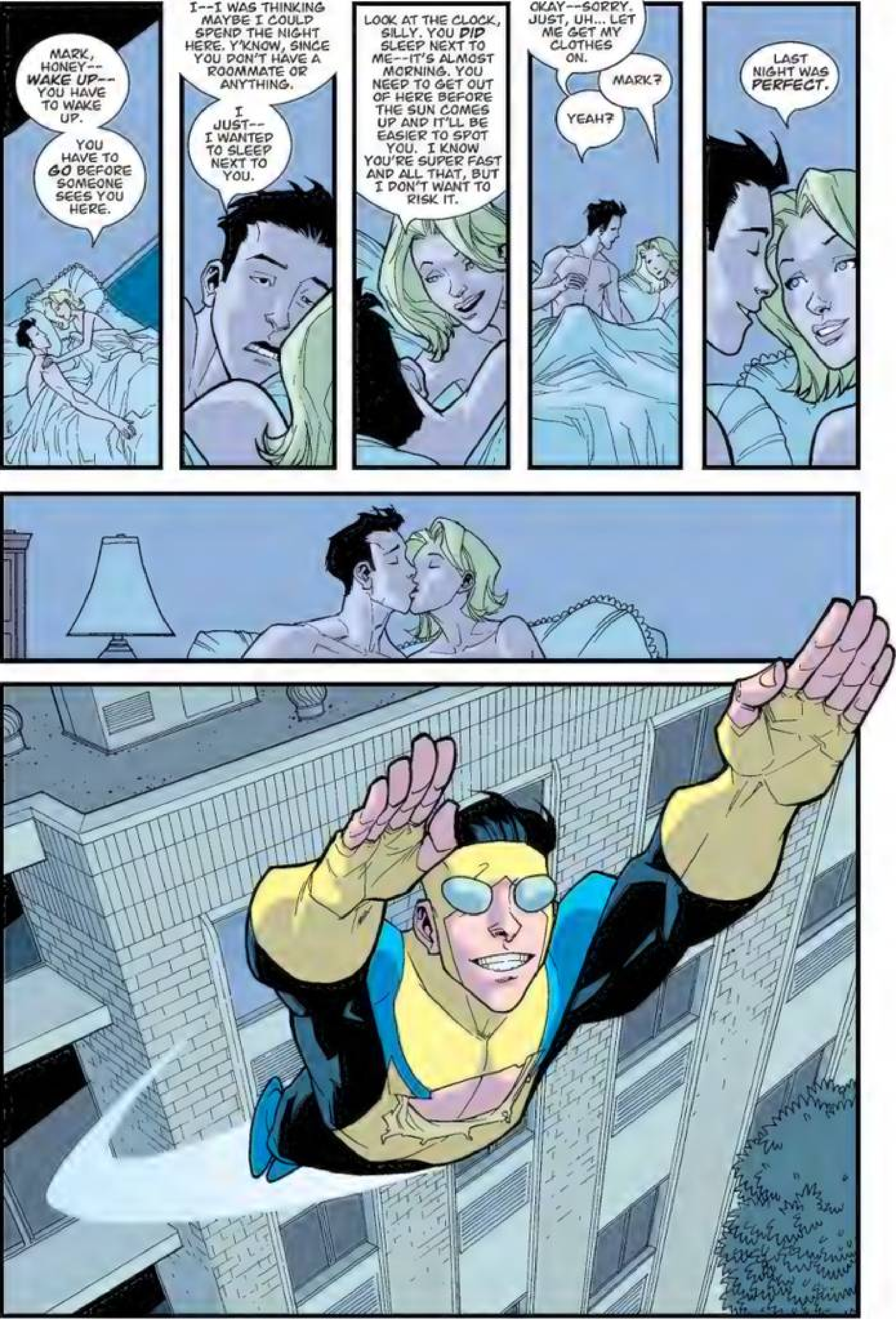


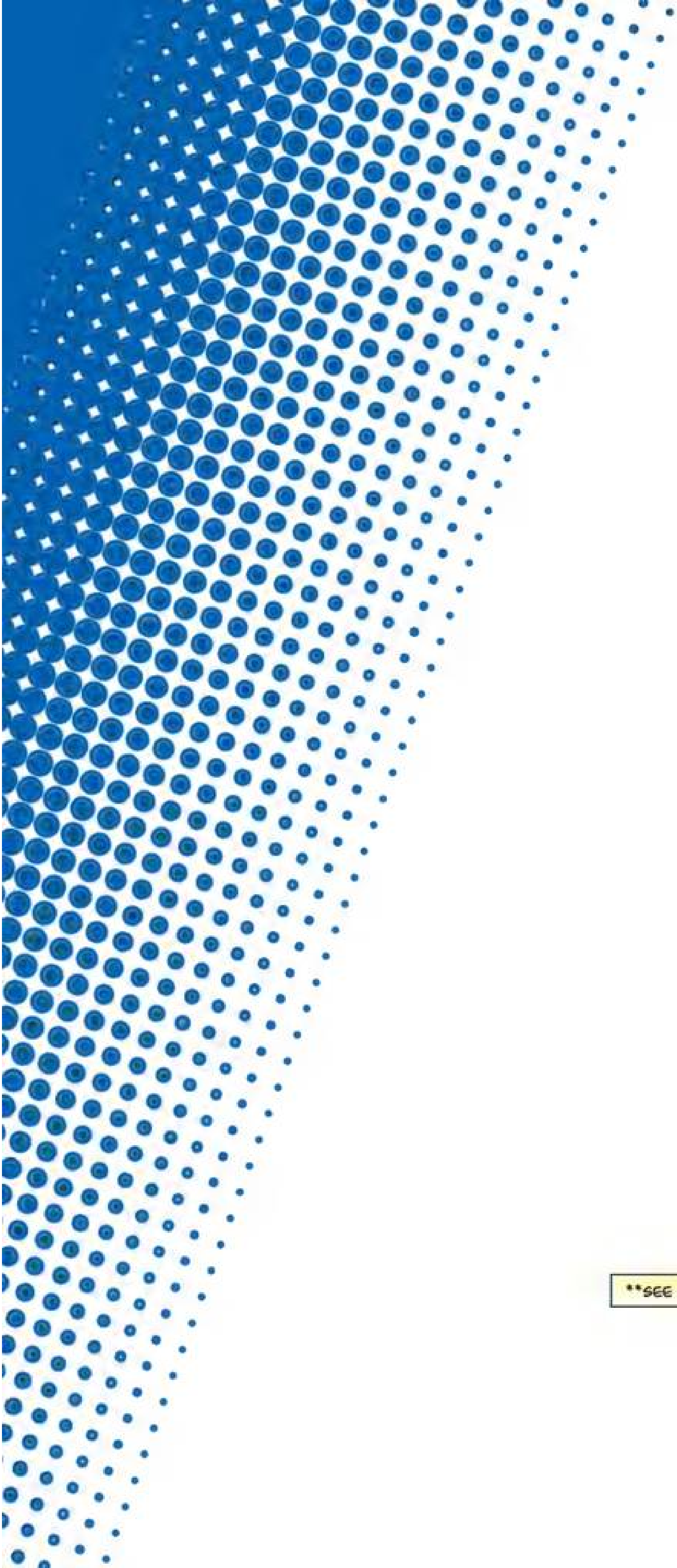

LATER--MUCH LATER--AT THE MEDICAL CENTER OF TALESCRIA.
HOURS AFTER ALLEN'S BODY WAS RECOVERED.
OH, GOD--OH, GOD--
CALM YOURSELF, CHILD. IT COULD HAVE BEEN MUCH WORSE. HE WAS VERY LUCKY THIS TIME.
THIS IS A TIME OF CELEBRATION, NOT REMORSE.
YOU'RE RIGHT--OF COURSE YOU'RE RIGHT.
CAN I SEE HIM?
CERTAINLY, GREAT THAEDUS--ENTER AT WILL.


DO NOT ATTEMPT TO *MOVE* OR *REPLY*. THOSE FACILITIES WILL BE BEYOND YOUR GRASP FOR SOME TIME--BUT *LISTEN*.
I *KNOW* YOU CAN LISTEN.


FIRST THAEDUS TALKS TO ALLEN OF HIS INJURIES. HIS EYE WAS REATTACHED--HIS ENTRAILS WERE RECOVERED AND REPLACED. HIS ARM HAS BEEN REATTACHED. HIS BONES HAVE BEEN RECONNECTED AND ARE HEALING.
HE WILL *LIVE*.
THEN COMES THE BAD NEWS.
IT IS NO LONGER SAFE TO REPORT TO THE HEAD COUNCIL OF THE COALITION. FROM THIS MOMENT FORTH, ALLEN IS TO REPORT DIRECTLY TO THAEDUS AND NO OTHER.
ANY NEWS OF HIS INTERGALACTIC DEALINGS ARE NOT TO BE REPORTED TO ANYONE BUT THAEDUS HIMSELF. FALSE REPORTS ARE TO BE COMPILED AND REPORTED TO THE COUNCIL.
THEN, HE'S GIVEN THE REASON FOR SUCH CAUTIOUS AND SUSPICIOUS BEHAVIOR.

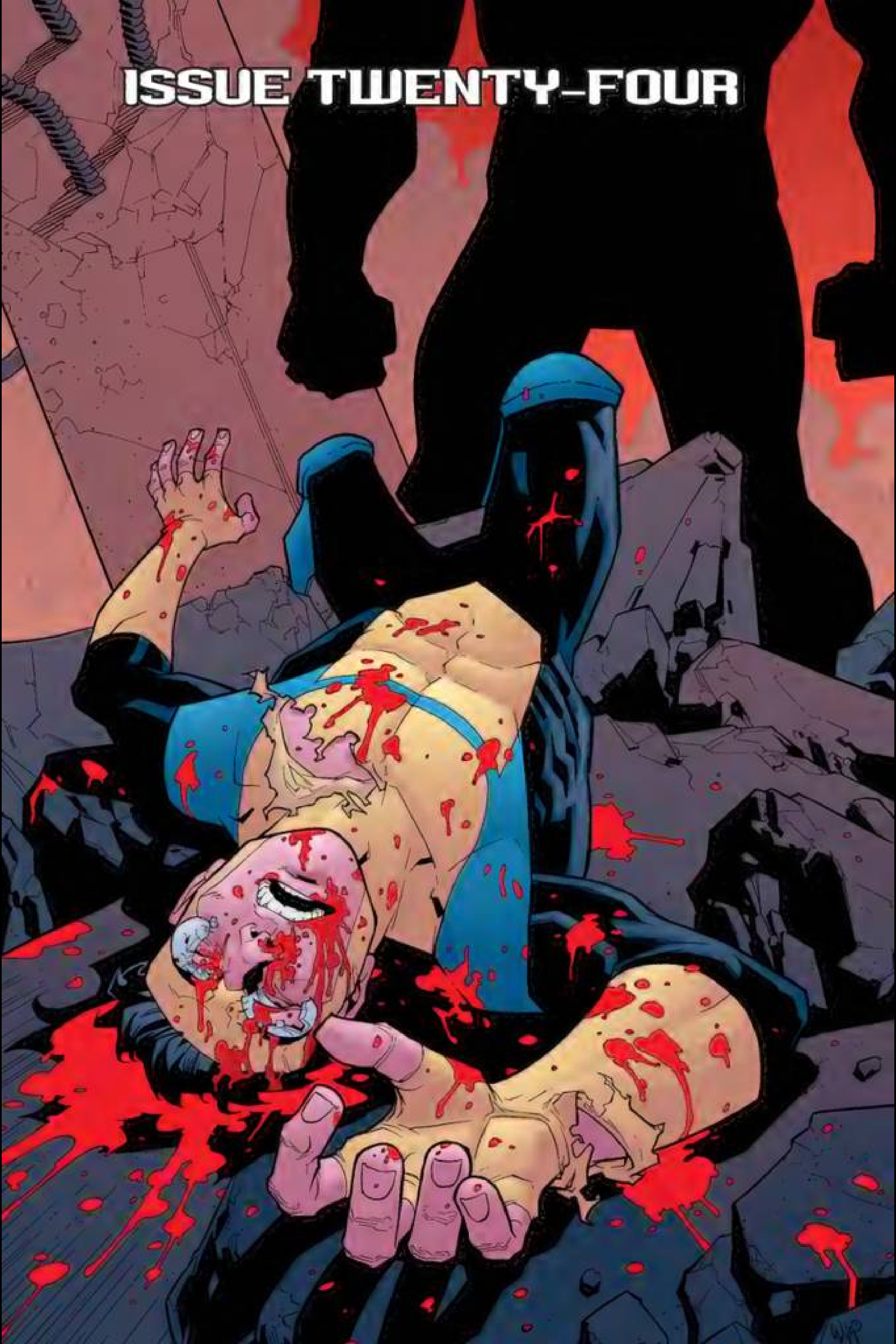

THERE IS A *MOLE* WITHIN THE HEAD COUNCIL OF THE COALITION.
UNTIL HE IS DISCOVERED AND *ELIMINATED*--NO ONE IS SAFE. THE VERY COALITION *ITSELF* IS IN JEOPARDY.
THIS COULD VERY WELL BE THE BEGINNING OF THE *END*.

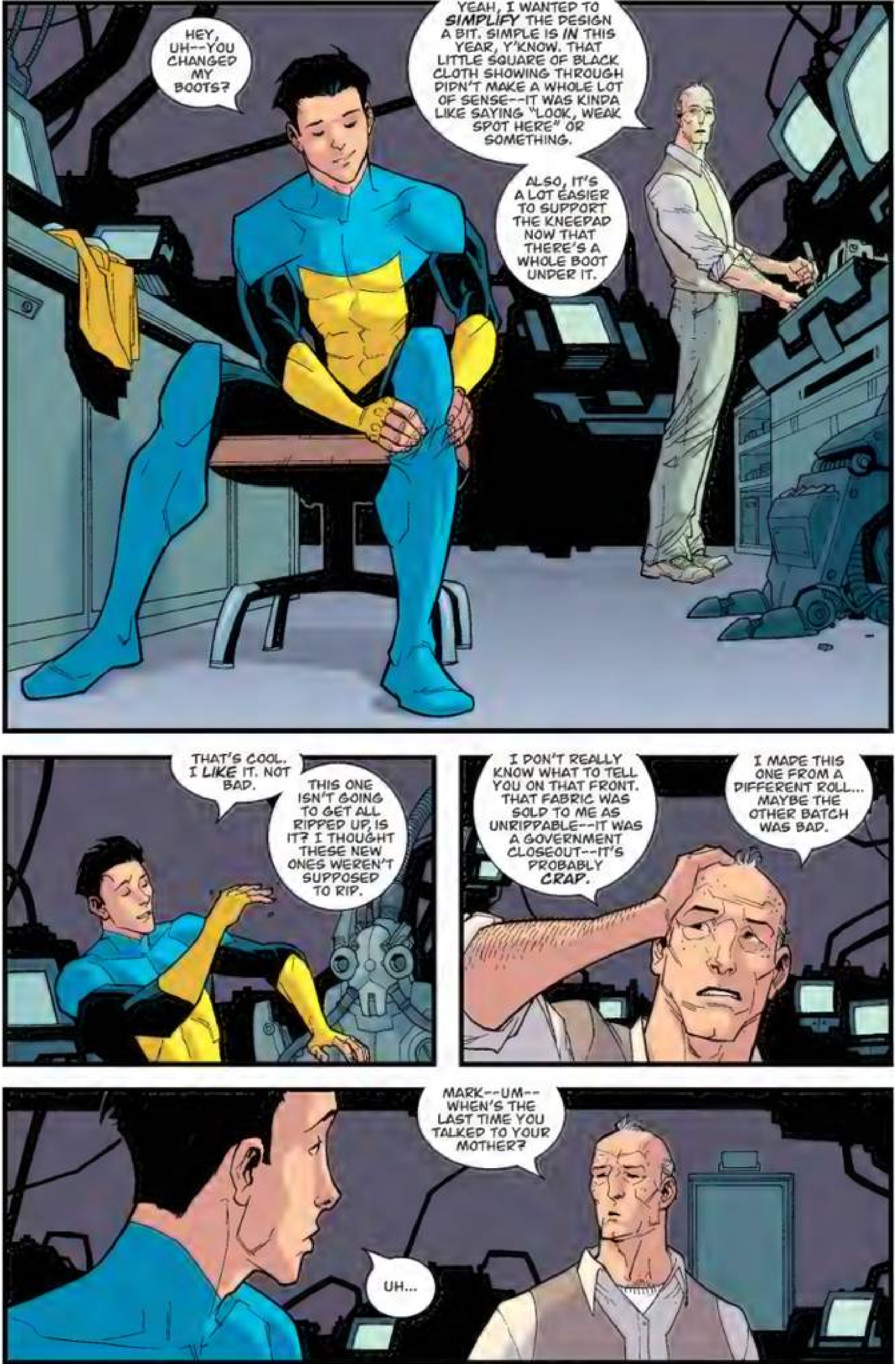

MARK, HONEY-- ***WAKE UP***-- YOU HAVE TO WAKE UP.
YOU HAVE TO ***GO*** BEFORE SOMEONE SEES YOU HERE.
I--I WAS THINKING MAYBE I COULD SPEND THE NIGHT HERE. Y'KNOW, SINCE YOU DON'T HAVE A ROOMMATE OR ANYTHING.
I JUST-- I WANTED TO SLEEP NEXT TO YOU.
LOOK AT THE CLOCK, SILLY. YOU ***DID*** SLEEP NEXT TO ME--IT'S ALMOST MORNING. YOU NEED TO GET OUT OF HERE BEFORE THE SUN COMES UP AND IT'LL BE EASIER TO SPOT YOU. I KNOW YOU'RE SUPER FAST AND ALL THAT, BUT I DON'T WANT TO RISK IT.
OKAY--SORRY. JUST, UH... LET ME GET MY CLOTHES ON.
MARK?
YEAH?
LAST NIGHT WAS ***PERFECT***.

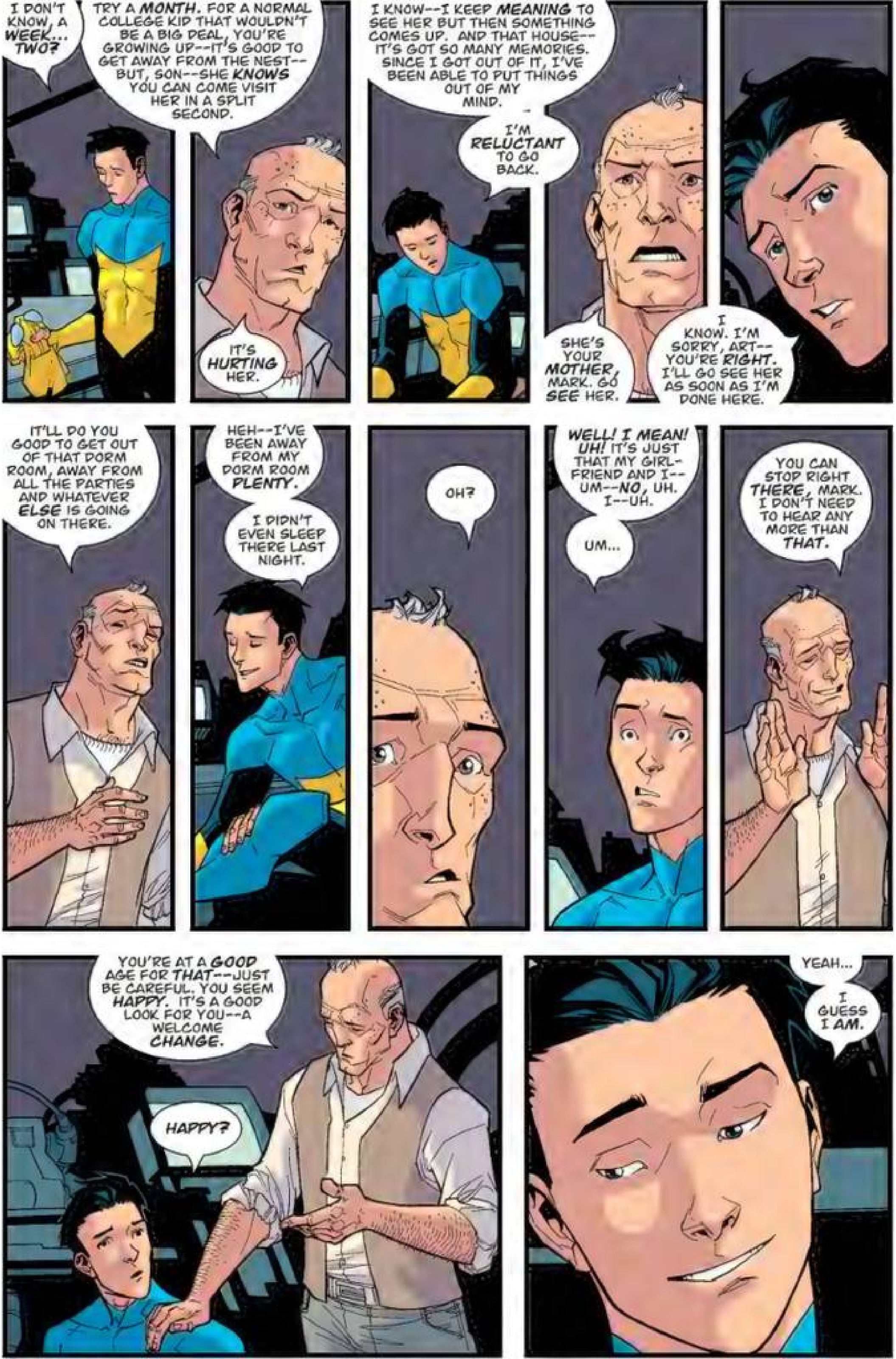


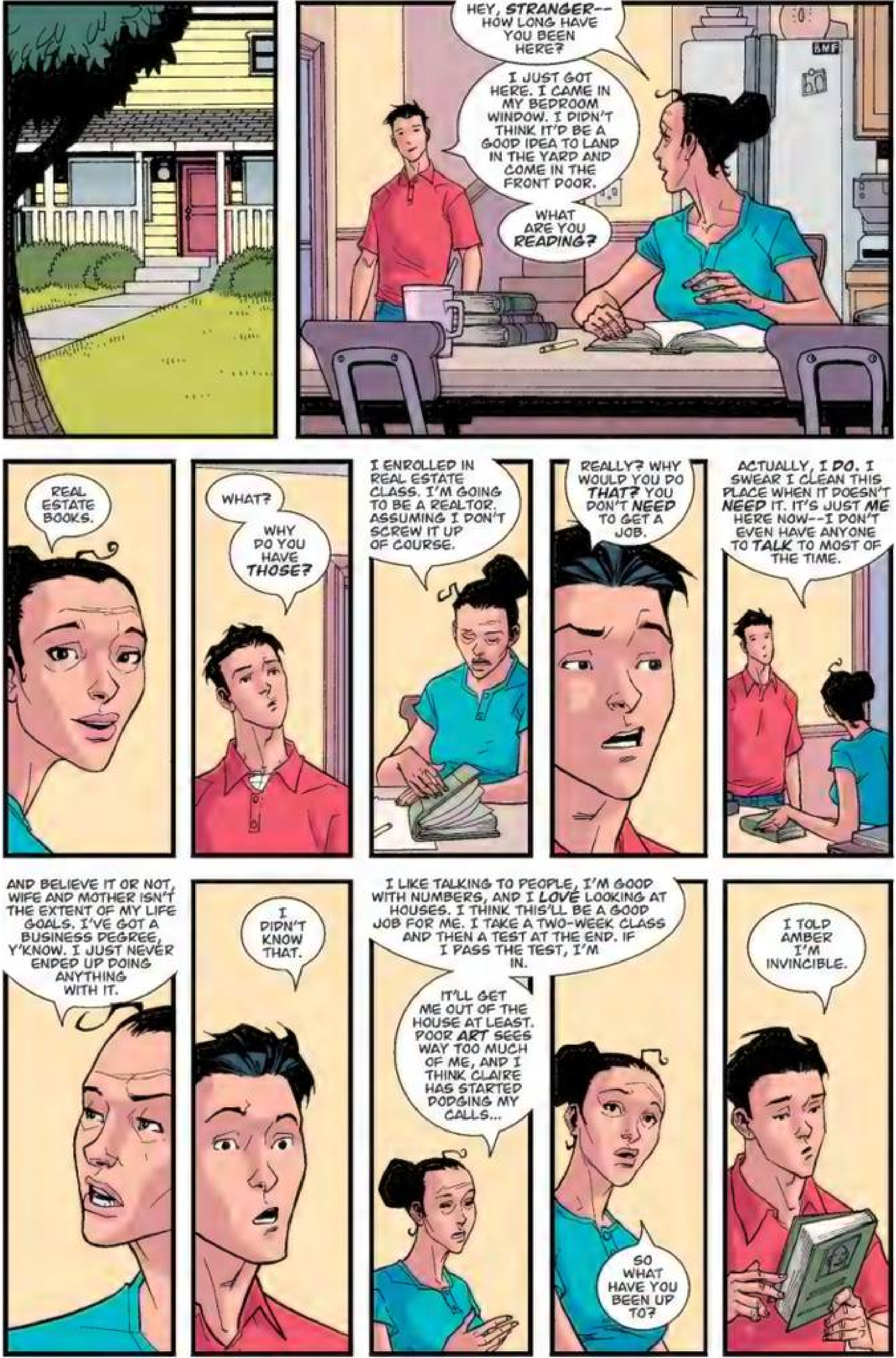
**SEE ISSUE 5, INVINCIHEADS.

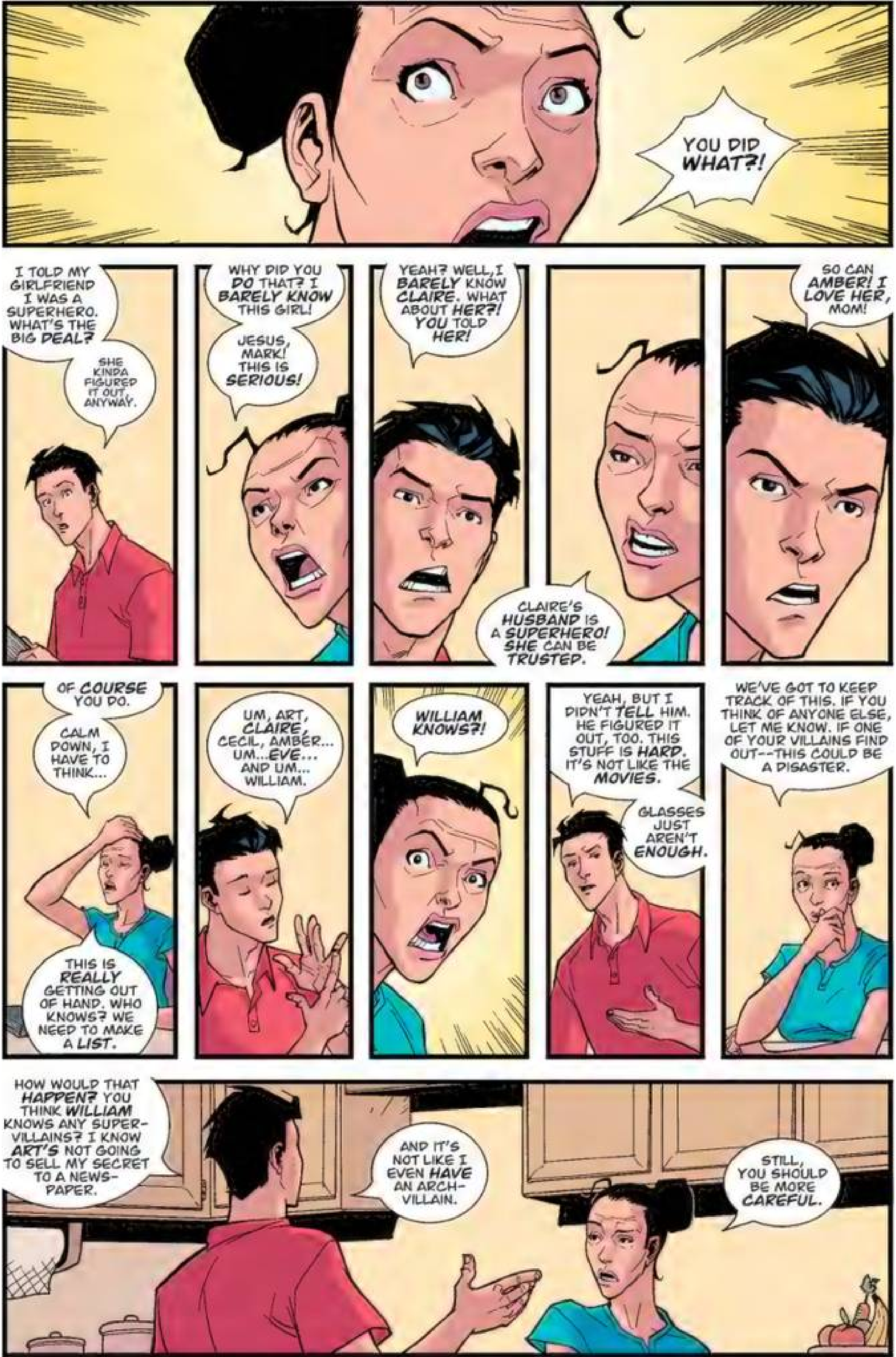
ISSUE TWENTY-FOUR

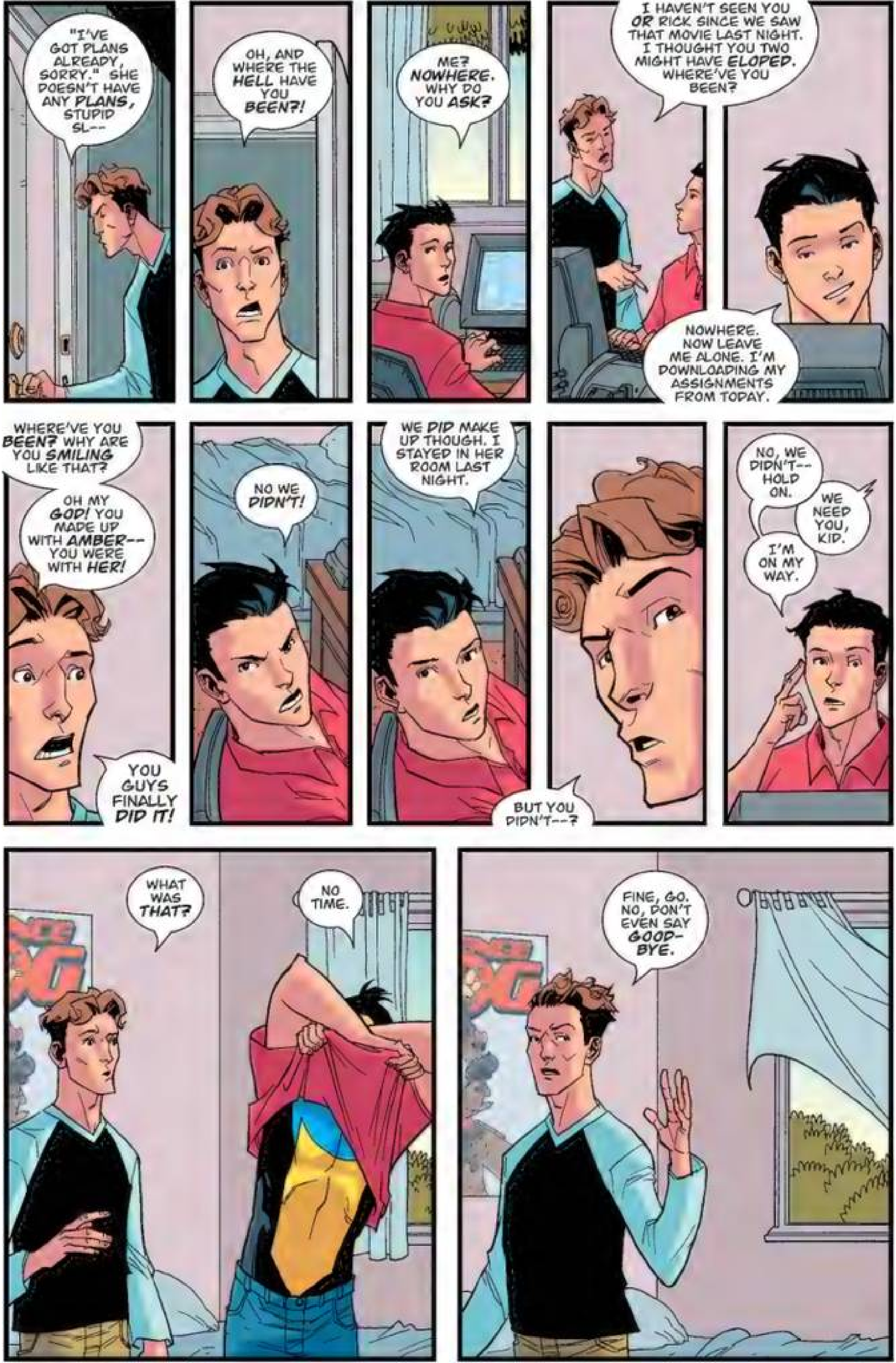


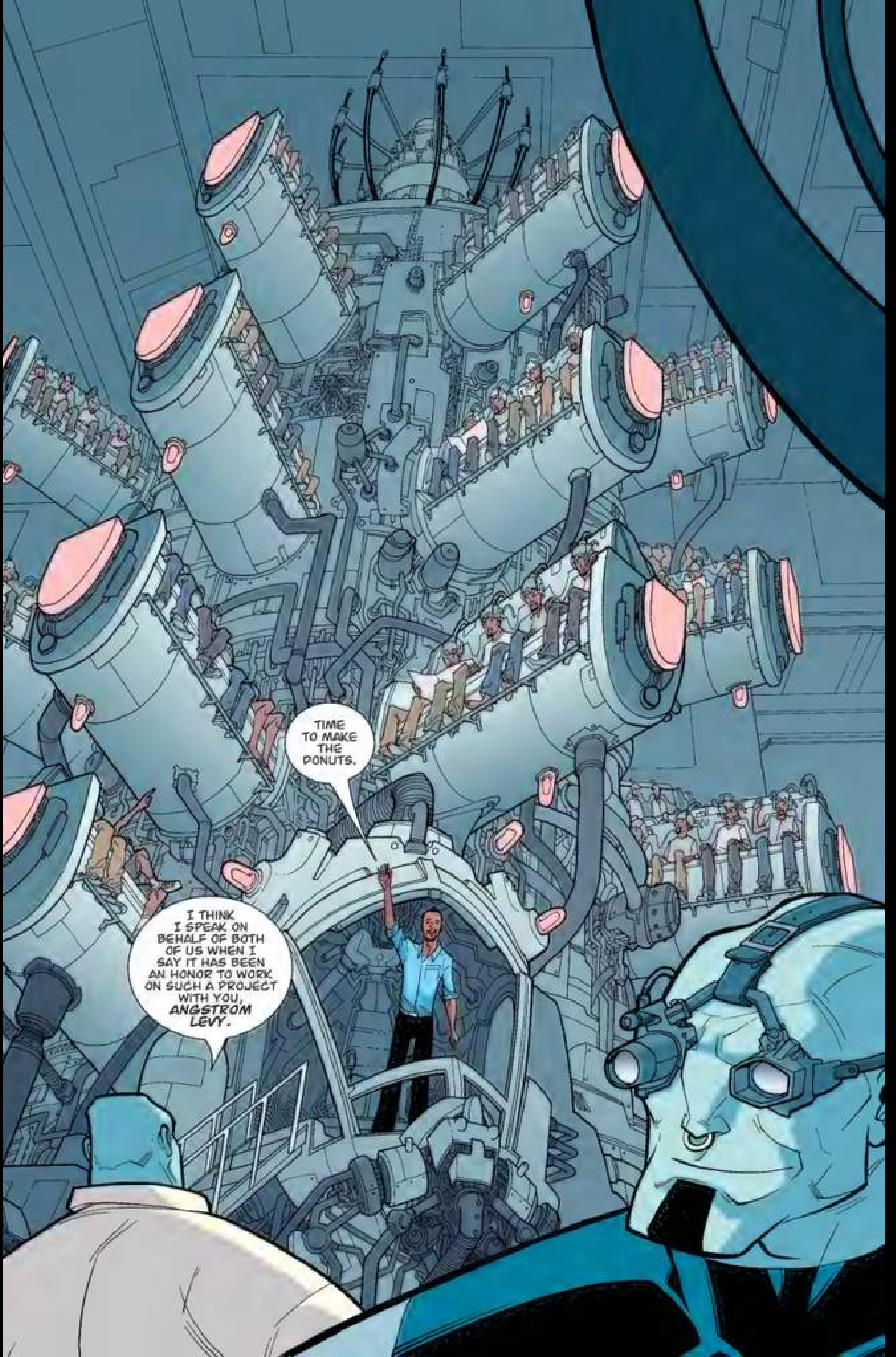

HEY, UH--YOU CHANGED MY BOOTS?
YEAH, I WANTED TO SIMPLIFY THE DESIGN A BIT. SIMPLE IS IN THIS YEAR, Y'KNOW. THAT LITTLE SQUARE OF BLACK CLOTH SHOWING THROUGH DIDN'T MAKE A WHOLE LOT OF SENSE--IT WAS KINDA LIKE SAYING "LOOK, WEAK SPOT HERE" OR SOMETHING.
ALSO, IT'S A LOT EASIER TO SUPPORT THE KNEEPAD NOW THAT THERE'S A WHOLE BOOT UNDER IT.
THAT'S COOL. I LIKE IT. NOT BAD.
THIS ONE ISN'T GOING TO GET ALL RIPPED UP, IS IT? I THOUGHT THESE NEW ONES WEREN'T SUPPOSED TO RIP.
I DON'T REALLY KNOW WHAT TO TELL YOU ON THAT FRONT. THAT FABRIC WAS SOLD TO ME AS UNRIPPABLE--IT WAS A GOVERNMENT CLOSEOUT--IT'S PROBABLY CRAP.
I MADE THIS ONE FROM A DIFFERENT ROLL... MAYBE THE OTHER BATCH WAS BAD.
MARK--UM--WHEN'S THE LAST TIME YOU TALKED TO YOUR MOTHER?
UH...

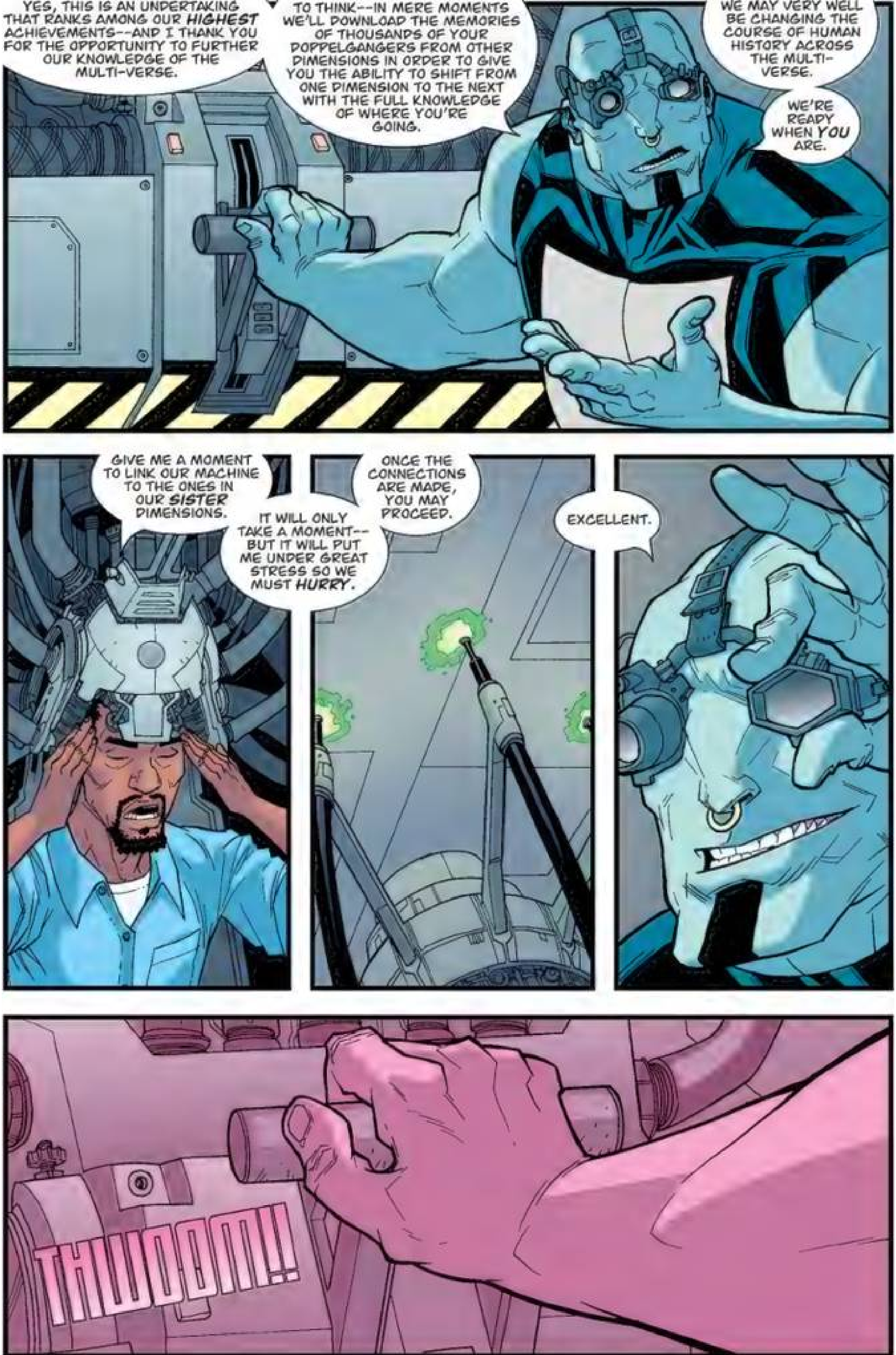

I DON'T KNOW, A WEEK... TWO?
TRY A MONTH. FOR A NORMAL COLLEGE KID THAT WOULDN'T BE A BIG DEAL, YOU'RE GROWING UP--IT'S GOOD TO GET AWAY FROM THE NEST--BUT, SON--SHE KNOWS YOU CAN COME VISIT HER IN A SPLIT SECOND.
IT'S HURTING HER.
I KNOW--I KEEP MEANING TO SEE HER BUT THEN SOMETHING COMES UP. AND THAT HOUSE--IT'S GOT SO MANY MEMORIES. SINCE I GOT OUT OF IT, I'VE BEEN ABLE TO PUT THINGS OUT OF MY MIND.
I'M RELUCTANT TO GO BACK.
SHE'S YOUR MOTHER, MARK. GO SEE HER.
I KNOW. I'M SORRY, ART--YOU'RE RIGHT. I'LL GO SEE HER AS SOON AS I'M DONE HERE.
IT'LL DO YOU GOOD TO GET OUT OF THAT DORM ROOM, AWAY FROM ALL THE PARTIES AND WHATEVER ELSE IS GOING ON THERE.
HEH--I'VE BEEN AWAY FROM MY DORM ROOM PLENTY.
I DIDN'T EVEN SLEEP THERE LAST NIGHT.
OH?
WELL! I MEAN! UH! IT'S JUST THAT MY GIRLFRIEND AND I--UM--NO, UH. I--UH.
UM...
YOU CAN STOP RIGHT THERE, MARK. I DON'T NEED TO HEAR ANY MORE THAN THAT.
YOU'RE AT A GOOD AGE FOR THAT--JUST BE CAREFUL. YOU SEEM HAPPY. IT'S A GOOD LOOK FOR YOU--A WELCOME CHANGE.
HAPPY?
YEAH...
I GUESS I AM.

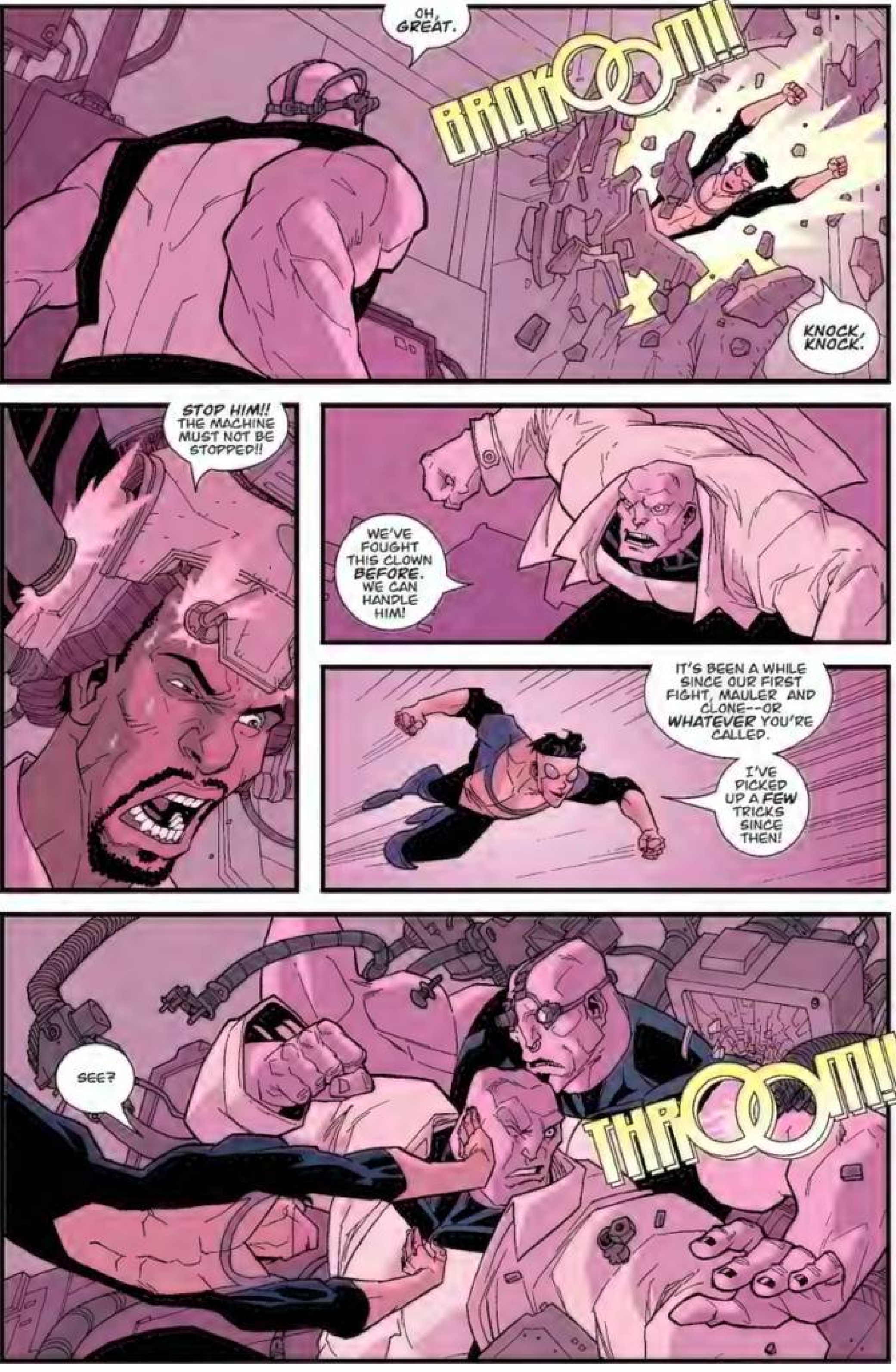

HEY, STRANGER-- HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN HERE?
I JUST GOT HERE. I CAME IN MY BEDROOM WINDOW. I DIDN'T THINK IT'D BE A GOOD IDEA TO LAND IN THE YARD AND COME IN THE FRONT DOOR.
WHAT ARE YOU READING?
REAL ESTATE BOOKS.
WHAT?
WHY DO YOU HAVE THOSE?
I ENROLLED IN REAL ESTATE CLASS. I'M GOING TO BE A REALTOR. ASSUMING I DON'T SCREW IT UP OF COURSE.
REALLY? WHY WOULD YOU DO THAT? YOU DON'T NEED TO GET A JOB.
ACTUALLY, I DO. I SWEAR I CLEAN THIS PLACE WHEN IT DOESN'T NEED IT. IT'S JUST ME HERE NOW--I DON'T EVEN HAVE ANYONE TO TALK TO MOST OF THE TIME.
AND BELIEVE IT OR NOT, WIFE AND MOTHER ISN'T THE EXTENT OF MY LIFE GOALS. I'VE GOT A BUSINESS DEGREE, Y'KNOW. I JUST NEVER ENDED UP DOING ANYTHING WITH IT.
I DIDN'T KNOW THAT.
I LIKE TALKING TO PEOPLE, I'M GOOD WITH NUMBERS, AND I LOVE LOOKING AT HOUSES. I THINK THIS'LL BE A GOOD JOB FOR ME. I TAKE A TWO-WEEK CLASS AND THEN A TEST AT THE END. IF I PASS THE TEST, I'M IN.
IT'LL GET ME OUT OF THE HOUSE AT LEAST. POOR ART SEES WAY TOO MUCH OF ME, AND I THINK CLAIRE HAS STARTED DODGING MY CALLS...
SO WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN UP TO?
I TOLD AMBER I'M INVINCIBLE.

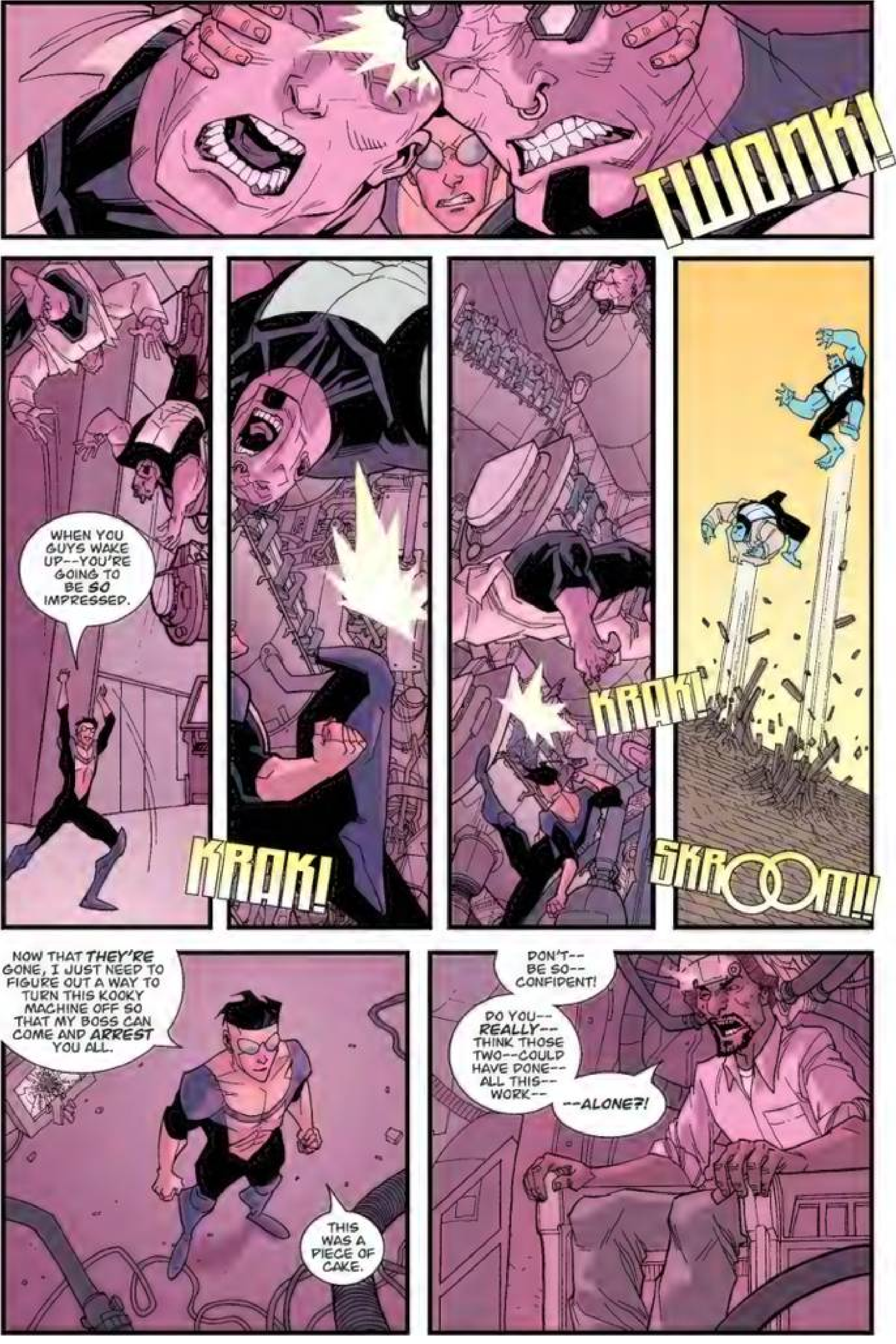

YOU DID WHAT?!
I TOLD MY GIRLFRIEND I WAS A SUPERHERO. WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?
SHE KINDA FIGURED IT OUT, ANYWAY.
WHY DID YOU DO THAT? I BARELY KNOW THIS GIRL!
JESUS, MARK! THIS IS SERIOUS!
YEAH? WELL, I BARELY KNOW CLAIRE. WHAT ABOUT HER?! YOU TOLD HER!
CLAIRE'S HUSBAND IS A SUPERHERO! SHE CAN BE TRUSTED.
SO CAN AMBER! I LOVE HER, MOM!
OF COURSE YOU DO.
CALM DOWN, I HAVE TO THINK...
THIS IS REALLY GETTING OUT OF HAND. WHO KNOWS? WE NEED TO MAKE A LIST.
UM, ART, CLAIRE, CECIL, AMBER... UM...EVE... AND UM... WILLIAM.
WILLIAM KNOWS?!
YEAH, BUT I DIDN'T TELL HIM. HE FIGURED IT OUT, TOO. THIS STUFF IS HARD. IT'S NOT LIKE THE MOVIES.
GLASSES JUST AREN'T ENOUGH.
WE'VE GOT TO KEEP TRACK OF THIS. IF YOU THINK OF ANYONE ELSE, LET ME KNOW. IF ONE OF YOUR VILLAINS FIND OUT--THIS COULD BE A DISASTER.
HOW WOULD THAT HAPPEN? YOU THINK WILLIAM KNOWS ANY SUPER-VILLAINS? I KNOW ART'S NOT GOING TO SELL MY SECRET TO A NEWS-PAPER.
AND IT'S NOT LIKE I EVEN HAVE AN ARCH-VILLAIN.
STILL, YOU SHOULD BE MORE CAREFUL.

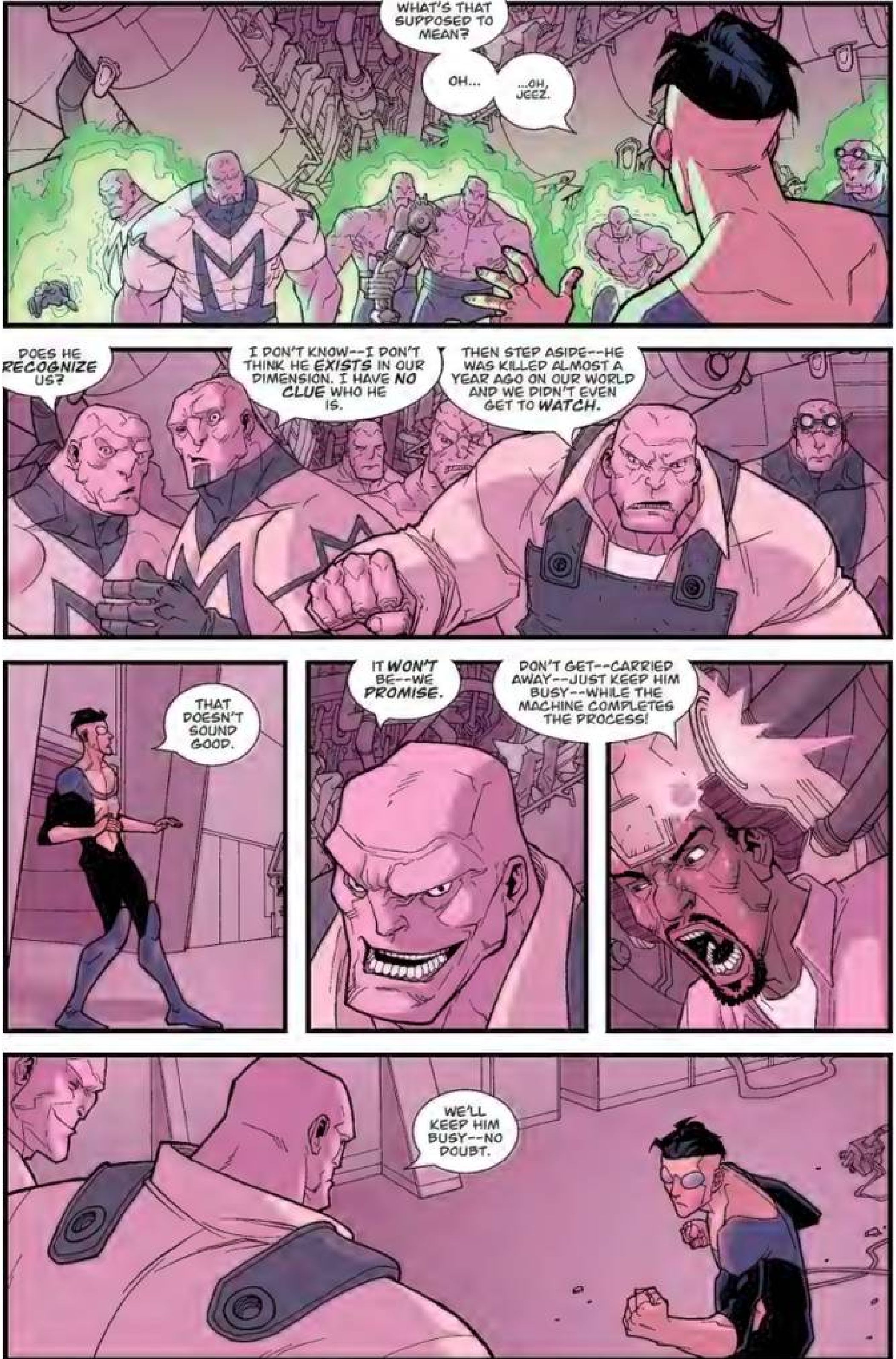

"I'VE GOT PLANS ALREADY, SORRY." SHE DOESN'T HAVE ANY PLANS, STUPID SL--
OH, AND WHERE THE HELL HAVE YOU BEEN?!
ME? NOWHERE. WHY DO YOU ASK?
I HAVEN'T SEEN YOU OR RICK SINCE WE SAW THAT MOVIE LAST NIGHT. I THOUGHT YOU TWO MIGHT HAVE ELOPED. WHERE'VE YOU BEEN?
NOWHERE. NOW LEAVE ME ALONE. I'M DOWNLOADING MY ASSIGNMENTS FROM TODAY.
WHERE'VE YOU BEEN? WHY ARE YOU SMILING LIKE THAT?
OH MY GOD! YOU MADE UP WITH AMBER-- YOU WERE WITH HER!
YOU GUYS FINALLY DID IT!
NO WE DIDN'T!
WE DID MAKE UP THOUGH. I STAYED IN HER ROOM LAST NIGHT.
BUT YOU DIDN'T--?
NO, WE DIDN'T-- HOLD ON.
WE NEED YOU, KID.
I'M ON MY WAY.
WHAT WAS THAT?
NO TIME.
FINE, GO. NO, DON'T EVEN SAY GOOD-BYE.

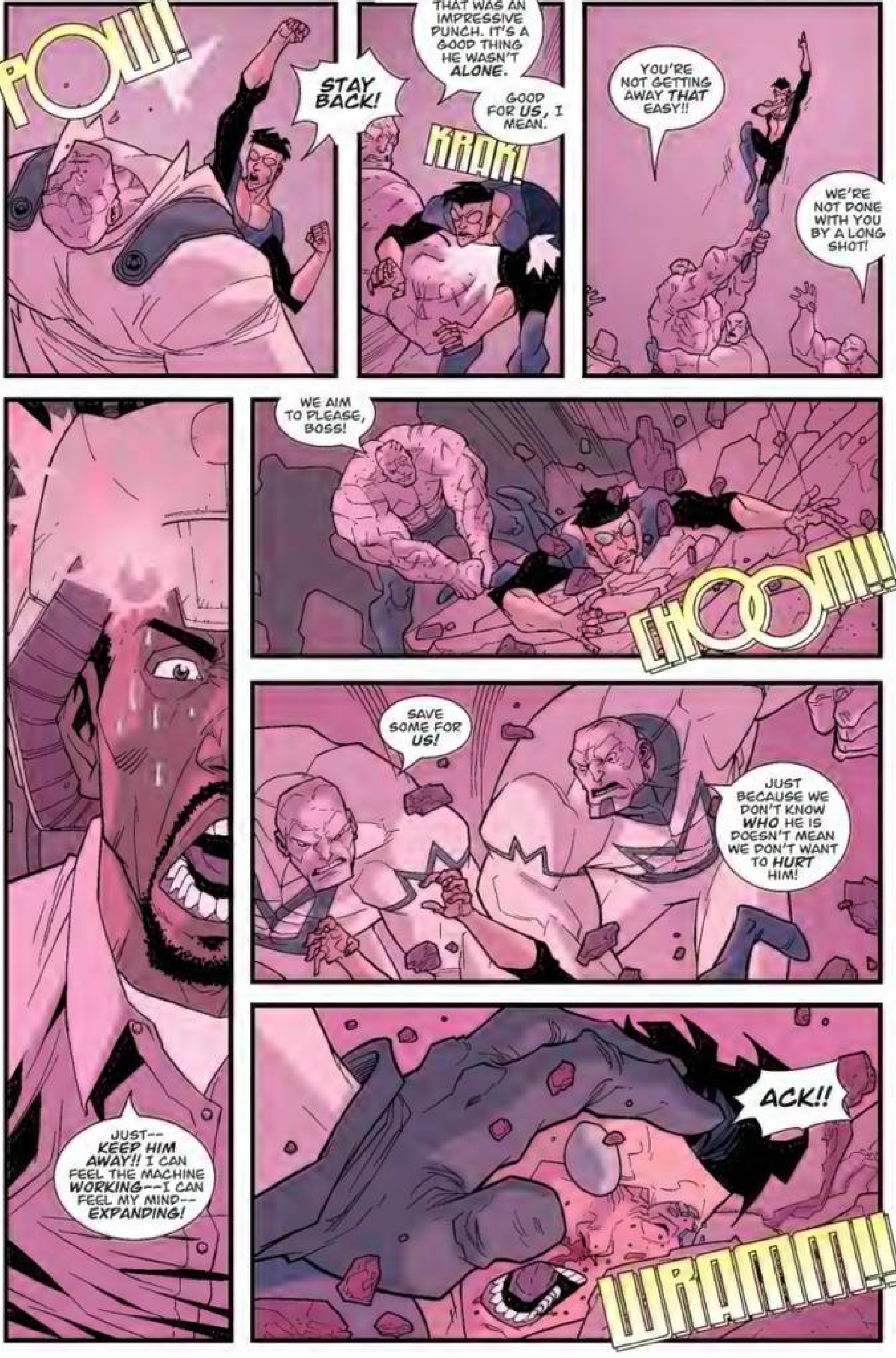

TIME TO MAKE THE DONUTS.
I THINK I SPEAK ON BEHALF OF BOTH OF US WHEN I SAY IT HAS BEEN AN HONOR TO WORK ON SUCH A PROJECT WITH YOU, ANGSTROM LEVY.

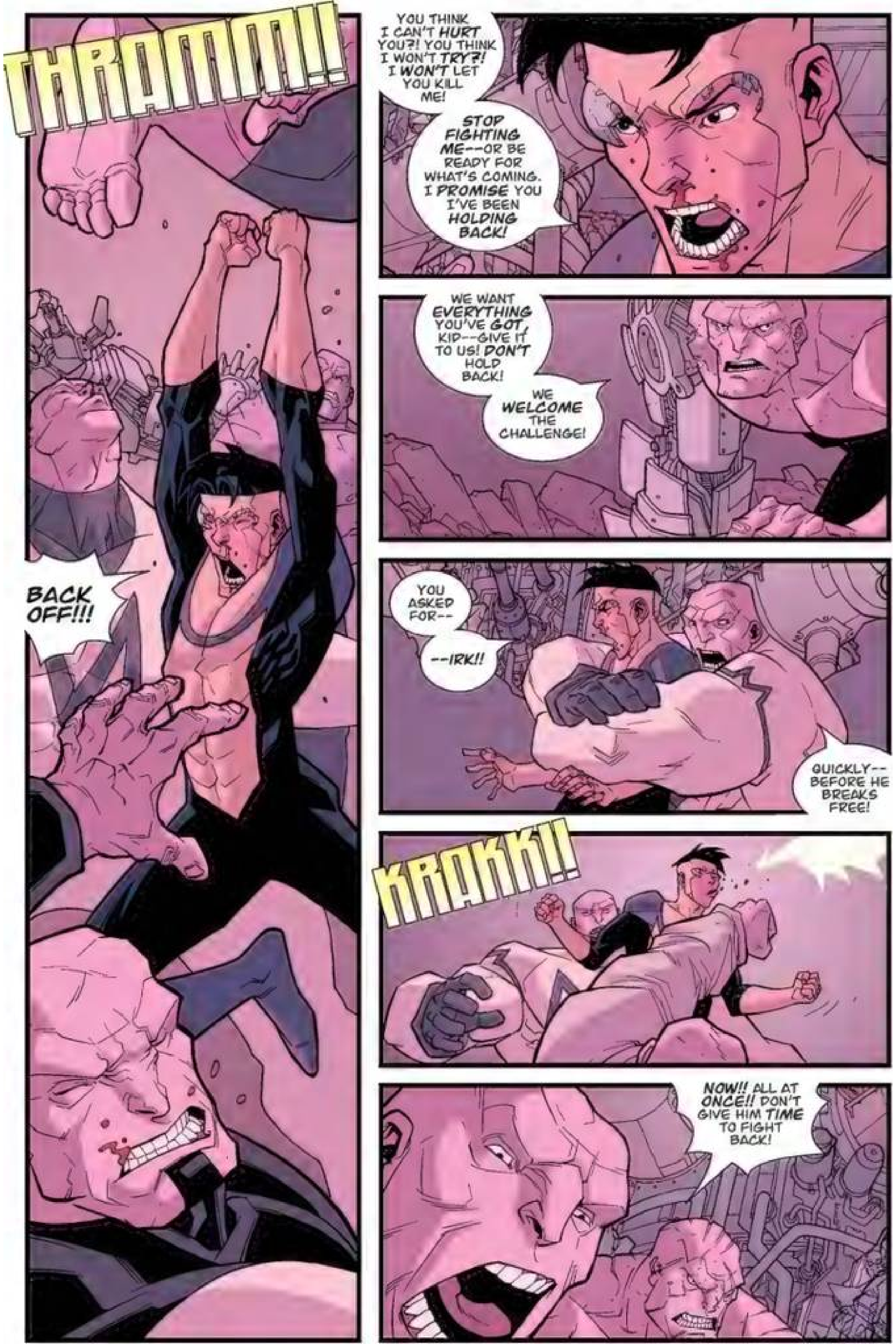

YES, THIS IS AN UNDERTAKING THAT RANKS AMONG OUR *HIGHEST* ACHIEVEMENTS--AND I THANK YOU FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO FURTHER OUR KNOWLEDGE OF THE MULTI-VERSE.
TO THINK--IN MERE MOMENTS WE'LL DOWNLOAD THE MEMORIES OF THOUSANDS OF YOUR DOPPELGANGERS FROM OTHER DIMENSIONS IN ORDER TO GIVE YOU THE ABILITY TO SHIFT FROM ONE DIMENSION TO THE NEXT WITH THE FULL KNOWLEDGE OF WHERE YOU'RE GOING.
WE MAY VERY WELL BE CHANGING THE COURSE OF HUMAN HISTORY ACROSS THE MULTI-VERSE.
WE'RE READY WHEN *YOU* ARE.
GIVE ME A MOMENT TO LINK OUR MACHINE TO THE ONES IN OUR *SISTER* DIMENSIONS.
IT WILL ONLY TAKE A MOMENT--BUT IT WILL PUT ME UNDER GREAT STRESS SO WE MUST *HURRY*.
ONCE THE CONNECTIONS ARE MADE, YOU MAY PROCEED.
EXCELLENT.
THWOOM!!

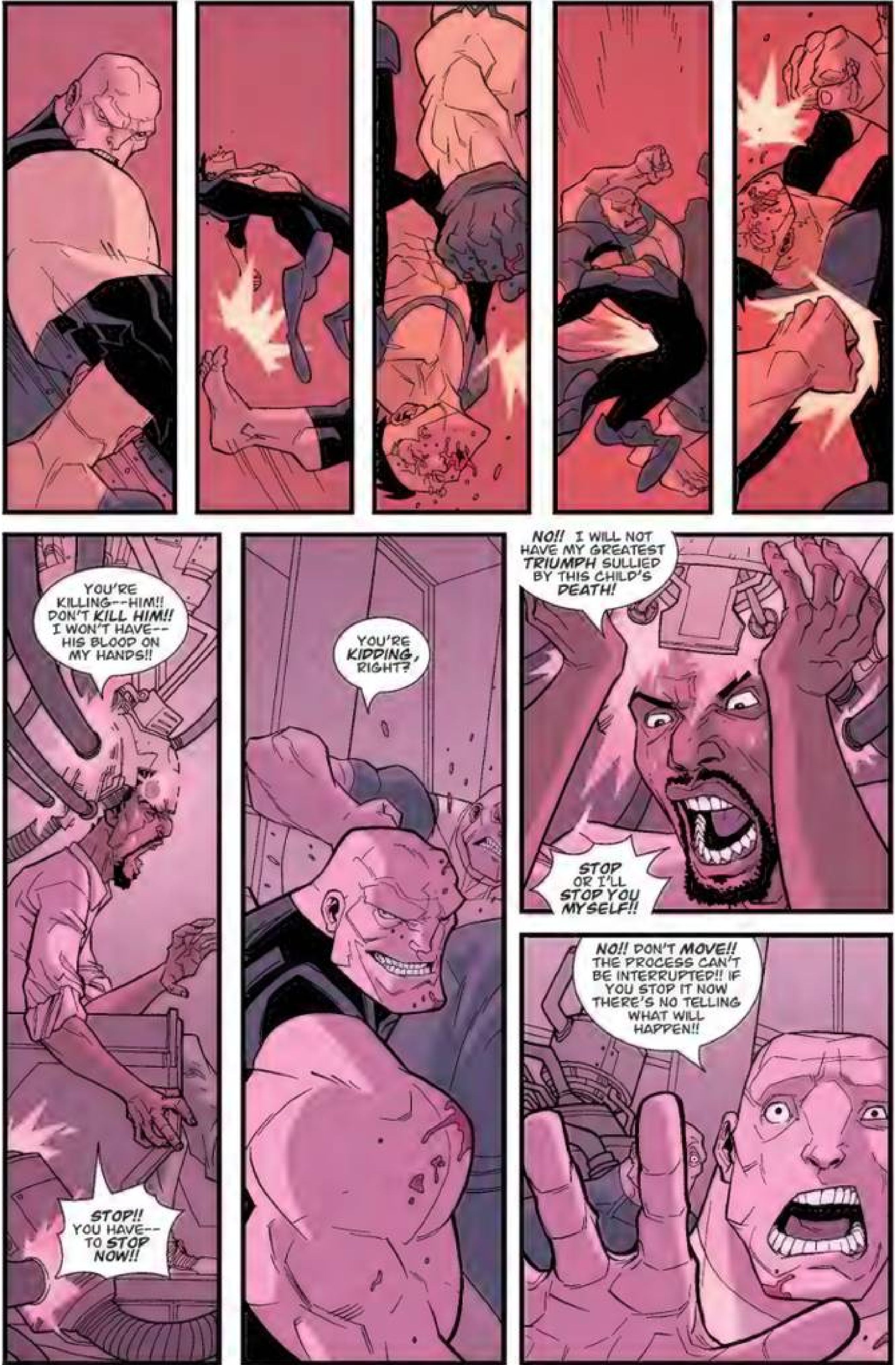

OH, GREAT.
BRAKOOOM!!
KNOCK, KNOCK.
STOP HIM!! THE MACHINE MUST NOT BE STOPPED!!
WE'VE FOUGHT THIS CLOWN BEFORE. WE CAN HANDLE HIM!
IT'S BEEN A WHILE SINCE OUR FIRST FIGHT, MAULER AND CLONE--OR WHATEVER YOU'RE CALLED.
I'VE PICKED UP A FEW TRICKS SINCE THEN!
SEE?
THROOOM!!

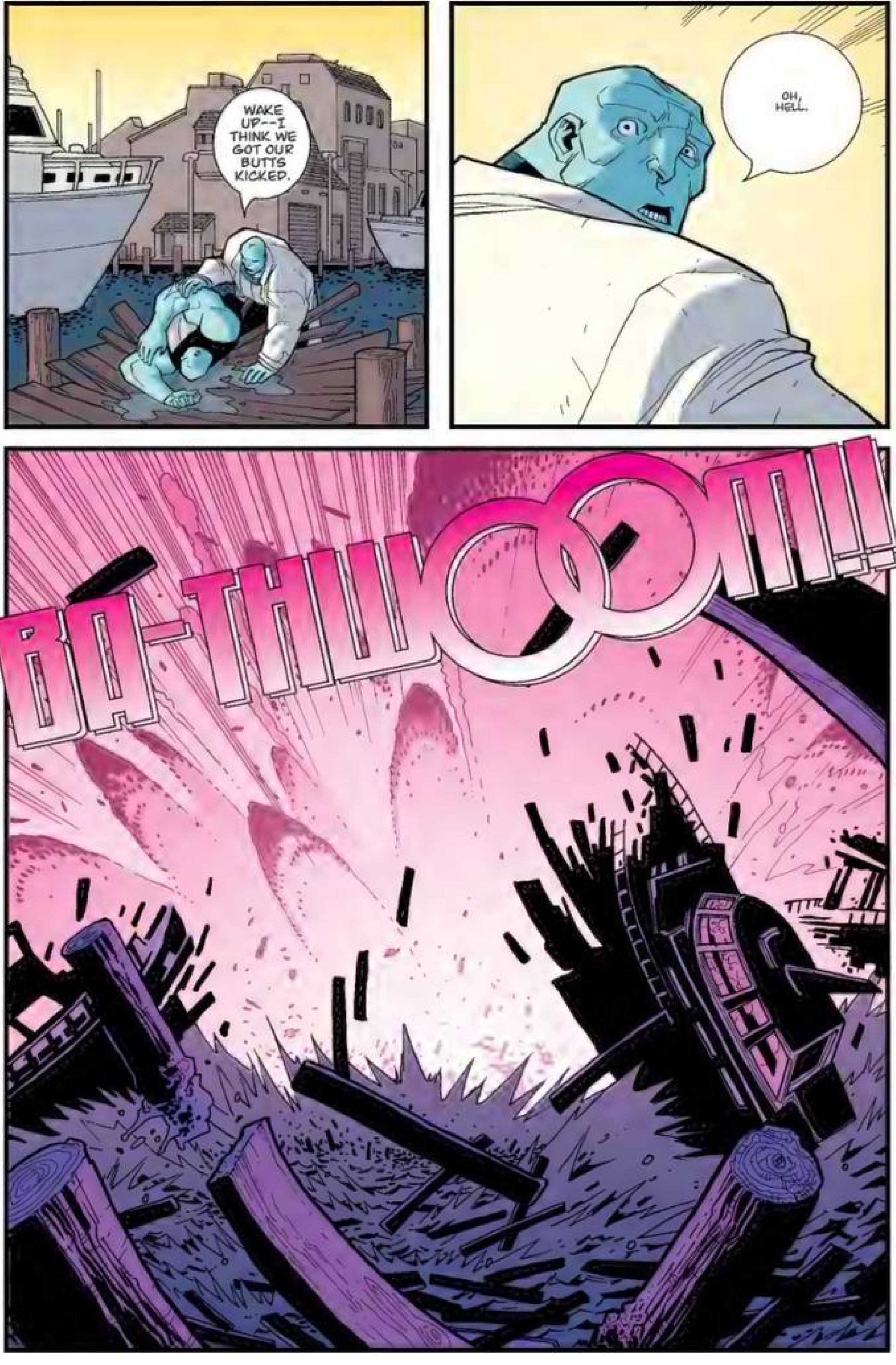

TWONK!
WHEN YOU GUYS WAKE UP--YOU'RE GOING TO BE *SO* IMPRESSED.
KRAK!
KRAK!
SKROOM!!
NOW THAT *THEY'RE* GONE, I JUST NEED TO FIGURE OUT A WAY TO TURN THIS KOOKY MACHINE OFF SO THAT MY BOSS CAN COME AND *ARREST* YOU ALL.
THIS WAS A PIECE OF CAKE.
DON'T-- BE SO-- CONFIDENT!
DO YOU-- *REALLY*-- THINK THOSE TWO--COULD HAVE DONE-- ALL THIS-- WORK--
--*ALONE?!*

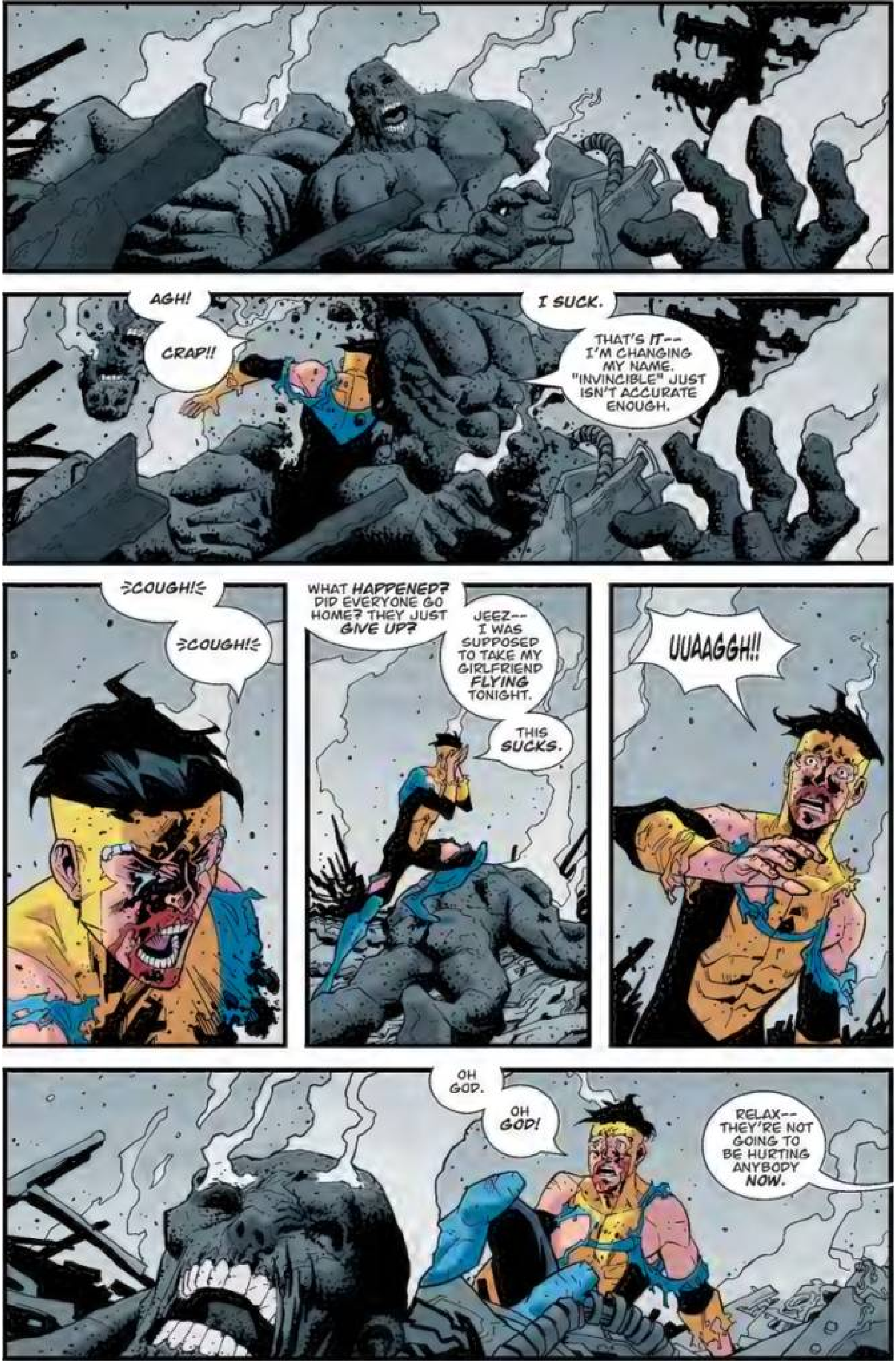

WHAT'S THAT SUPPOSED TO MEAN?
OH...
...OH, JEEZ.
DOES HE RECOGNIZE US?
I DON'T KNOW--I DON'T THINK HE EXISTS IN OUR DIMENSION. I HAVE NO CLUE WHO HE IS.
THEN STEP ASIDE--HE WAS KILLED ALMOST A YEAR AGO ON OUR WORLD AND WE DIDN'T EVEN GET TO WATCH.
THAT DOESN'T SOUND GOOD.
IT WON'T BE--WE PROMISE.
DON'T GET--CARRIED AWAY--JUST KEEP HIM BUSY--WHILE THE MACHINE COMPLETES THE PROCESS!
WE'LL KEEP HIM BUSY--NO DOUBT.

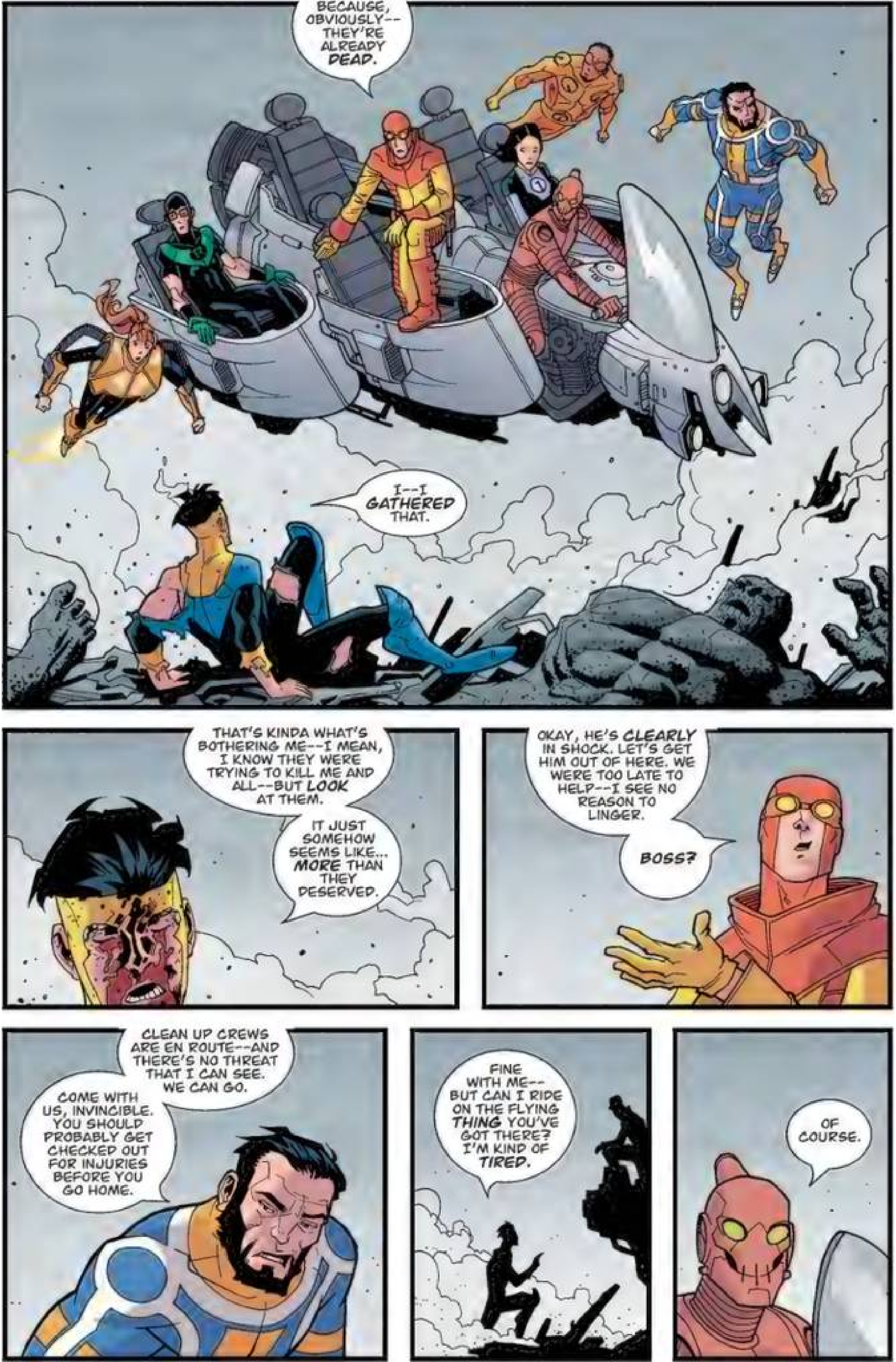

POW!
STAY BACK!
THAT WAS AN IMPRESSIVE PUNCH. IT'S A GOOD THING HE WASN'T ALONE.
GOOD FOR US, I MEAN.
KRAK!
YOU'RE NOT GETTING AWAY THAT EASY!!
WE'RE NOT DONE WITH YOU BY A LONG SHOT!
JUST-- KEEP HIM AWAY!! I CAN FEEL THE MACHINE WORKING--I CAN FEEL MY MIND-- EXPANDING!
WE AIM TO PLEASE, BOSS!
CHOOM!!
SAVE SOME FOR US!
JUST BECAUSE WE DON'T KNOW WHO HE IS DOESN'T MEAN WE DON'T WANT TO HURT HIM!
ACK!!
WRAMM!!

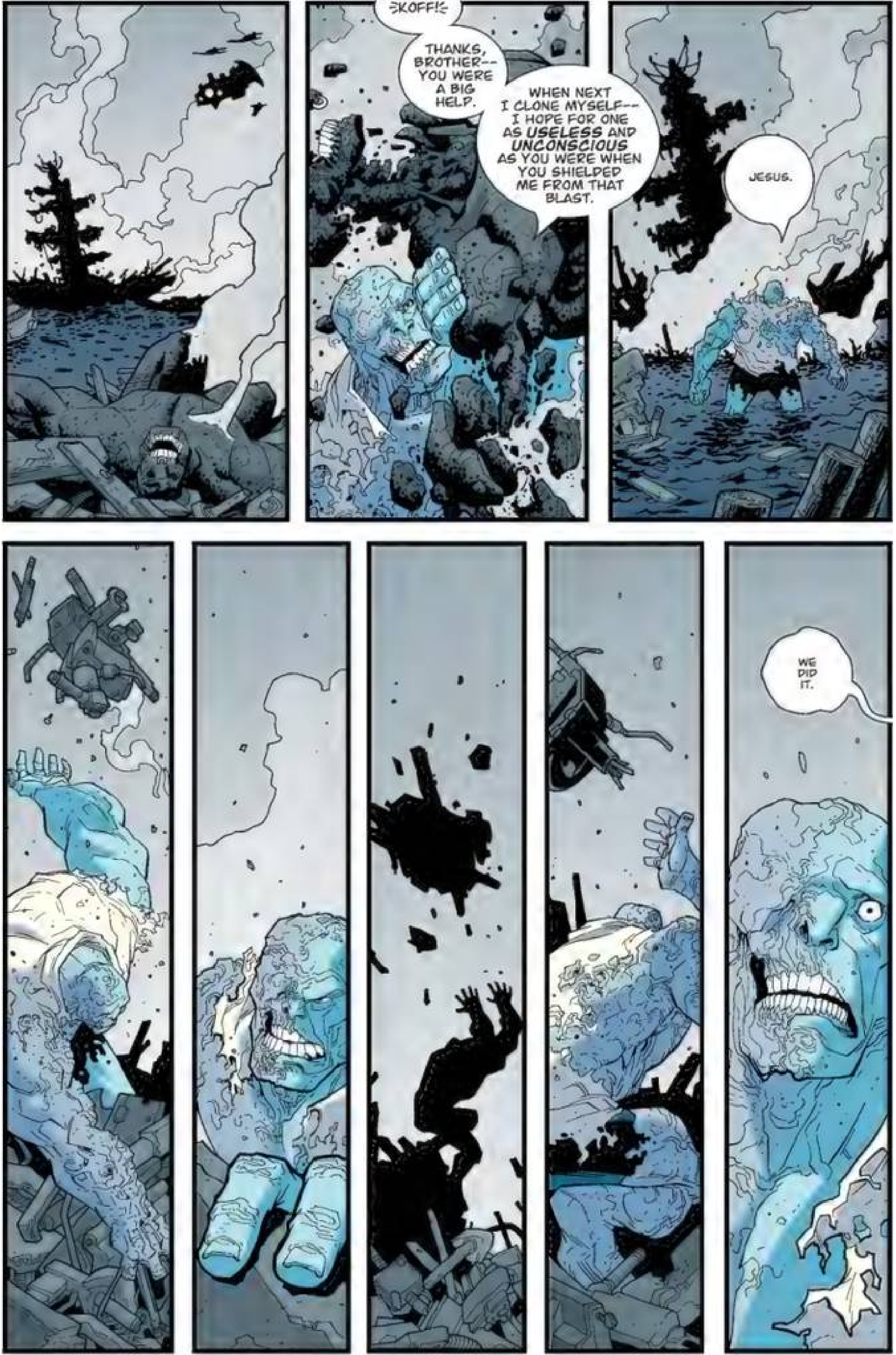

THRAMM!!
BACK OFF!!!
YOU THINK I CAN'T HURT YOU?! YOU THINK I WON'T TRY?! I WON'T LET YOU KILL ME!
STOP FIGHTING ME--OR BE READY FOR WHAT'S COMING. I PROMISE YOU I'VE BEEN HOLDING BACK!
WE WANT EVERYTHING YOU'VE GOT, KID--GIVE IT TO US! DON'T HOLD BACK!
WE WELCOME THE CHALLENGE!
YOU ASKED FOR--
--IRK!!
QUICKLY--BEFORE HE BREAKS FREE!
KRAKK!!
NOW!! ALL AT ONCE!! DON'T GIVE HIM TIME TO FIGHT BACK!

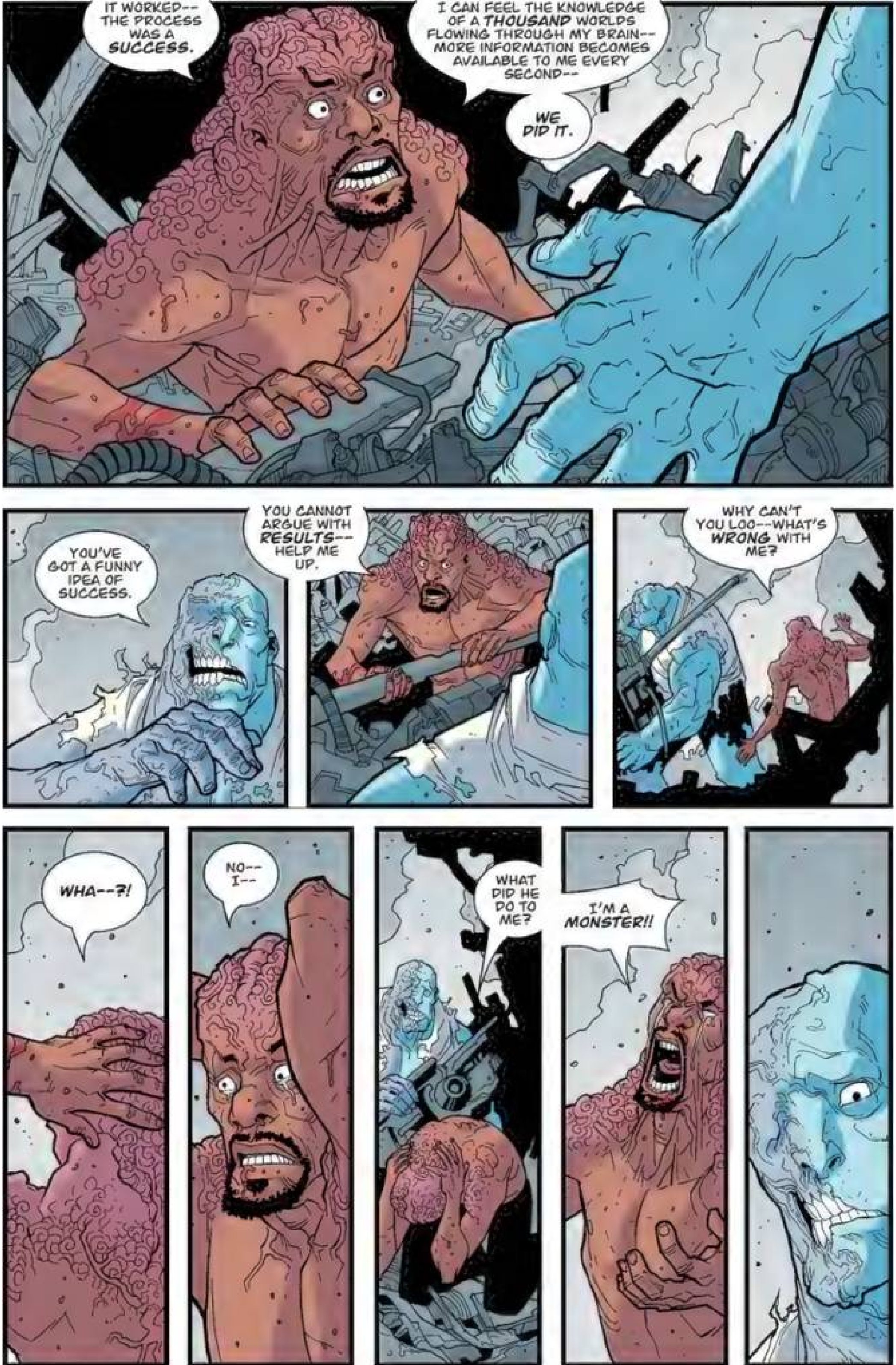

YOU'RE KILLING--HIM!! DON'T **KILL HIM!!** I WON'T HAVE-- HIS BLOOD ON MY HANDS!!
STOP!! YOU HAVE-- TO **STOP NOW!!**
YOU'RE **KIDDING,** RIGHT?
NO!! I WILL NOT HAVE MY GREATEST **TRIUMPH** SULLIED BY THIS CHILD'S **DEATH!**
STOP OR I'LL **STOP YOU MYSELF!!**
NO!! DON'T **MOVE!!** THE PROCESS CAN'T BE INTERRUPTED!! IF YOU STOP IT NOW THERE'S NO TELLING WHAT WILL HAPPEN!!

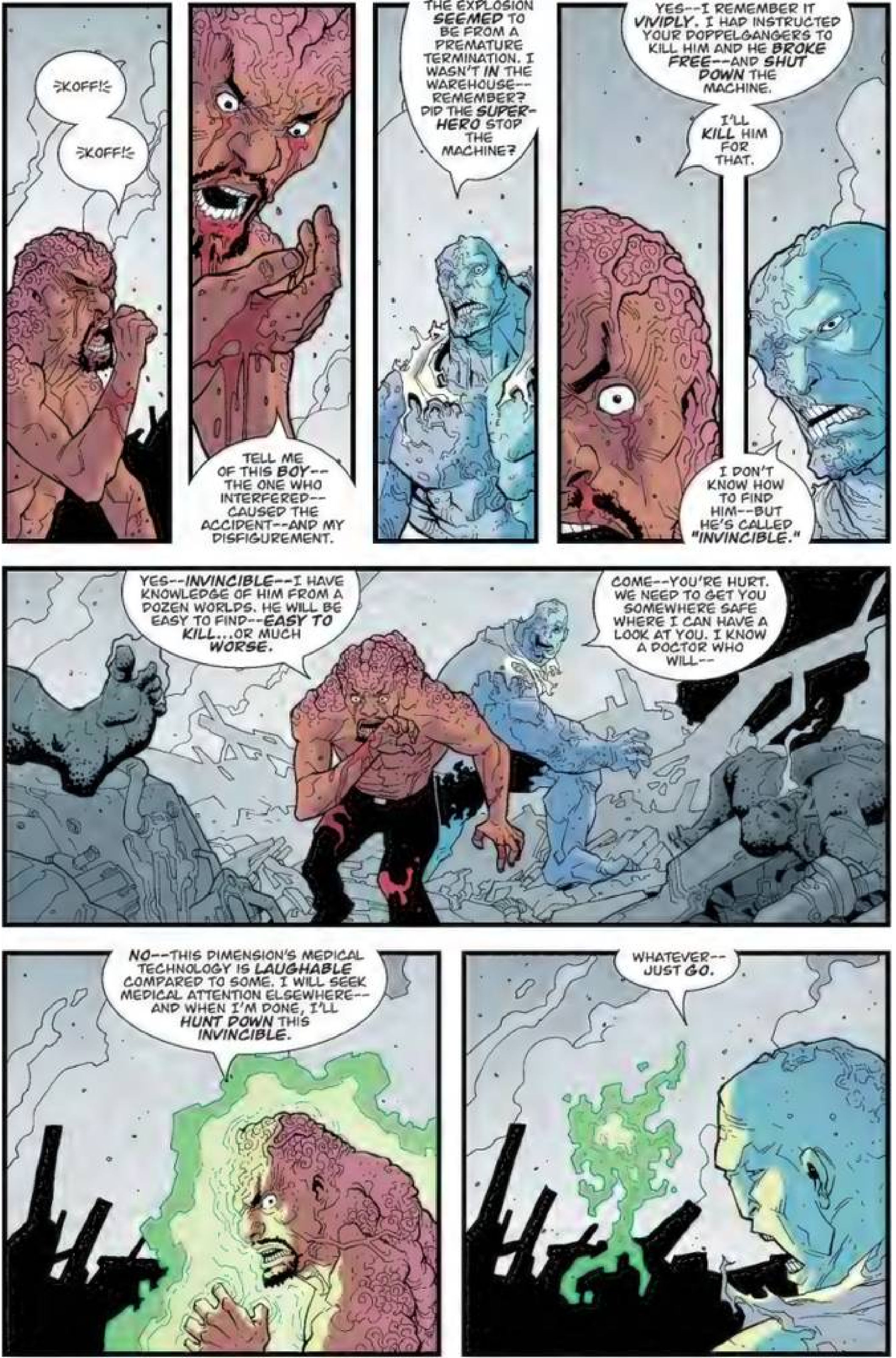

WAKE UP--I THINK WE GOT OUR BUTTS KICKED.
OH, HELL.
BA-THWOOM!!!

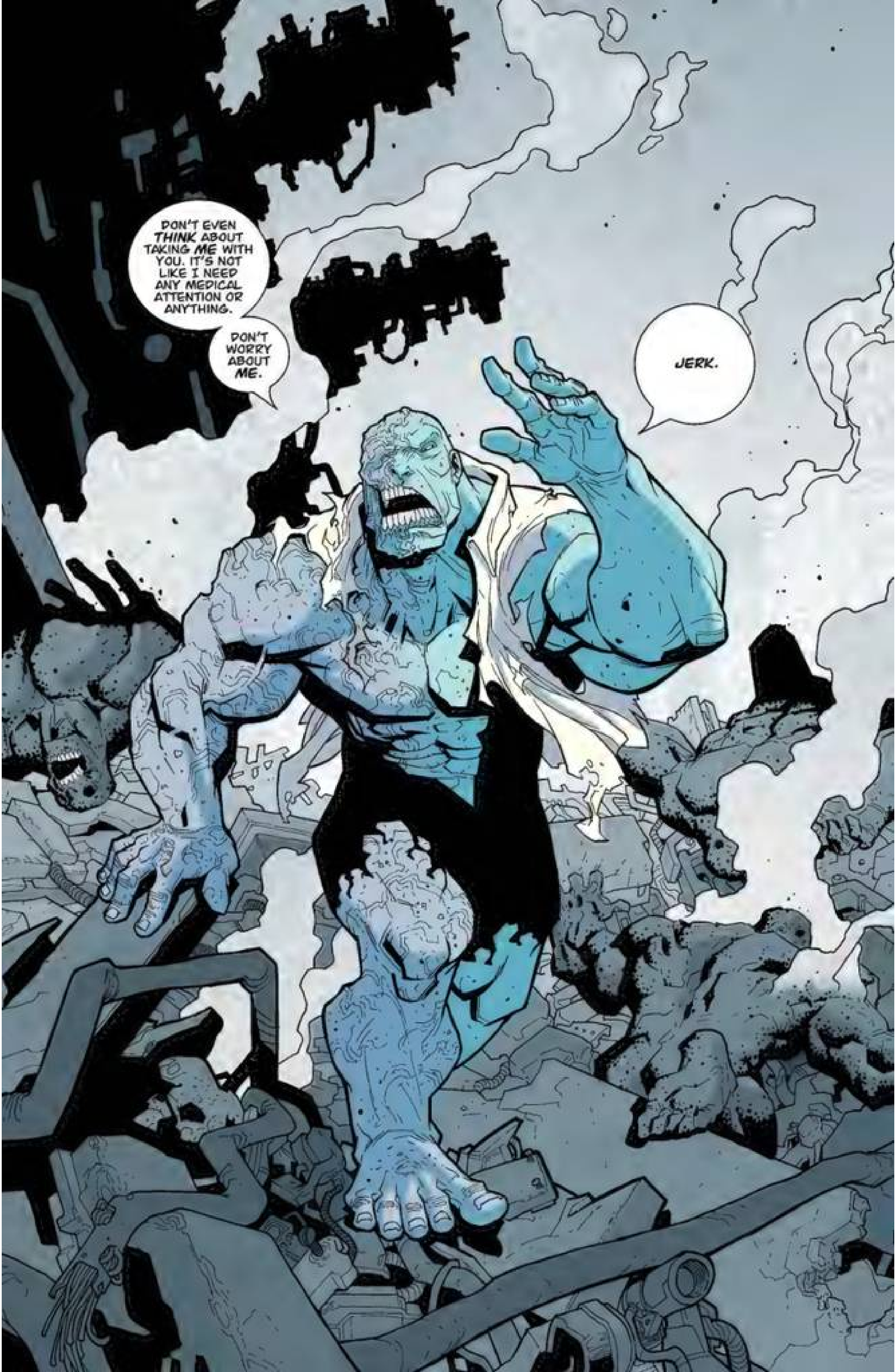

AGH!
CRAP!!
I SUCK.
THAT'S IT-- I'M CHANGING MY NAME. "INVINCIBLE" JUST ISN'T ACCURATE ENOUGH.
COUGH!
COUGH!
WHAT HAPPENED? DID EVERYONE GO HOME? THEY JUST GIVE UP?
JEEZ-- I WAS SUPPOSED TO TAKE MY GIRLFRIEND FLYING TONIGHT.
THIS SUCKS.
UUAAGGH!!
OH GOD.
OH GOD!
RELAX-- THEY'RE NOT GOING TO BE HURTING ANYBODY NOW.


BECAUSE, OBVIOUSLY-- THEY'RE ALREADY **DEAD**.
I--I **GATHERED** THAT.
THAT'S KINDA WHAT'S BOTHERING ME--I MEAN, I KNOW THEY WERE TRYING TO KILL ME AND ALL--BUT **LOOK** AT THEM.
IT JUST SOMEHOW SEEMS LIKE... **MORE** THAN THEY DESERVED.
OKAY, HE'S **CLEARLY** IN SHOCK. LET'S GET HIM OUT OF HERE. WE WERE TOO LATE TO HELP--I SEE NO REASON TO LINGER.
BOSS?
CLEAN UP CREWS ARE EN ROUTE--AND THERE'S NO THREAT THAT I CAN SEE. WE CAN GO.
COME WITH US, INVINCIBLE. YOU SHOULD PROBABLY GET CHECKED OUT FOR INJURIES BEFORE YOU GO HOME.
FINE WITH ME-- BUT CAN I RIDE ON THE FLYING **THING** YOU'VE GOT THERE? I'M KIND OF **TIRED**.
OF COURSE.


KOFF!
THANKS, BROTHER-- YOU WERE A BIG HELP.
WHEN NEXT I CLONE MYSELF-- I HOPE FOR ONE AS **USELESS** AND **UNCONSCIOUS** AS YOU WERE WHEN YOU SHIELDED ME FROM THAT BLAST.
JESUS.
WE DID IT.

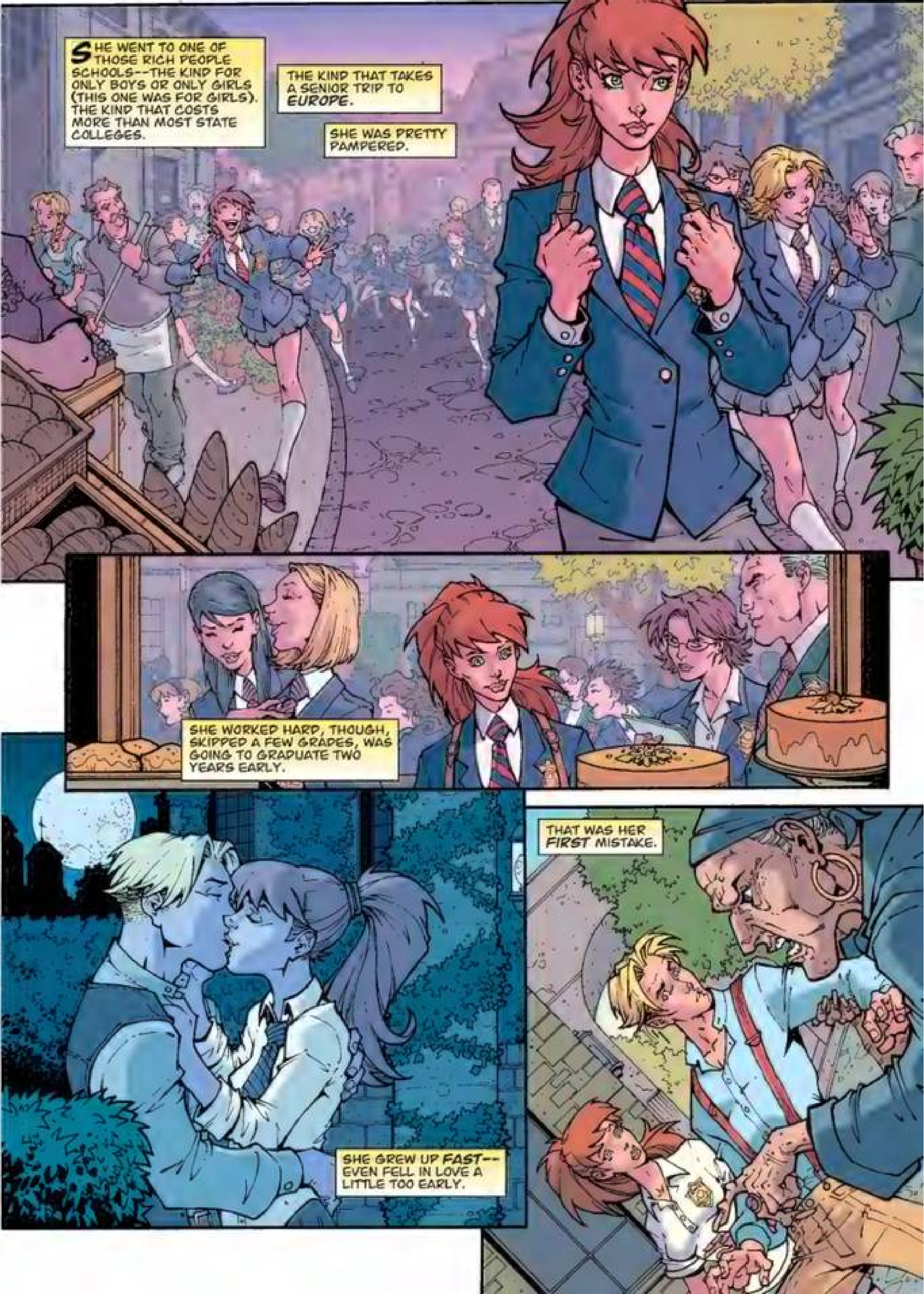

IT WORKED-- THE PROCESS WAS A SUCCESS.
I CAN FEEL THE KNOWLEDGE OF A THOUSAND WORLDS FLOWING THROUGH MY BRAIN-- MORE INFORMATION BECOMES AVAILABLE TO ME EVERY SECOND--
WE DID IT.
YOU'VE GOT A FUNNY IDEA OF SUCCESS.
YOU CANNOT ARGUE WITH RESULTS-- HELP ME UP.
WHY CAN'T YOU LOO--WHAT'S WRONG WITH ME?
WHA--?!
NO-- I--
WHAT DID HE DO TO ME?
I'M A MONSTER!!

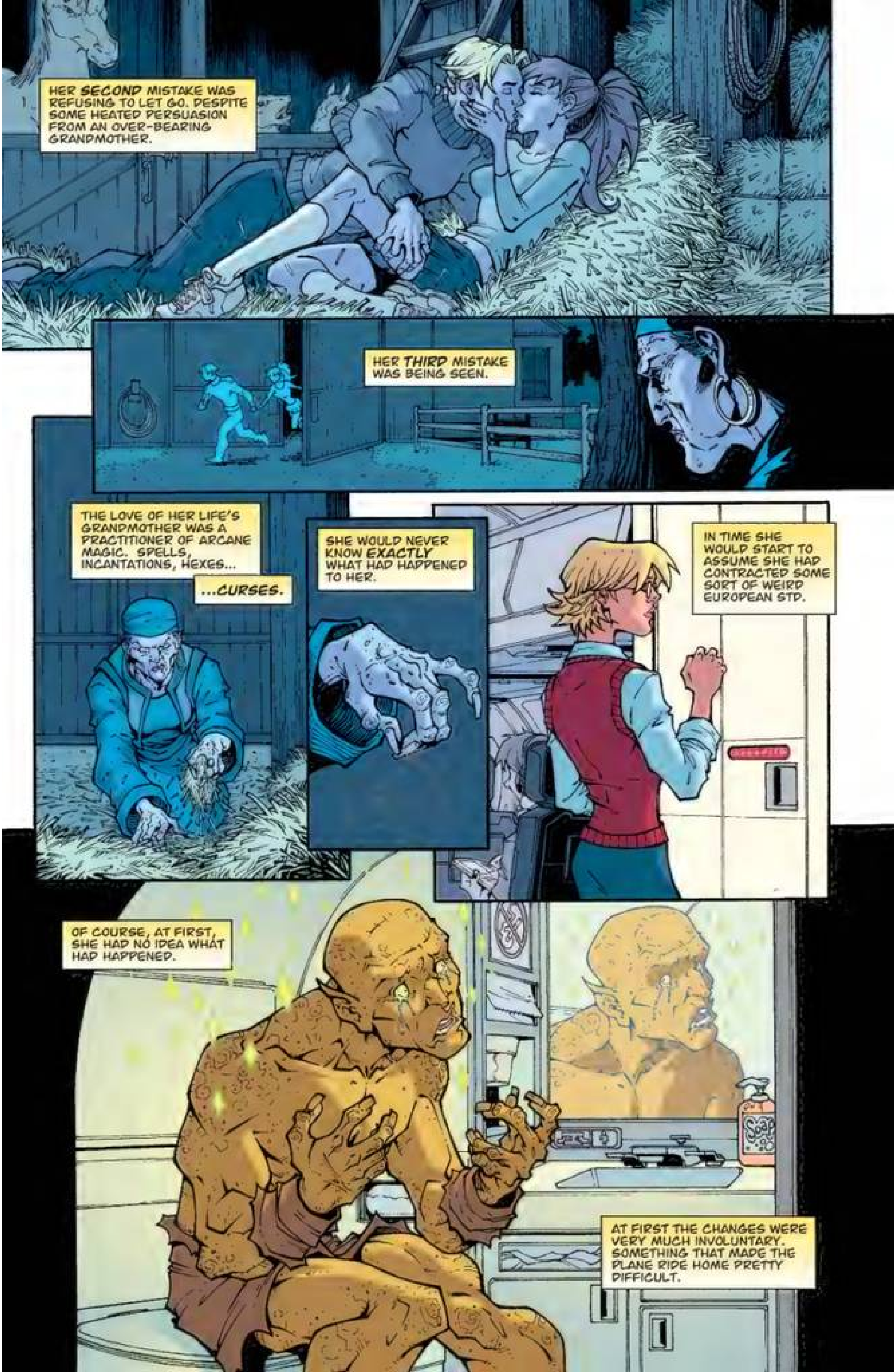

KOFF!
KOFF!
TELL ME OF THIS BOY--THE ONE WHO INTERFERED--CAUSED THE ACCIDENT--AND MY DISFIGUREMENT.
THE EXPLOSION SEEMED TO BE FROM A PREMATURE TERMINATION. I WASN'T IN THE WAREHOUSE--REMEMBER? DID THE SUPER-HERO STOP THE MACHINE?
YES--I REMEMBER IT VIVIDLY. I HAD INSTRUCTED YOUR DOPPELGANGERS TO KILL HIM AND HE BROKE FREE--AND SHUT DOWN THE MACHINE.
I'LL KILL HIM FOR THAT.
I DON'T KNOW HOW TO FIND HIM--BUT HE'S CALLED "INVINCIBLE."
YES--INVINCIBLE--I HAVE KNOWLEDGE OF HIM FROM A DOZEN WORLDS. HE WILL BE EASY TO FIND--EASY TO KILL...OR MUCH WORSE.
COME--YOU'RE HURT. WE NEED TO GET YOU SOMEWHERE SAFE WHERE I CAN HAVE A LOOK AT YOU. I KNOW A DOCTOR WHO WILL--
NO--THIS DIMENSION'S MEDICAL TECHNOLOGY IS LAUGHABLE COMPARED TO SOME. I WILL SEEK MEDICAL ATTENTION ELSEWHERE--AND WHEN I'M DONE, I'LL HUNT DOWN THIS INVINCIBLE.
WHATEVER--JUST GO.

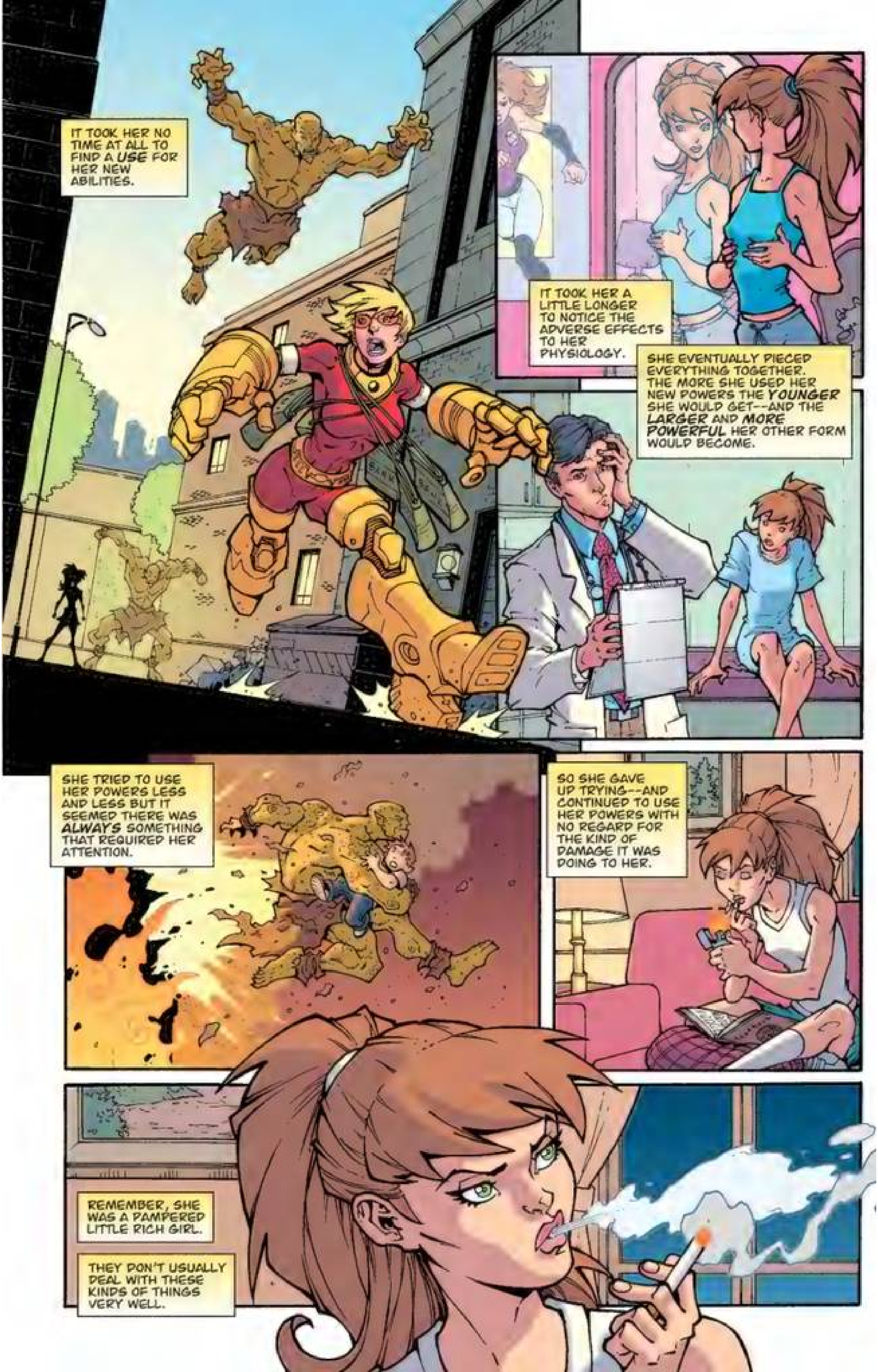

DON'T EVEN THINK ABOUT TAKING ME WITH YOU. IT'S NOT LIKE I NEED ANY MEDICAL ATTENTION OR ANYTHING.
DON'T WORRY ABOUT ME.
JERK.

ORIGINS

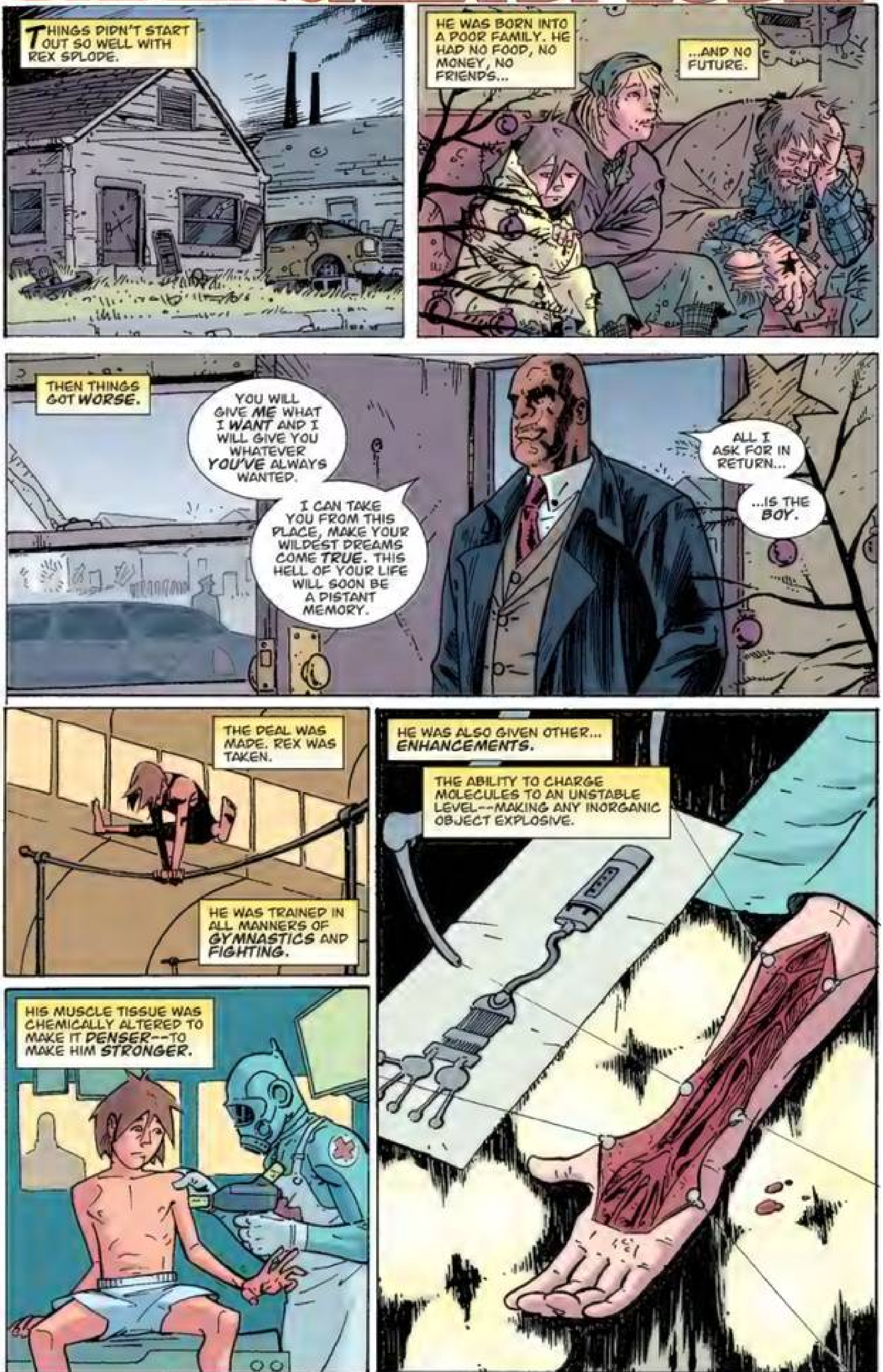
AT LONG LAST--THE SECRET ORIGIN OF MONSTER GIRL!

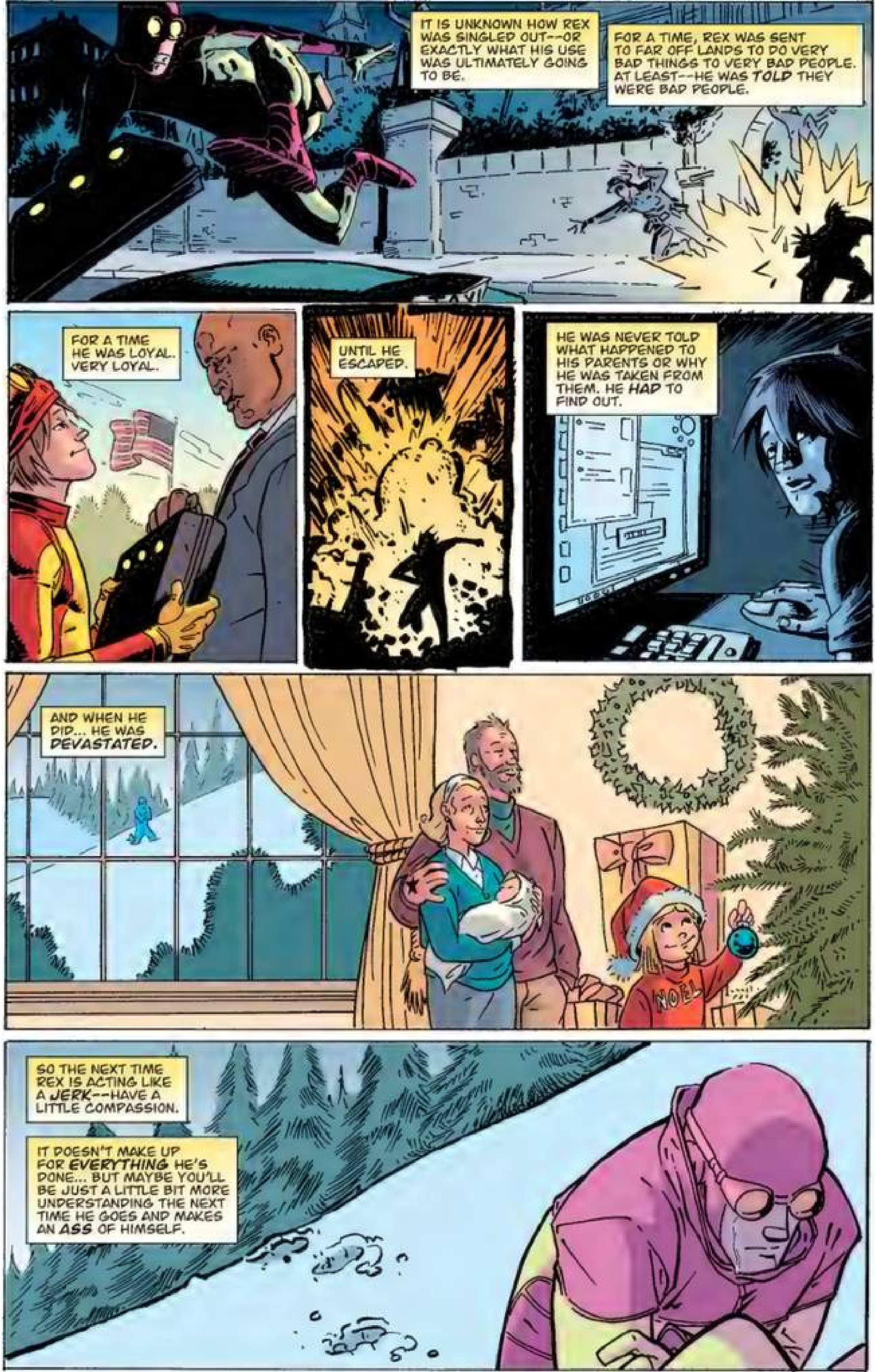

SHE WENT TO ONE OF THOSE RICH PEOPLE SCHOOLS--THE KIND FOR ONLY BOYS OR ONLY GIRLS (THIS ONE WAS FOR GIRLS). THE KIND THAT COSTS MORE THAN MOST STATE COLLEGES.
THE KIND THAT TAKES A SENIOR TRIP TO *EUROPE*.
SHE WAS PRETTY PAMPERED.
SHE WORKED HARD, THOUGH, SKIPPED A FEW GRADES, WAS GOING TO GRADUATE TWO YEARS EARLY.
SHE GREW UP *FAST*-- EVEN FELL IN LOVE A LITTLE TOO EARLY.
THAT WAS HER *FIRST* MISTAKE.


HER SECOND MISTAKE WAS REFUSING TO LET GO. DESPITE SOME HEATED PERSUASION FROM AN OVER-BEARING GRANDMOTHER.
HER THIRD MISTAKE WAS BEING SEEN.
THE LOVE OF HER LIFE'S GRANDMOTHER WAS A PRACTITIONER OF ARCANE MAGIC. SPELLS, INCANTATIONS, HEXES...
...CURSES.
SHE WOULD NEVER KNOW EXACTLY WHAT HAD HAPPENED TO HER.
IN TIME SHE WOULD START TO ASSUME SHE HAD CONTRACTED SOME SORT OF WEIRD EUROPEAN STD.
OF COURSE, AT FIRST, SHE HAD NO IDEA WHAT HAD HAPPENED.
Soap
AT FIRST THE CHANGES WERE VERY MUCH INVOLUNTARY. SOMETHING THAT MADE THE PLANE RIDE HOME PRETTY DIFFICULT.

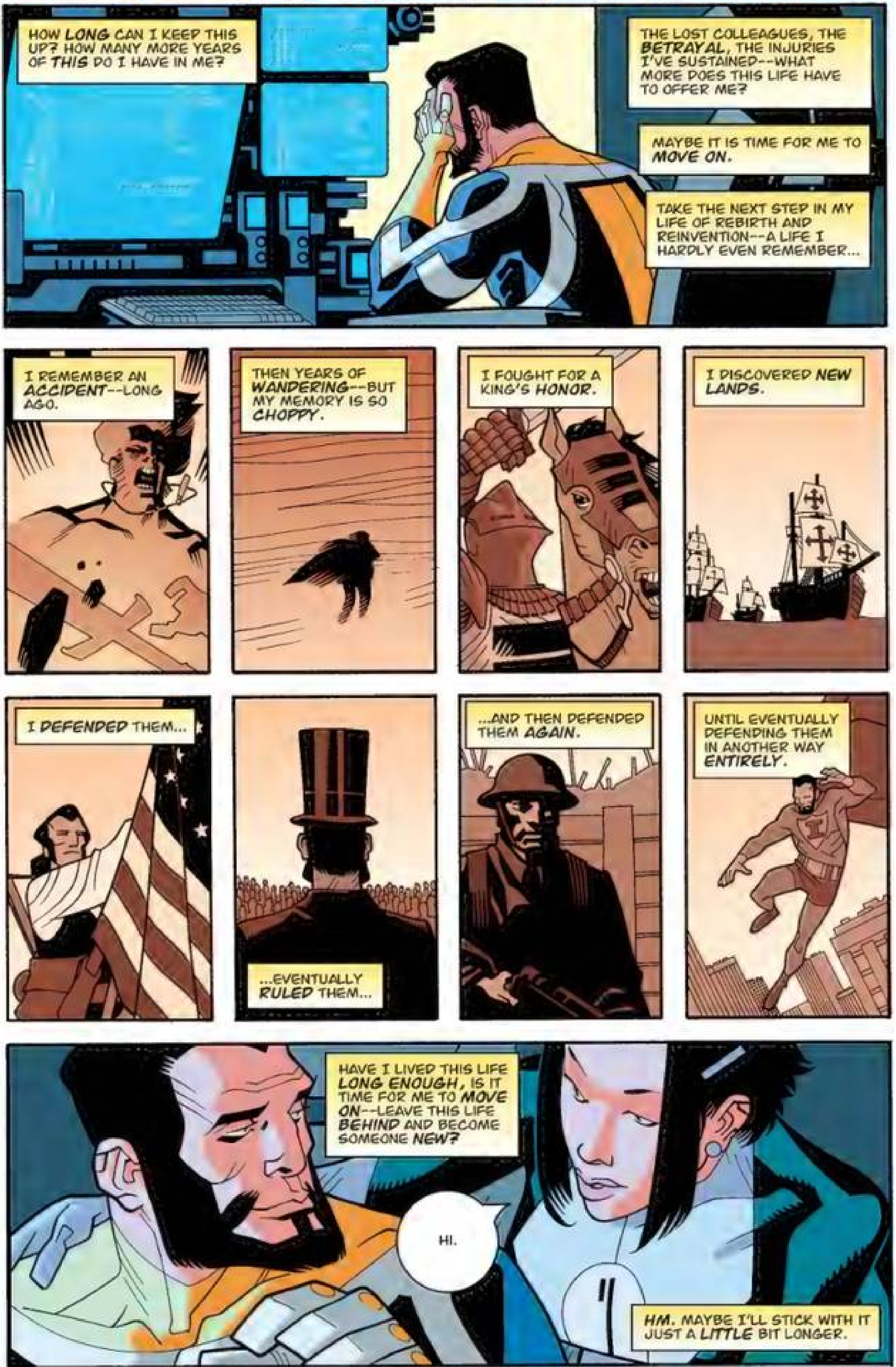

IT TOOK HER NO TIME AT ALL TO FIND A *USE* FOR HER NEW ABILITIES.
IT TOOK HER A LITTLE LONGER TO NOTICE THE ADVERSE EFFECTS TO HER PHYSIOLOGY.
SHE EVENTUALLY PIECED EVERYTHING TOGETHER. THE MORE SHE USED HER NEW POWERS THE *YOUNGER* SHE WOULD GET--AND THE ***LARGER*** AND ***MORE POWERFUL*** HER OTHER FORM WOULD BECOME.
SHE TRIED TO USE HER POWERS LESS AND LESS BUT IT SEEMED THERE WAS ***ALWAYS*** SOMETHING THAT REQUIRED HER ATTENTION.
SO SHE GAVE UP *TRYING*--AND CONTINUED TO USE HER POWERS WITH NO REGARD FOR THE KIND OF DAMAGE IT WAS DOING TO HER.
REMEMBER, SHE WAS A PAMPERED LITTLE RICH GIRL.
THEY DON'T USUALLY DEAL WITH THESE KINDS OF THINGS VERY WELL.

AT LONG LAST--THE SECRET ORIGIN OF REX SPLODE!

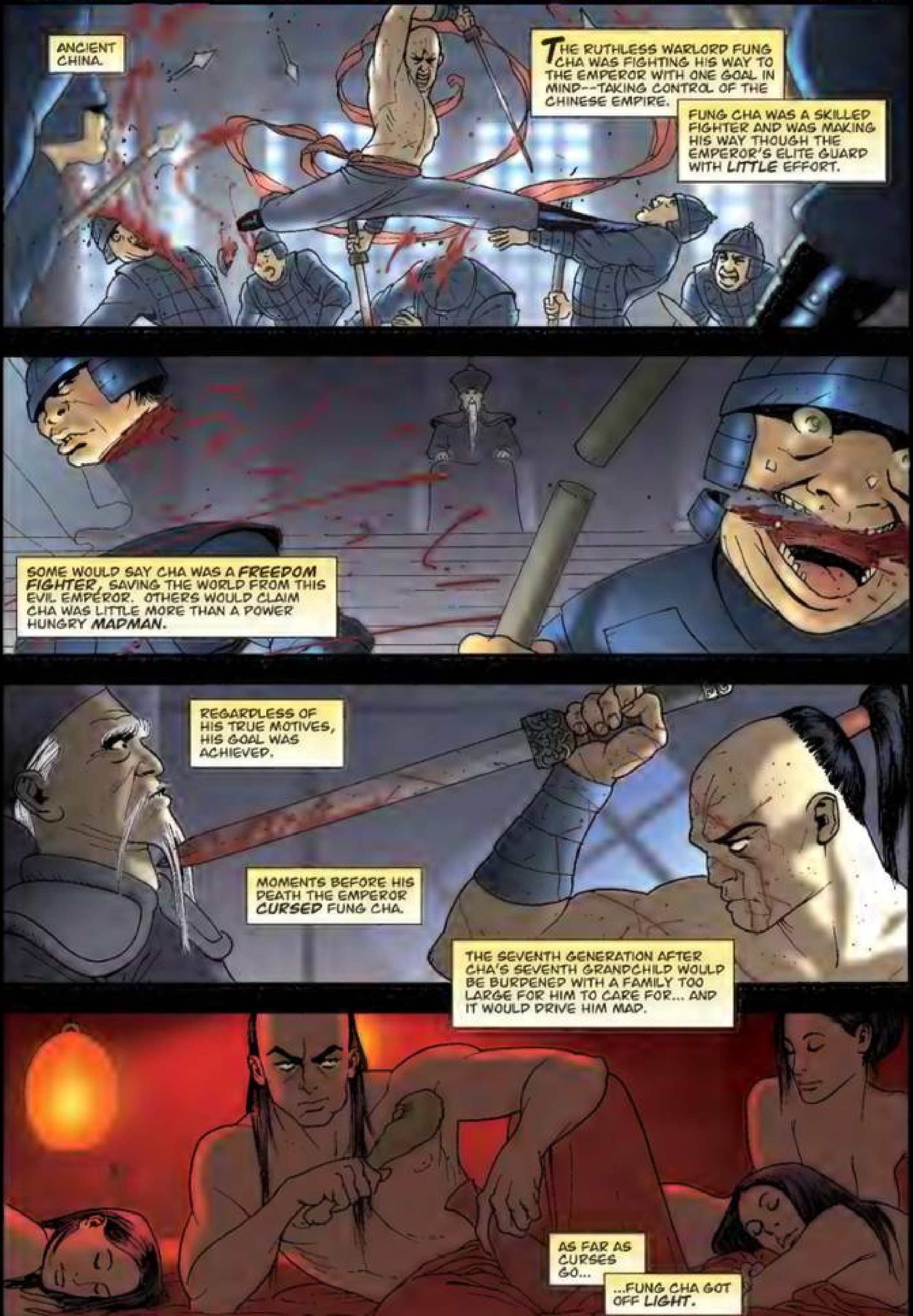

THINGS DIDN'T START OUT SO WELL WITH REX SPLODE.
HE WAS BORN INTO A POOR FAMILY. HE HAD NO FOOD, NO MONEY, NO FRIENDS...
...AND NO FUTURE.
THEN THINGS GOT WORSE.
YOU WILL GIVE ME WHAT I WANT AND I WILL GIVE YOU WHATEVER YOU'VE ALWAYS WANTED.
I CAN TAKE YOU FROM THIS PLACE, MAKE YOUR WILDEST DREAMS COME TRUE. THIS HELL OF YOUR LIFE WILL SOON BE A DISTANT MEMORY.
ALL I ASK FOR IN RETURN...
...IS THE BOY.
THE DEAL WAS MADE. REX WAS TAKEN.
HE WAS TRAINED IN ALL MANNERS OF GYMNASTICS AND FIGHTING.
HIS MUSCLE TISSUE WAS CHEMICALLY ALTERED TO MAKE IT DENSER--TO MAKE HIM STRONGER.
HE WAS ALSO GIVEN OTHER... ENHANCEMENTS.
THE ABILITY TO CHARGE MOLECULES TO AN UNSTABLE LEVEL--MAKING ANY INORGANIC OBJECT EXPLOSIVE.

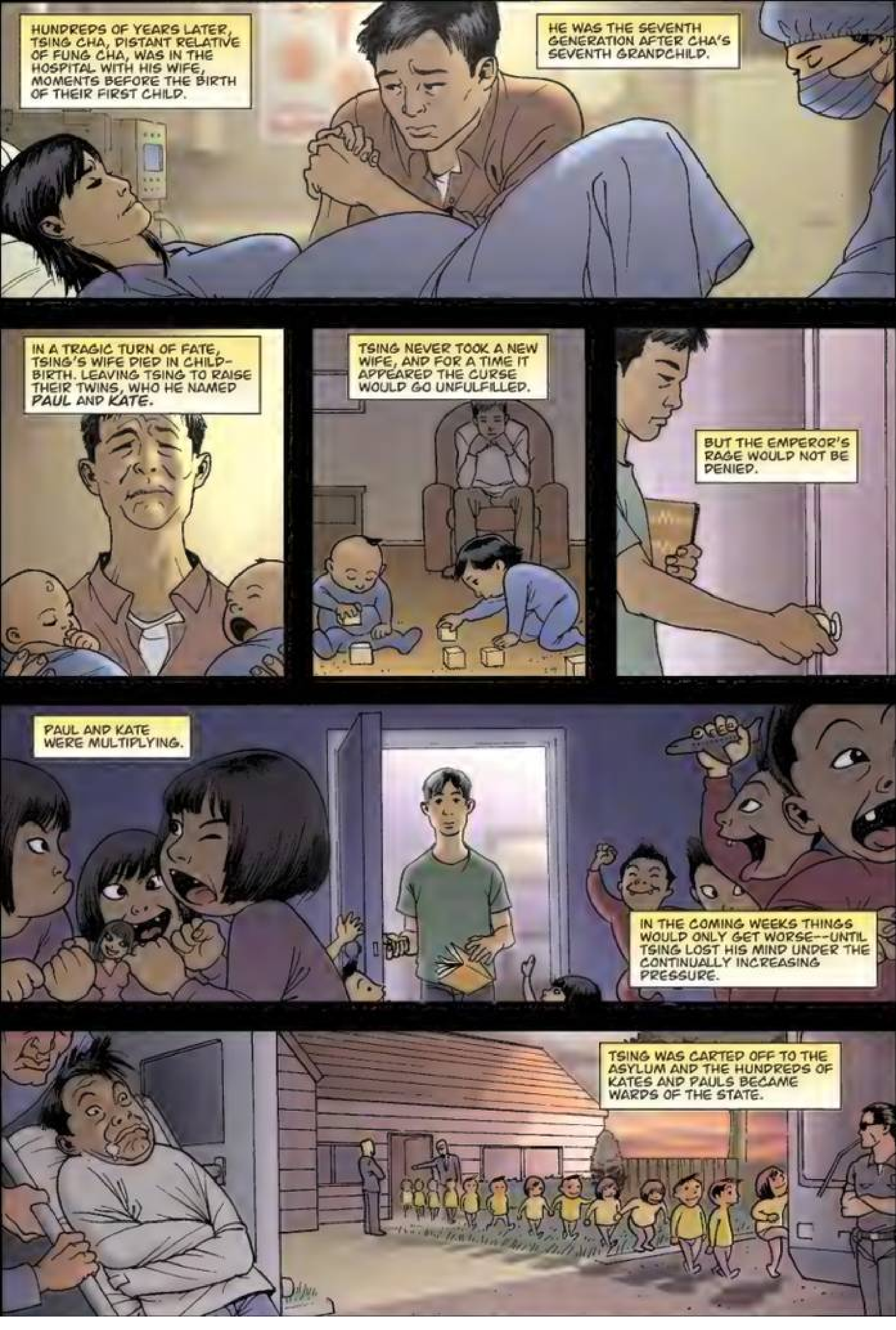

IT IS UNKNOWN HOW REX WAS SINGLED OUT--OR EXACTLY WHAT HIS USE WAS ULTIMATELY GOING TO BE.
FOR A TIME, REX WAS SENT TO FAR OFF LANDS TO DO VERY BAD THINGS TO VERY BAD PEOPLE. AT LEAST--HE WAS *TOLD* THEY WERE BAD PEOPLE.
FOR A TIME HE WAS LOYAL. VERY LOYAL.
UNTIL HE ESCAPED.
HE WAS NEVER TOLD WHAT HAPPENED TO HIS PARENTS OR WHY HE WAS TAKEN FROM THEM. HE *HAD* TO FIND OUT.
AND WHEN HE DID... HE WAS ***DEVASTATED.***
NOEL
SO THE NEXT TIME REX IS ACTING LIKE A ***JERK***--HAVE A LITTLE COMPASSION.
IT DOESN'T MAKE UP FOR ***EVERYTHING*** HE'S DONE... BUT MAYBE YOU'LL BE JUST A LITTLE BIT MORE UNDERSTANDING THE NEXT TIME HE GOES AND MAKES AN ***ASS*** OF HIMSELF.

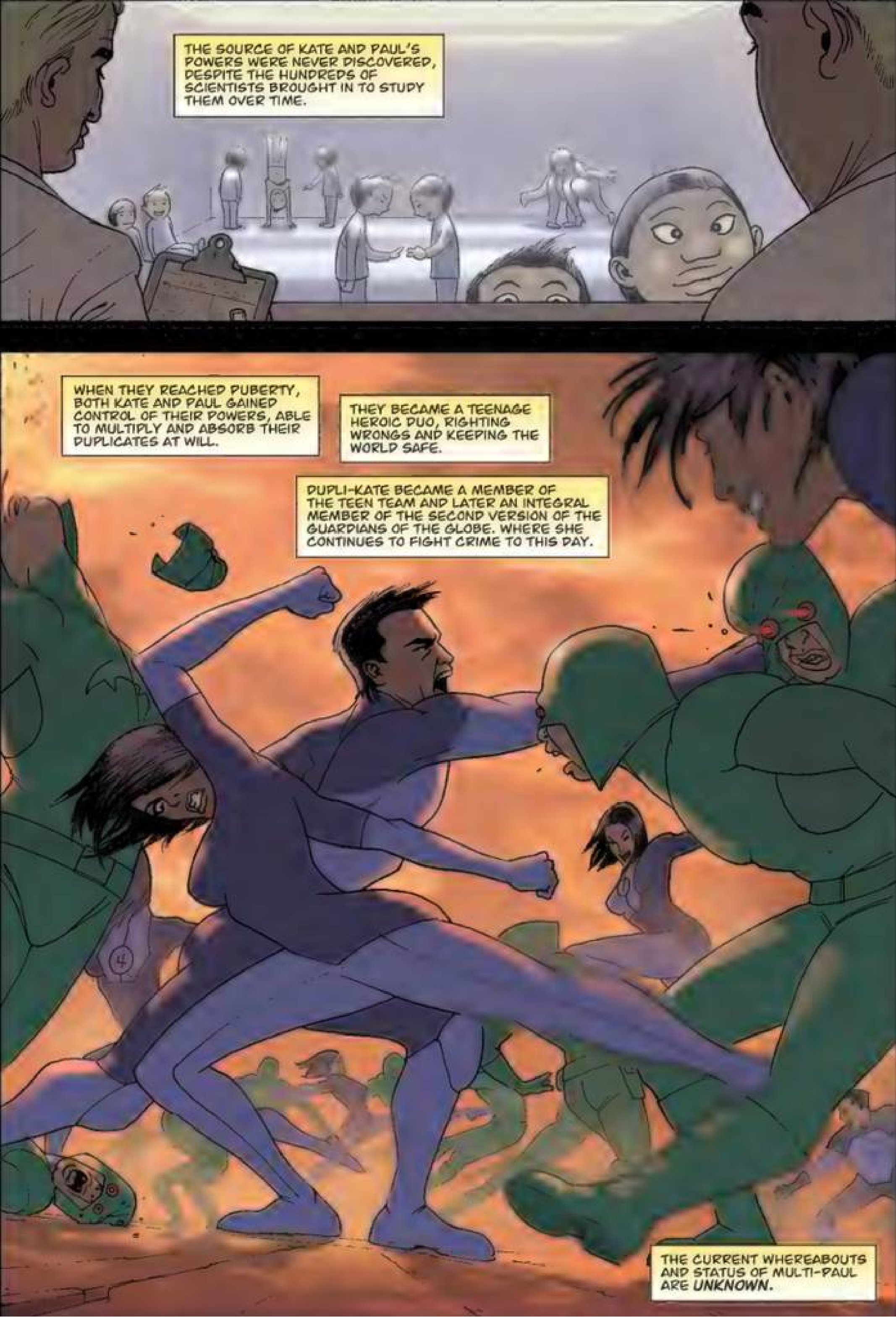
AT LONG LAST--THE SECRET ORIGIN OF THE IMMORTAL!


HOW LONG CAN I KEEP THIS UP? HOW MANY MORE YEARS OF THIS DO I HAVE IN ME?
THE LOST COLLEAGUES, THE BETRAYAL, THE INJURIES I'VE SUSTAINED--WHAT MORE DOES THIS LIFE HAVE TO OFFER ME?
MAYBE IT IS TIME FOR ME TO MOVE ON.
TAKE THE NEXT STEP IN MY LIFE OF REBIRTH AND REINVENTION--A LIFE I HARDLY EVEN REMEMBER...
I REMEMBER AN ACCIDENT--LONG AGO.
THEN YEARS OF WANDERING--BUT MY MEMORY IS SO CHOPPY.
I FOUGHT FOR A KING'S HONOR.
I DISCOVERED NEW LANDS.
I DEFENDED THEM...
...EVENTUALLY RULED THEM...
...AND THEN DEFENDED THEM AGAIN.
UNTIL EVENTUALLY DEFENDING THEM IN ANOTHER WAY ENTIRELY.
HAVE I LIVED THIS LIFE LONG ENOUGH, IS IT TIME FOR ME TO MOVE ON--LEAVE THIS LIFE BEHIND AND BECOME SOMEONE NEW?
HI.
HM. MAYBE I'LL STICK WITH IT JUST A LITTLE BIT LONGER.

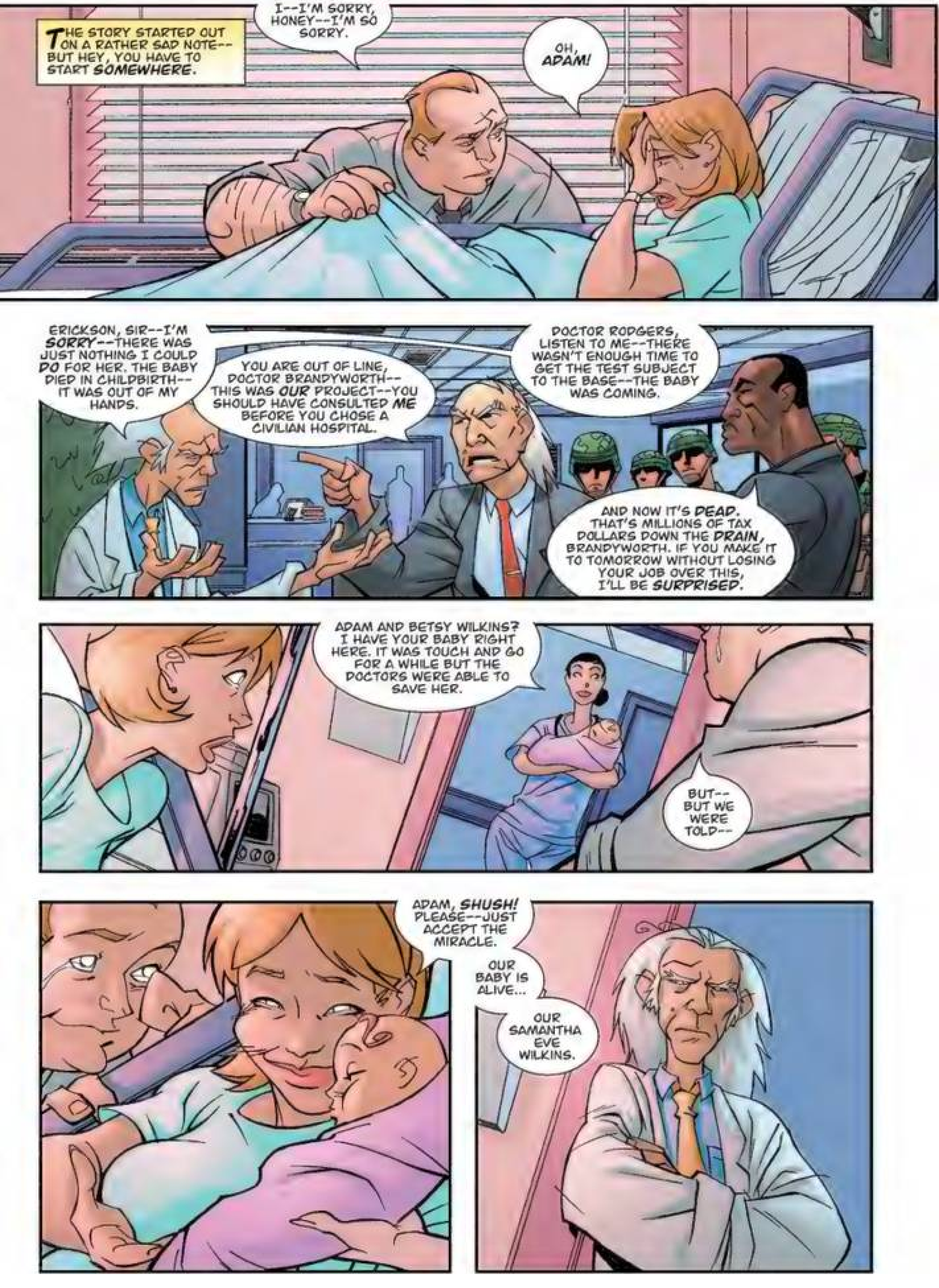
AT LONG LAST--THE SECRET ORIGIN OF DUPLI-KATE!

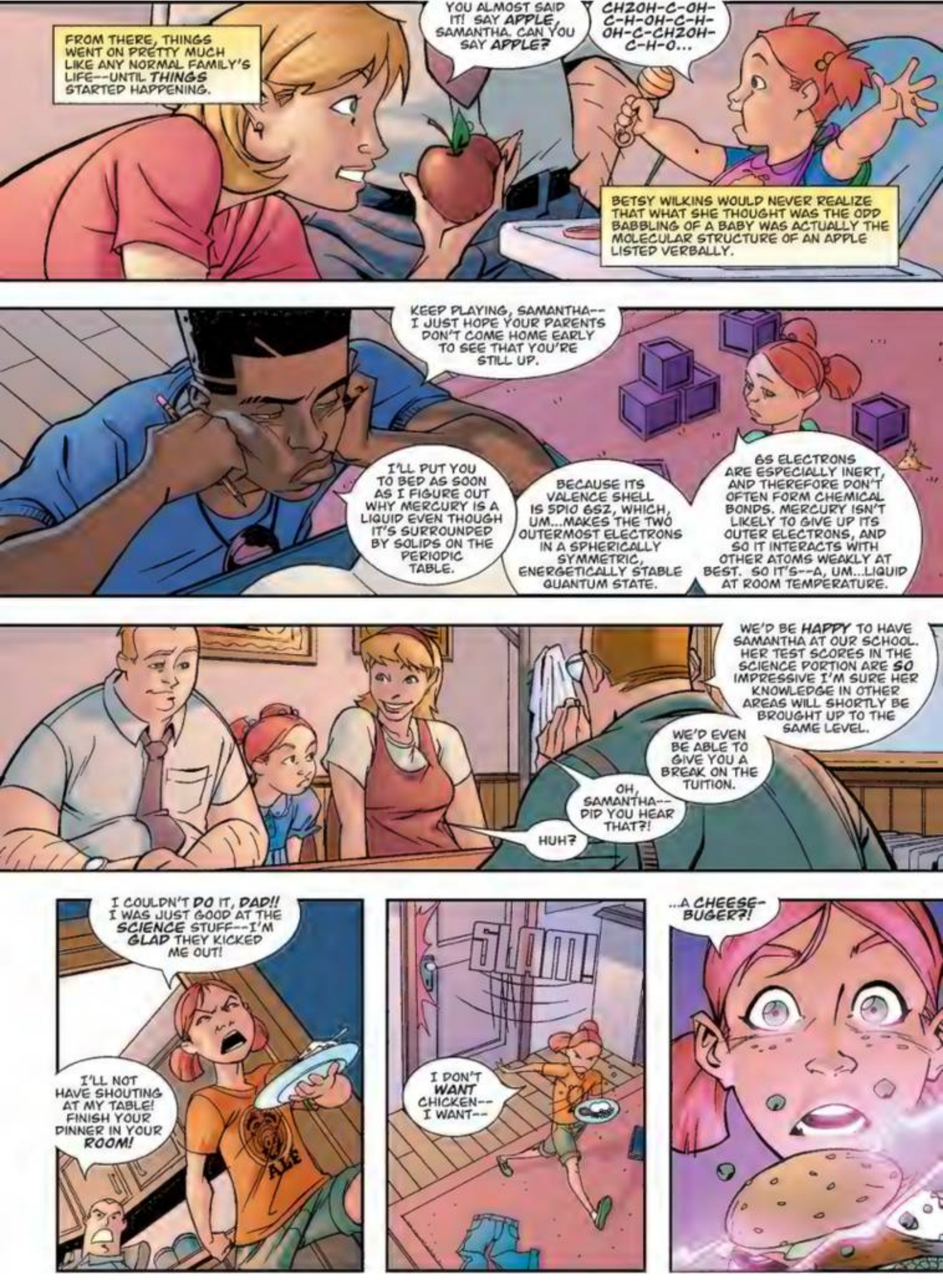

ANCIENT CHINA.
THE RUTHLESS WARLORD FUNG CHA WAS FIGHTING HIS WAY TO THE EMPEROR WITH ONE GOAL IN MIND--TAKING CONTROL OF THE CHINESE EMPIRE.
FUNG CHA WAS A SKILLED FIGHTER AND WAS MAKING HIS WAY THOUGH THE EMPEROR'S ELITE GUARD WITH LITTLE EFFORT.
SOME WOULD SAY CHA WAS A FREEDOM FIGHTER, SAVING THE WORLD FROM THIS EVIL EMPEROR. OTHERS WOULD CLAIM CHA WAS LITTLE MORE THAN A POWER HUNGRY MADMAN.
REGARDLESS OF HIS TRUE MOTIVES, HIS GOAL WAS ACHIEVED.
MOMENTS BEFORE HIS DEATH THE EMPEROR CURSED FUNG CHA.
THE SEVENTH GENERATION AFTER CHA'S SEVENTH GRANDCHILD WOULD BE BURDENED WITH A FAMILY TOO LARGE FOR HIM TO CARE FOR... AND IT WOULD DRIVE HIM MAD.
AS FAR AS CURSES GO...
...FUNG CHA GOT OFF LIGHT.

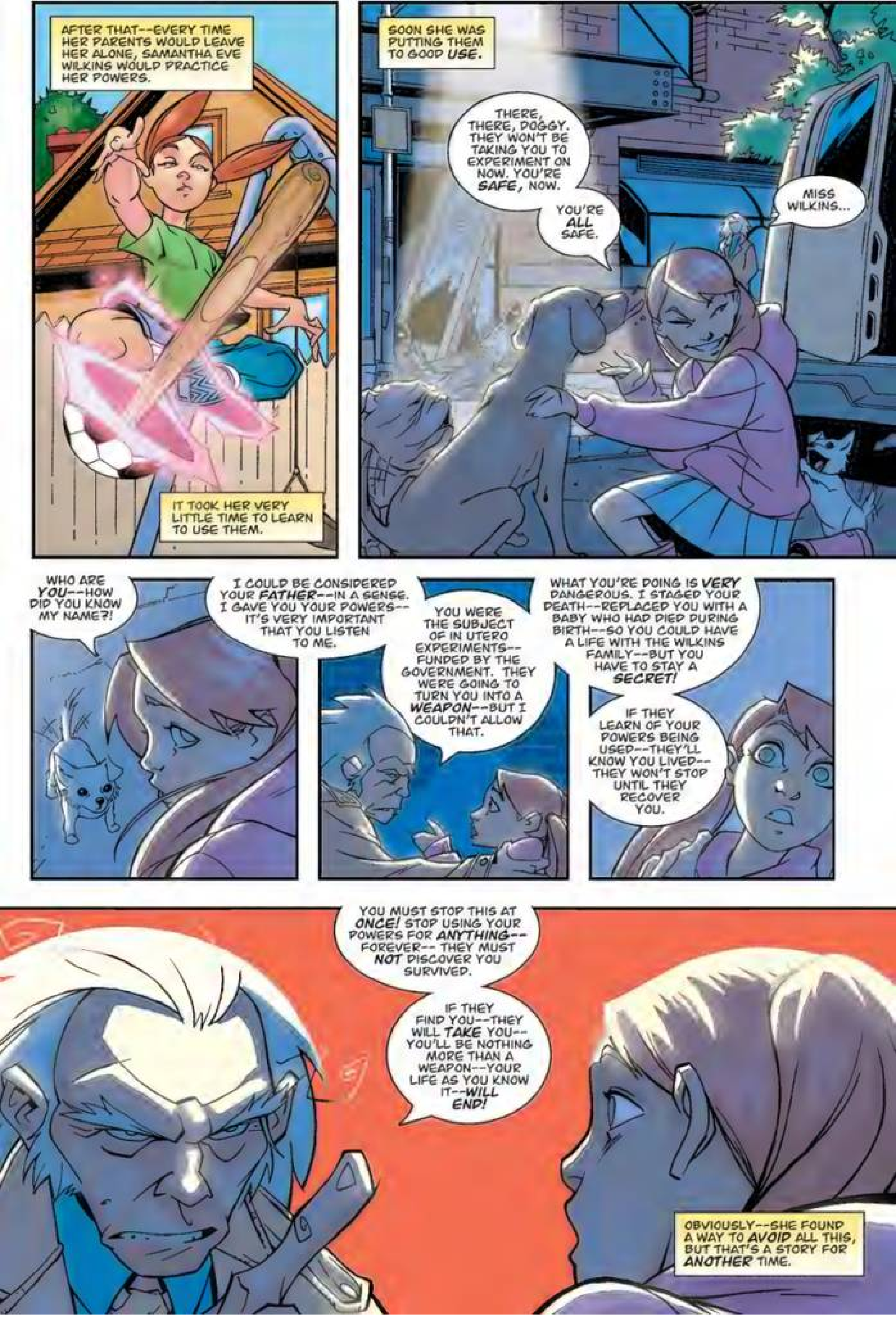

HUNDREDS OF YEARS LATER, TSING CHA, DISTANT RELATIVE OF FUNG CHA, WAS IN THE HOSPITAL WITH HIS WIFE, MOMENTS BEFORE THE BIRTH OF THEIR FIRST CHILD.
HE WAS THE SEVENTH GENERATION AFTER CHA'S SEVENTH GRANDCHILD.
IN A TRAGIC TURN OF FATE, TSING'S WIFE DIED IN CHILDBIRTH. LEAVING TSING TO RAISE THEIR TWINS, WHO HE NAMED PAUL AND KATE.
TSING NEVER TOOK A NEW WIFE, AND FOR A TIME IT APPEARED THE CURSE WOULD GO UNFULFILLED.
BUT THE EMPEROR'S RAGE WOULD NOT BE DENIED.
PAUL AND KATE WERE MULTIPLYING.
IN THE COMING WEEKS THINGS WOULD ONLY GET WORSE--UNTIL TSING LOST HIS MIND UNDER THE CONTINUALLY INCREASING PRESSURE.
TSING WAS CARTED OFF TO THE ASYLUM AND THE HUNDREDS OF KATES AND PAULS BECAME WARDS OF THE STATE.


THE SOURCE OF KATE AND PAUL'S POWERS WERE NEVER DISCOVERED, DESPITE THE HUNDREDS OF SCIENTISTS BROUGHT IN TO STUDY THEM OVER TIME.
WHEN THEY REACHED PUBERTY, BOTH KATE AND PAUL GAINED CONTROL OF THEIR POWERS, ABLE TO MULTIPLY AND ABSORB THEIR DUPLICATES AT WILL.
THEY BECAME A TEENAGE HEROIC DUO, RIGHTING WRONGS AND KEEPING THE WORLD SAFE.
DUPLI-KATE BECAME A MEMBER OF THE TEEN TEAM AND LATER AN INTEGRAL MEMBER OF THE SECOND VERSION OF THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE. WHERE SHE CONTINUES TO FIGHT CRIME TO THIS DAY.
THE CURRENT WHEREABOUTS AND STATUS OF MULTI-PAUL ARE *UNKNOWN*.

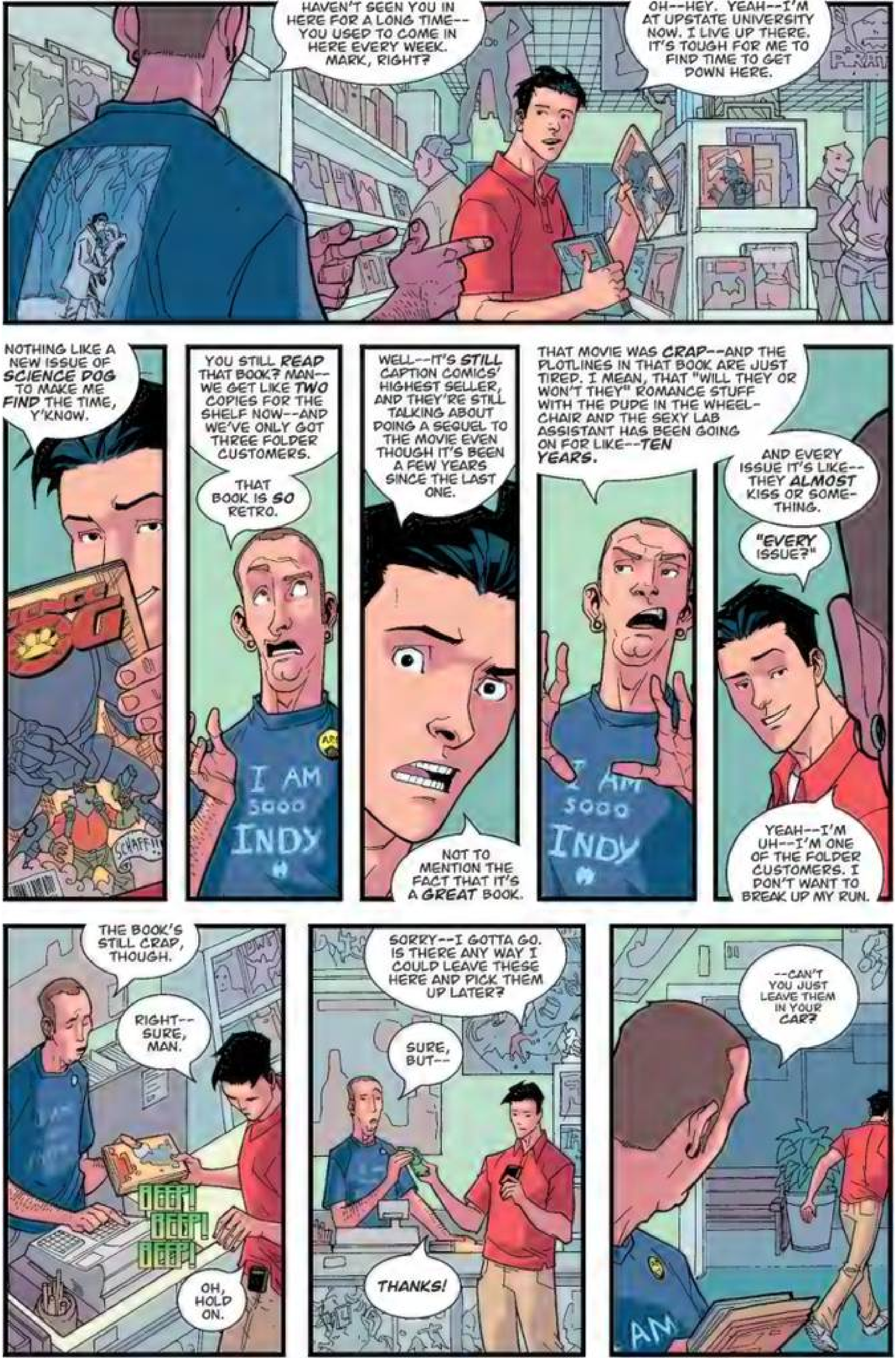
AT LONG LAST--THE SECRET ORIGIN OF ATOM EVE!

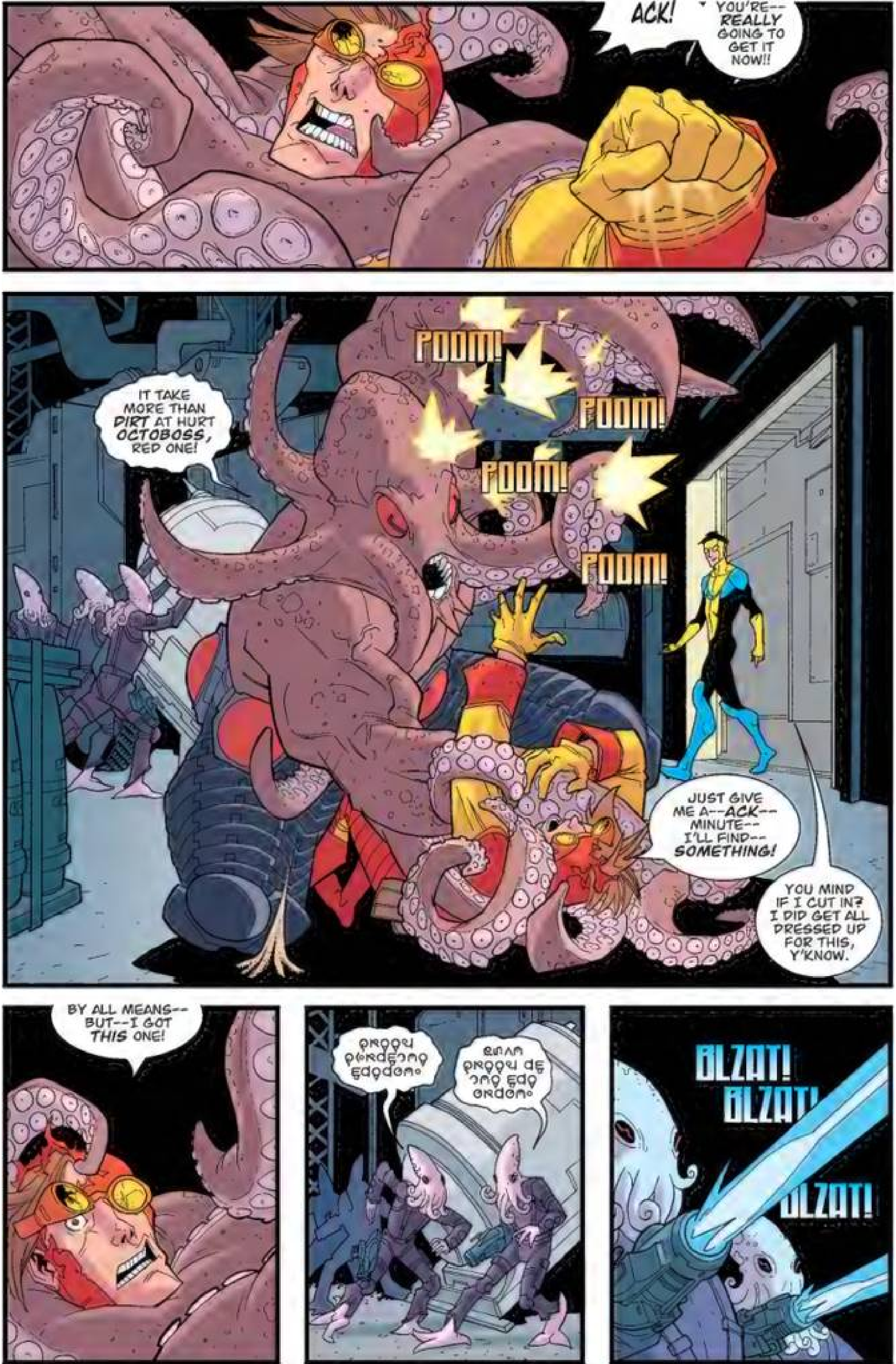

THE STORY STARTED OUT ON A RATHER SAD NOTE--BUT HEY, YOU HAVE TO START SOMEWHERE.
I--I'M SORRY, HONEY--I'M SO SORRY.
OH, ADAM!
ERICKSON, SIR--I'M SORRY--THERE WAS JUST NOTHING I COULD DO FOR HER. THE BABY DIED IN CHILDBIRTH--IT WAS OUT OF MY HANDS.
YOU ARE OUT OF LINE, DOCTOR BRANDYWORTH--THIS WAS OUR PROJECT--YOU SHOULD HAVE CONSULTED ME BEFORE YOU CHOSE A CIVILIAN HOSPITAL.
DOCTOR RODGERS, LISTEN TO ME--THERE WASN'T ENOUGH TIME TO GET THE TEST SUBJECT TO THE BASE--THE BABY WAS COMING.
AND NOW IT'S DEAD. THAT'S MILLIONS OF TAX DOLLARS DOWN THE DRAIN, BRANDYWORTH. IF YOU MAKE IT TO TOMORROW WITHOUT LOSING YOUR JOB OVER THIS, I'LL BE SURPRISED.
ADAM AND BETSY WILKINS? I HAVE YOUR BABY RIGHT HERE. IT WAS TOUCH AND GO FOR A WHILE BUT THE DOCTORS WERE ABLE TO SAVE HER.
BUT--BUT WE WERE TOLD--
ADAM, SHUSH! PLEASE--JUST ACCEPT THE MIRACLE.
OUR BABY IS ALIVE...
OUR SAMANTHA EVE WILKINS.

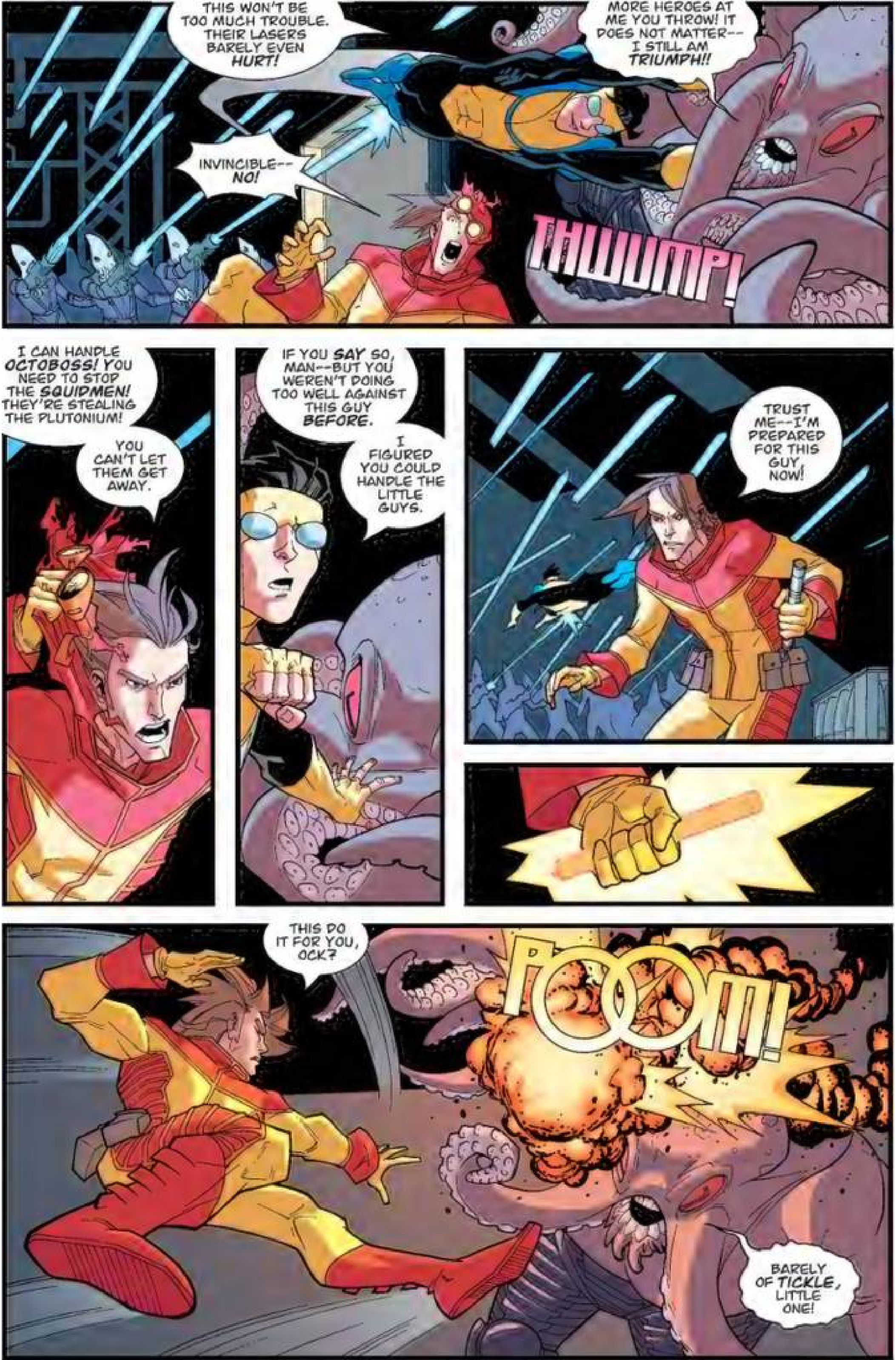

FROM THERE, THINGS WENT ON PRETTY MUCH LIKE ANY NORMAL FAMILY'S LIFE--UNTIL *THINGS* STARTED HAPPENING.
YOU ALMOST SAID IT! SAY **APPLE**, SAMANTHA. CAN YOU SAY **APPLE**?
CH2OH-C-OH-C-H-OH-C-H-OH-C-CH2OH-C-H-O...
BETSY WILKINS WOULD NEVER REALIZE THAT WHAT SHE THOUGHT WAS THE ODD BABBLING OF A BABY WAS ACTUALLY THE MOLECULAR STRUCTURE OF AN APPLE LISTED VERBALLY.
KEEP PLAYING, SAMANTHA-- I JUST HOPE YOUR PARENTS DON'T COME HOME EARLY TO SEE THAT YOU'RE STILL UP.
I'LL PUT YOU TO BED AS SOON AS I FIGURE OUT WHY MERCURY IS A LIQUID EVEN THOUGH IT'S SURROUNDED BY SOLIDS ON THE PERIODIC TABLE.
BECAUSE ITS VALENCE SHELL IS 5D10 6S2, WHICH, UM...MAKES THE TWO OUTERMOST ELECTRONS IN A SPHERICALLY SYMMETRIC, ENERGETICALLY STABLE QUANTUM STATE.
6S ELECTRONS ARE ESPECIALLY INERT, AND THEREFORE DON'T OFTEN FORM CHEMICAL BONDS. MERCURY ISN'T LIKELY TO GIVE UP ITS OUTER ELECTRONS, AND SO IT INTERACTS WITH OTHER ATOMS WEAKLY AT BEST. SO IT'S--A, UM...LIQUID AT ROOM TEMPERATURE.
WE'D BE **HAPPY** TO HAVE SAMANTHA AT OUR SCHOOL. HER TEST SCORES IN THE SCIENCE PORTION ARE **SO** IMPRESSIVE I'M SURE HER KNOWLEDGE IN OTHER AREAS WILL SHORTLY BE BROUGHT UP TO THE SAME LEVEL.
WE'D EVEN BE ABLE TO GIVE YOU A BREAK ON THE TUITION.
OH, SAMANTHA-- DID YOU HEAR THAT?!
HUH?
I COULDN'T **DO** IT, **DAD!!** I WAS JUST GOOD AT THE **SCIENCE** STUFF--I'M **GLAD** THEY KICKED ME OUT!
I'LL NOT HAVE SHOUTING AT MY TABLE! FINISH YOUR DINNER IN YOUR **ROOM!**
ALE
SLAM!
I DON'T **WANT** CHICKEN-- I WANT--
...A **CHEESE-BUGER?!**

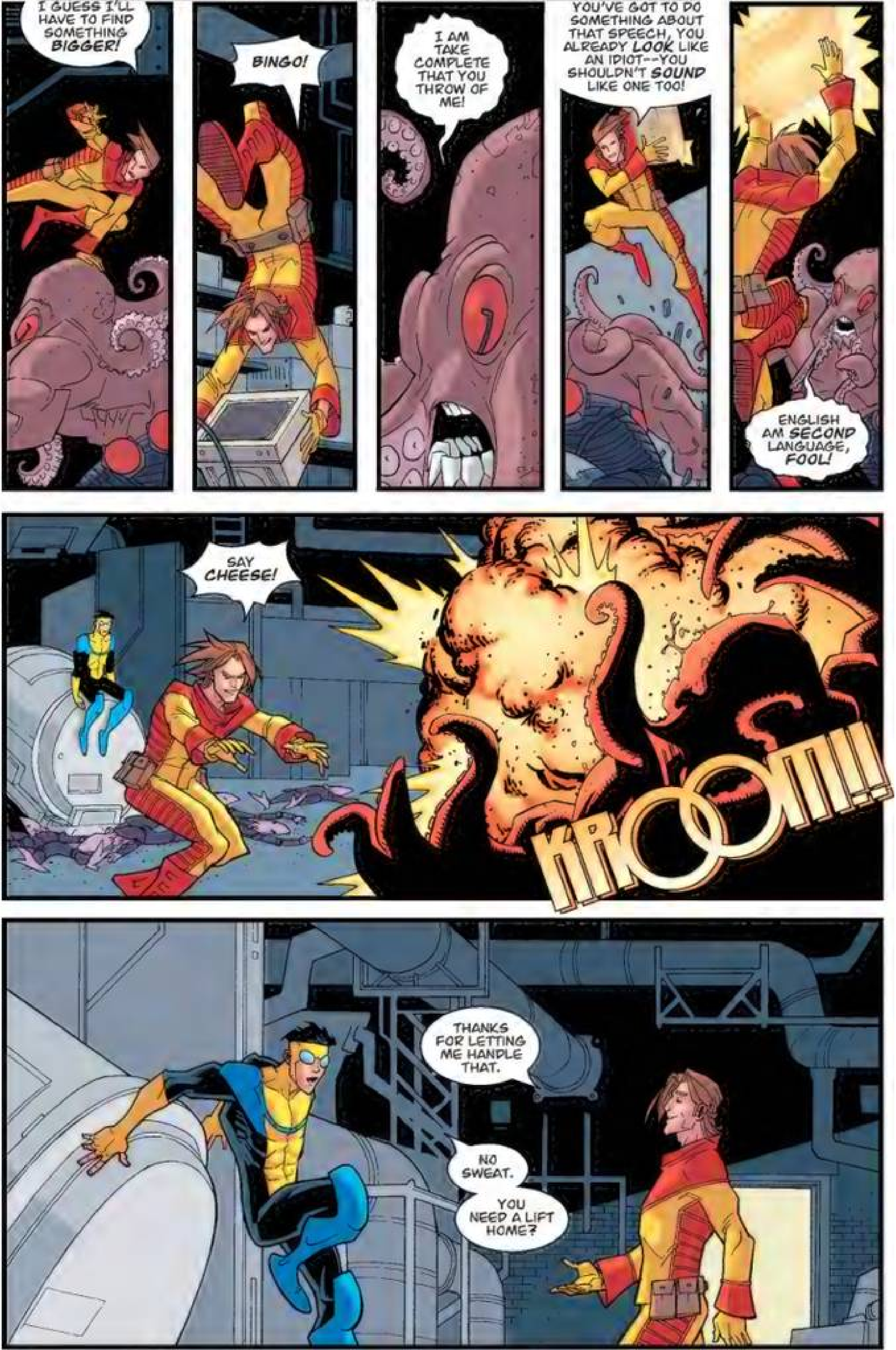

AFTER THAT--EVERY TIME HER PARENTS WOULD LEAVE HER ALONE, SAMANTHA EVE WILKINS WOULD PRACTICE HER POWERS.
IT TOOK HER VERY LITTLE TIME TO LEARN TO USE THEM.
SOON SHE WAS PUTTING THEM TO GOOD USE.
THERE, THERE, DOGGY. THEY WON'T BE TAKING YOU TO EXPERIMENT ON NOW. YOU'RE SAFE, NOW.
YOU'RE ALL SAFE.
MISS WILKINS...
WHO ARE YOU--HOW DID YOU KNOW MY NAME?!
I COULD BE CONSIDERED YOUR FATHER--IN A SENSE. I GAVE YOU YOUR POWERS--IT'S VERY IMPORTANT THAT YOU LISTEN TO ME.
YOU WERE THE SUBJECT OF IN UTERO EXPERIMENTS--FUNDED BY THE GOVERNMENT. THEY WERE GOING TO TURN YOU INTO A WEAPON--BUT I COULDN'T ALLOW THAT.
WHAT YOU'RE DOING IS VERY DANGEROUS. I STAGED YOUR DEATH--REPLACED YOU WITH A BABY WHO HAD DIED DURING BIRTH--SO YOU COULD HAVE A LIFE WITH THE WILKINS FAMILY--BUT YOU HAVE TO STAY A SECRET!
IF THEY LEARN OF YOUR POWERS BEING USED--THEY'LL KNOW YOU LIVED--THEY WON'T STOP UNTIL THEY RECOVER YOU.
YOU MUST STOP THIS AT ONCE! STOP USING YOUR POWERS FOR ANYTHING--FOREVER-- THEY MUST NOT DISCOVER YOU SURVIVED.
IF THEY FIND YOU--THEY WILL TAKE YOU--YOU'LL BE NOTHING MORE THAN A WEAPON--YOUR LIFE AS YOU KNOW IT--WILL END!
OBVIOUSLY--SHE FOUND A WAY TO AVOID ALL THIS, BUT THAT'S A STORY FOR ANOTHER TIME.

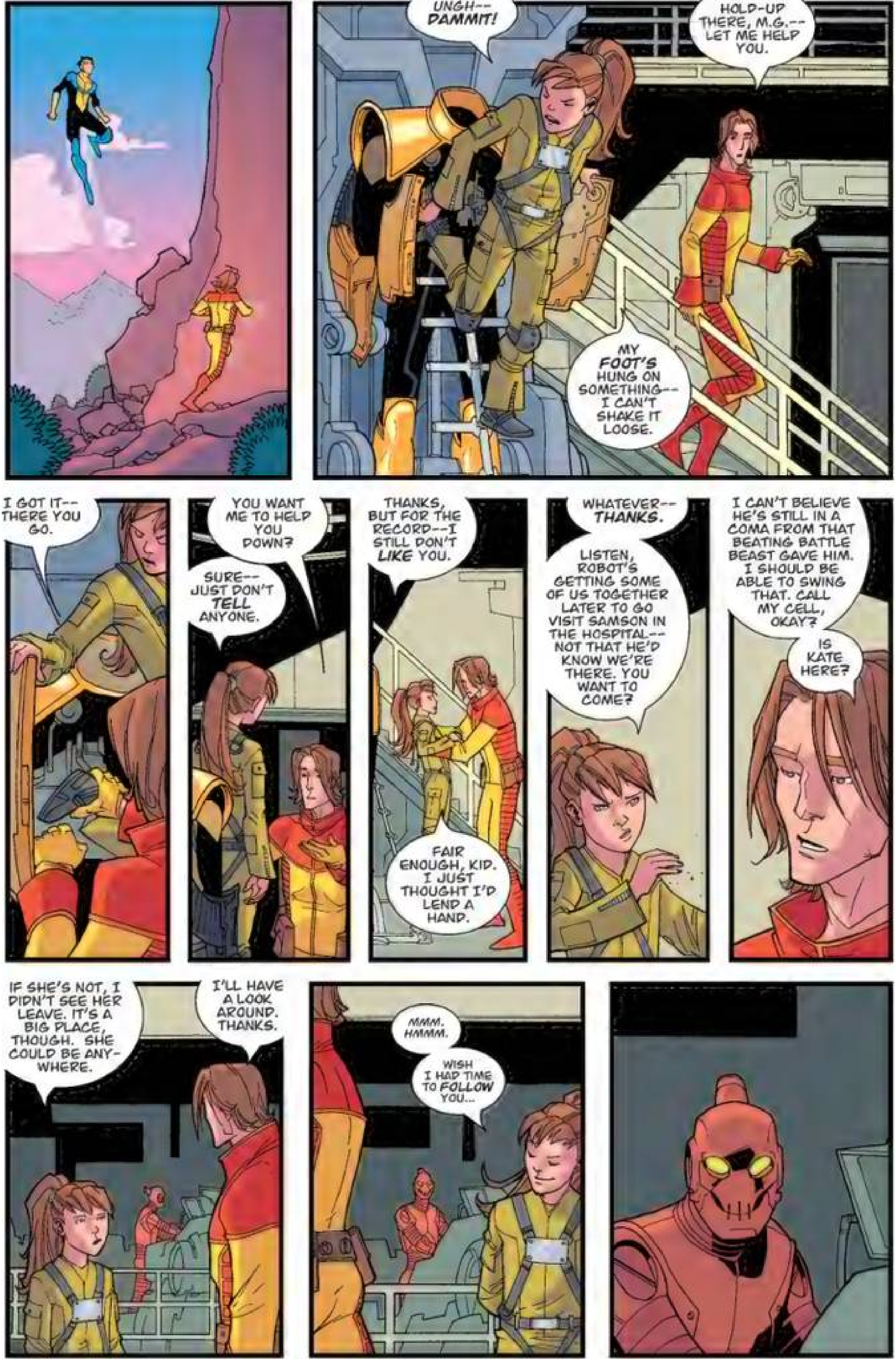
ISSUE TWENTY-FIVE

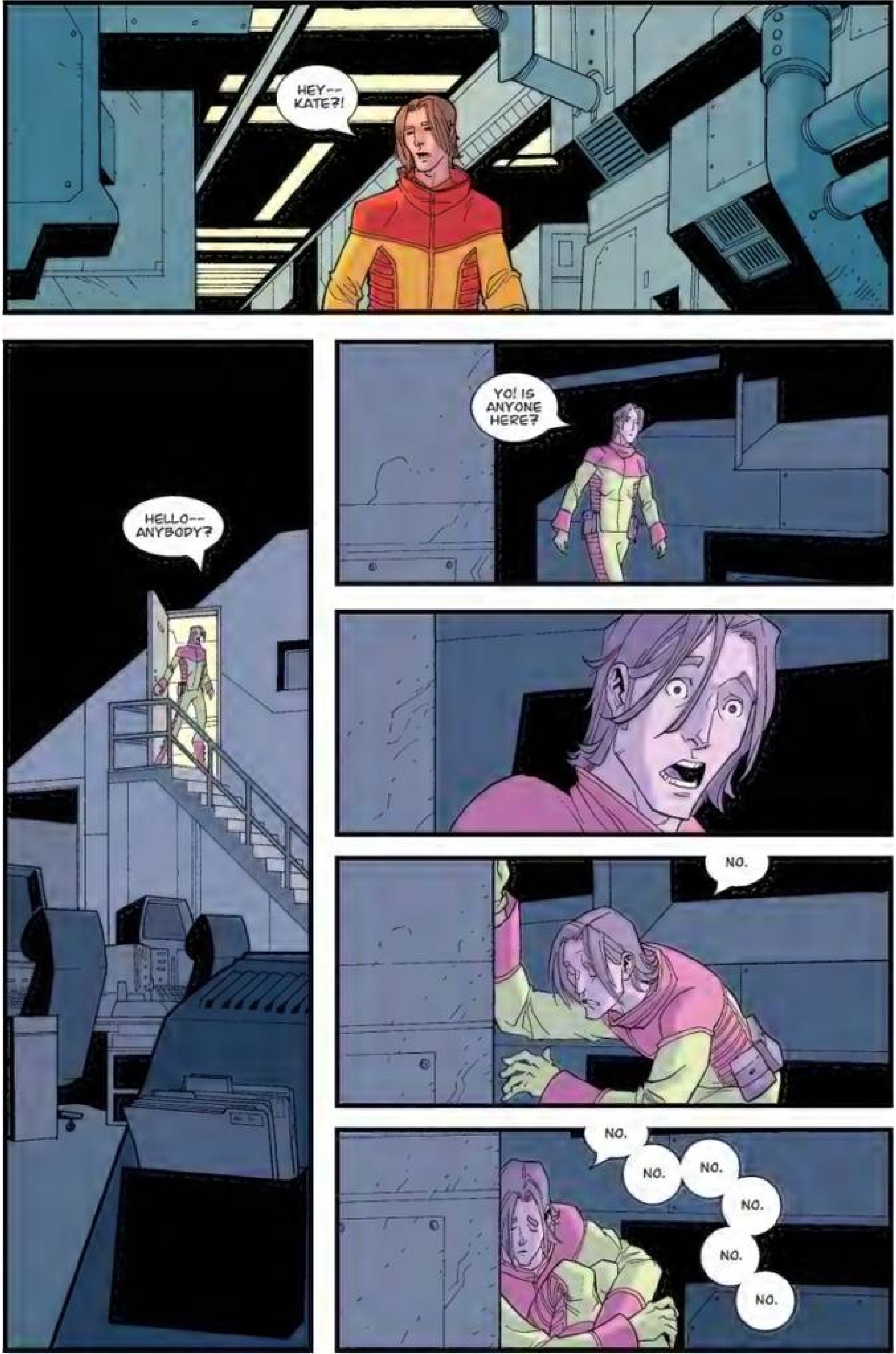

HAVEN'T SEEN YOU IN HERE FOR A LONG TIME-- YOU USED TO COME IN HERE EVERY WEEK. MARK, RIGHT?
OH--HEY. YEAH--I'M AT UPSTATE UNIVERSITY NOW. I LIVE UP THERE. IT'S TOUGH FOR ME TO FIND TIME TO GET DOWN HERE.
NOTHING LIKE A NEW ISSUE OF SCIENCE DOG TO MAKE ME FIND THE TIME, Y'KNOW.
SCHAFF!!!
YOU STILL READ THAT BOOK? MAN-- WE GET LIKE TWO COPIES FOR THE SHELF NOW--AND WE'VE ONLY GOT THREE FOLDER CUSTOMERS.
THAT BOOK IS SO RETRO.
I AM SOOO INDY
WELL--IT'S STILL CAPTION COMICS' HIGHEST SELLER, AND THEY'RE STILL TALKING ABOUT DOING A SEQUEL TO THE MOVIE EVEN THOUGH IT'S BEEN A FEW YEARS SINCE THE LAST ONE.
NOT TO MENTION THE FACT THAT IT'S A GREAT BOOK.
THAT MOVIE WAS CRAP--AND THE PLOTLINES IN THAT BOOK ARE JUST TIRED. I MEAN, THAT "WILL THEY OR WON'T THEY" ROMANCE STUFF WITH THE DUDE IN THE WHEEL-CHAIR AND THE SEXY LAB ASSISTANT HAS BEEN GOING ON FOR LIKE--TEN YEARS.
I AM SOOO INDY
AND EVERY ISSUE IT'S LIKE-- THEY ALMOST KISS OR SOMETHING.
"EVERY ISSUE?"
YEAH--I'M UH--I'M ONE OF THE FOLDER CUSTOMERS. I DON'T WANT TO BREAK UP MY RUN.
THE BOOK'S STILL CRAP, THOUGH.
RIGHT-- SURE, MAN.
BEEP! BEEP! BEEP!
OH, HOLD ON.
SORRY--I GOTTA GO. IS THERE ANY WAY I COULD LEAVE THESE HERE AND PICK THEM UP LATER?
SURE, BUT--
THANKS!
--CAN'T YOU JUST LEAVE THEM IN YOUR CAR?
AM

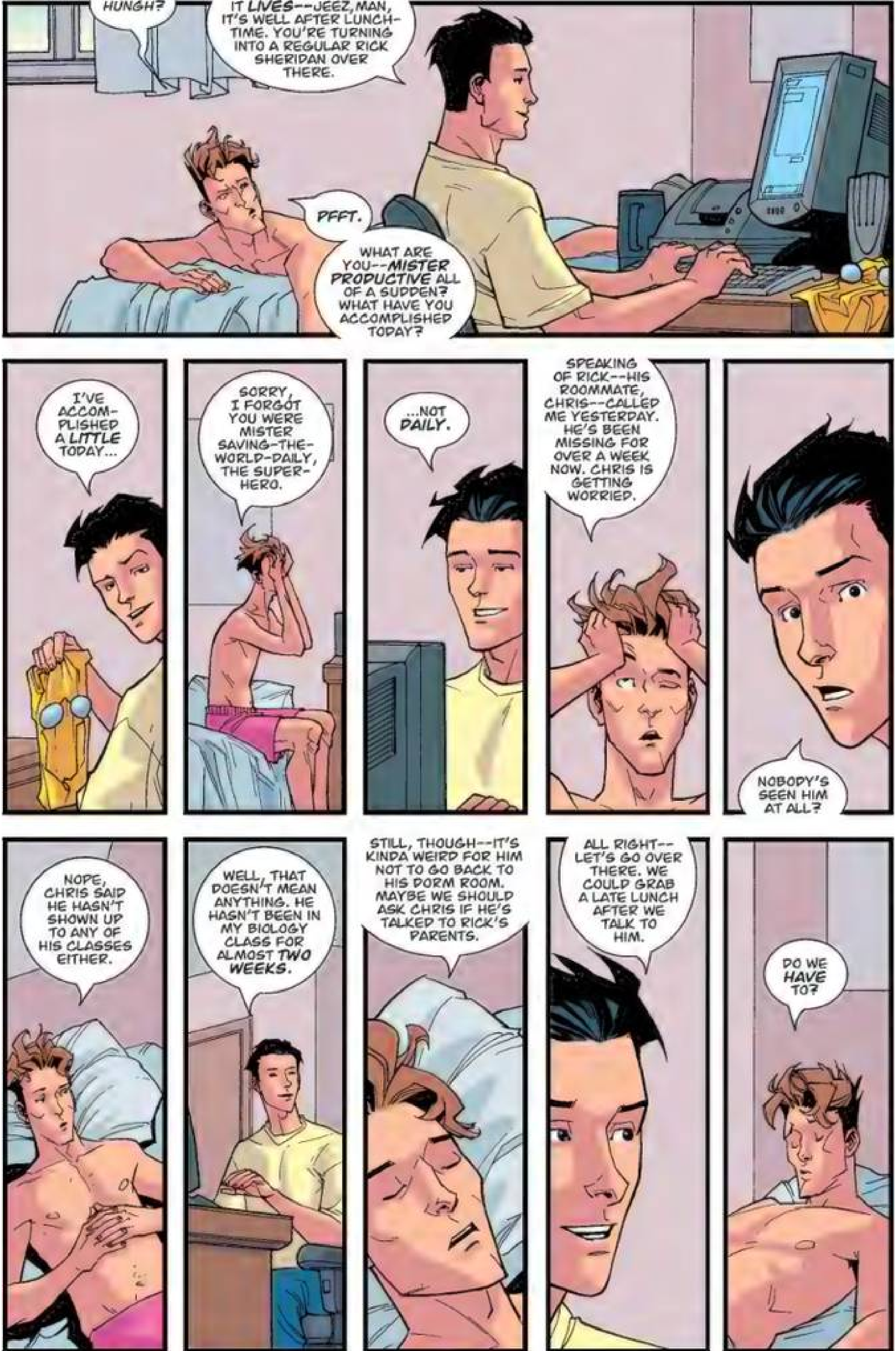

ACK!
YOU'RE-- REALLY GOING TO GET IT NOW!!
POOM!
POOM!
POOM!
POOM!
IT TAKE MORE THAN DIRT AT HURT OCTOBOSS, RED ONE!
JUST GIVE ME A--ACK-- MINUTE-- I'LL FIND-- SOMETHING!
YOU MIND IF I CUT IN? I DID GET ALL DRESSED UP FOR THIS, Y'KNOW.
BY ALL MEANS-- BUT--I GOT THIS ONE!
BLZAT!
BLZAT!
BLZAT!

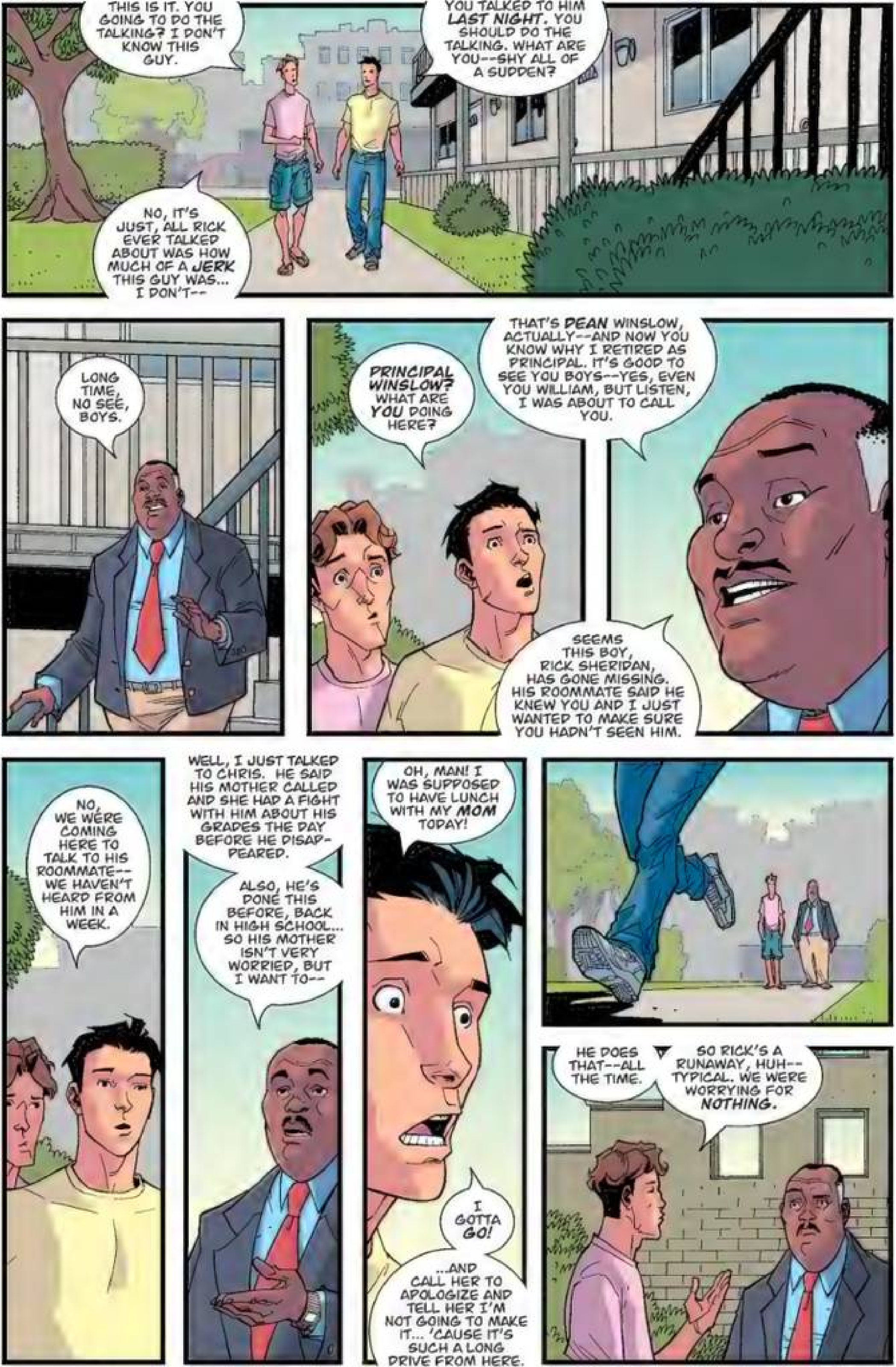

THIS WON'T BE TOO MUCH TROUBLE. THEIR LASERS BARELY EVEN HURT!
MORE HEROES AT ME YOU THROW! IT DOES NOT MATTER-- I STILL AM TRIUMPH!!
INVINCIBLE-- NO!
THWUMP!
I CAN HANDLE OCTOBOSS! YOU NEED TO STOP THE SQUIDMEN! THEY'RE STEALING THE PLUTONIUM!
YOU CAN'T LET THEM GET AWAY.
IF YOU SAY SO, MAN--BUT YOU WEREN'T DOING TOO WELL AGAINST THIS GUY BEFORE.
I FIGURED YOU COULD HANDLE THE LITTLE GUYS.
TRUST ME--I'M PREPARED FOR THIS GUY, NOW!
THIS DO IT FOR YOU, OCK?
FOOOM!
BARELY OF TICKLE, LITTLE ONE!

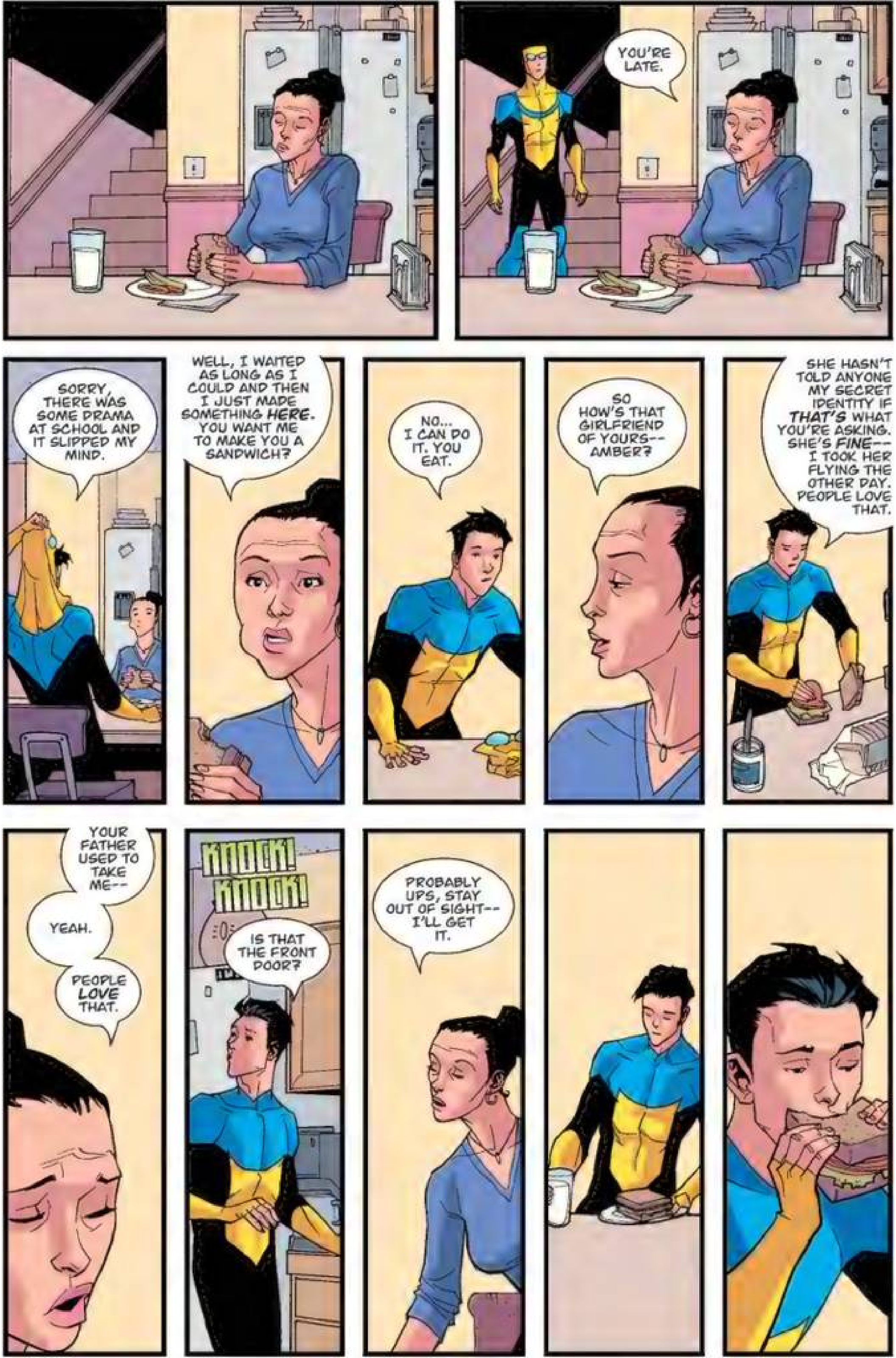

I GUESS I'LL HAVE TO FIND SOMETHING BIGGER!
BINGO!
I AM TAKE COMPLETE THAT YOU THROW OF ME!
YOU'VE GOT TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT THAT SPEECH, YOU ALREADY LOOK LIKE AN IDIOT--YOU SHOULDN'T SOUND LIKE ONE TOO!
ENGLISH AM SECOND LANGUAGE, FOOL!
SAY CHEESE!
KROOOM!!
THANKS FOR LETTING ME HANDLE THAT.
NO SWEAT.
YOU NEED A LIFT HOME?

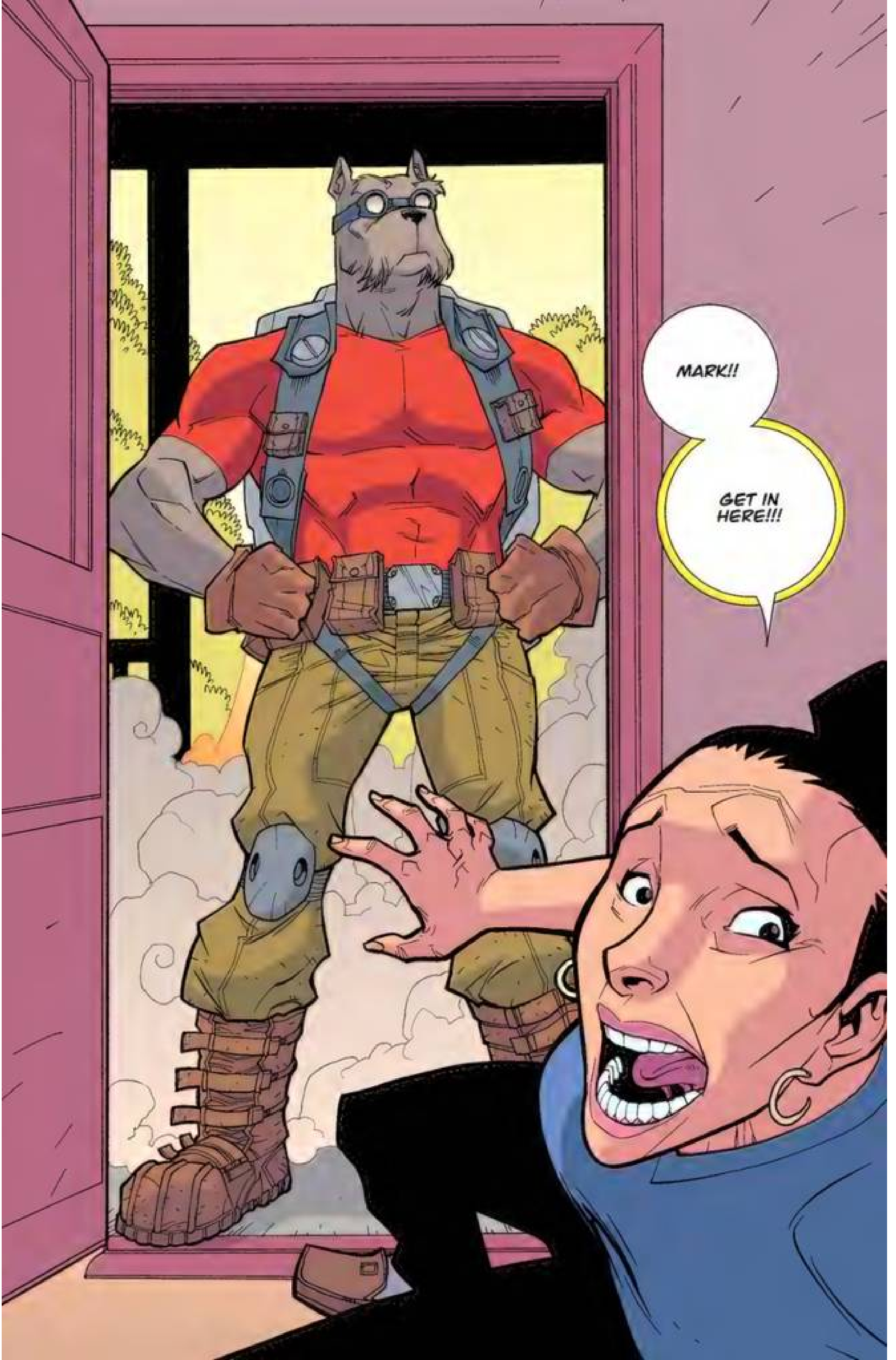

UNGH-- **DAMMIT!**
HOLD-UP THERE, M.G.-- LET ME HELP YOU.
MY **FOOT'S** HUNG ON SOMETHING-- I CAN'T SHAKE IT LOOSE.
I GOT IT-- THERE YOU GO.
YOU WANT ME TO HELP YOU DOWN?
SURE-- JUST DON'T **TELL** ANYONE.
THANKS, BUT FOR THE RECORD--I STILL DON'T **LIKE** YOU.
FAIR ENOUGH, KID. I JUST THOUGHT I'D LEND A HAND.
WHATEVER-- **THANKS.**
LISTEN, ROBOT'S GETTING SOME OF US TOGETHER LATER TO GO VISIT SAMSON IN THE HOSPITAL-- NOT THAT HE'D KNOW WE'RE THERE. YOU WANT TO COME?
I CAN'T BELIEVE HE'S STILL IN A COMA FROM THAT BEATING BATTLE BEAST GAVE HIM. I SHOULD BE ABLE TO SWING THAT. CALL MY CELL, OKAY?
IS KATE HERE?
IF SHE'S NOT, I DIDN'T SEE HER LEAVE. IT'S A BIG PLACE, THOUGH. SHE COULD BE ANYWHERE.
I'LL HAVE A LOOK AROUND. THANKS.
MMM. HMMM.
WISH I HAD TIME TO **FOLLOW** YOU...

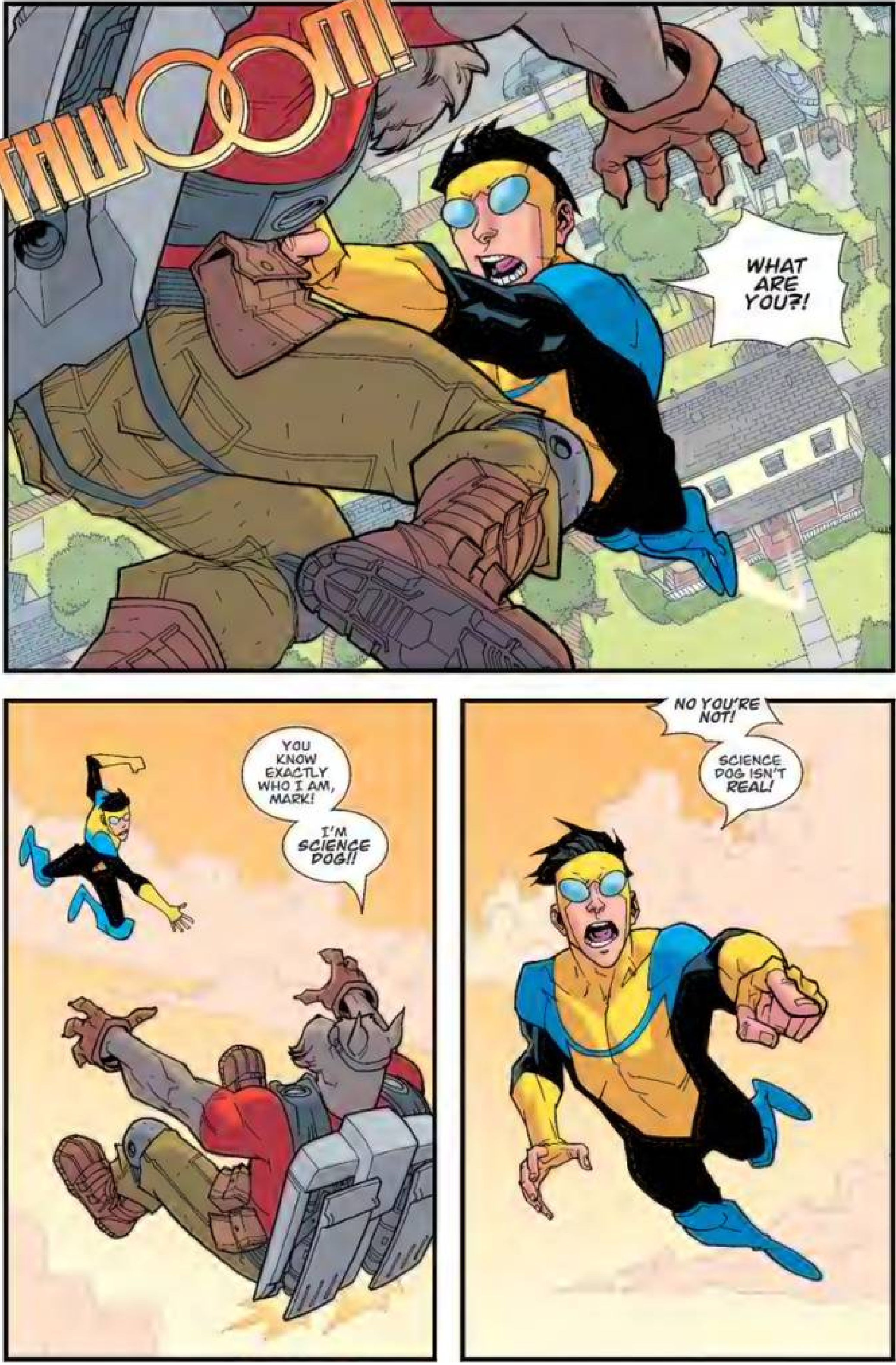

HEY-- KATE?!
HELLO-- ANYBODY?
YO! IS ANYONE HERE?
NO.
NO.
NO.
NO.
NO.
NO.
NO.

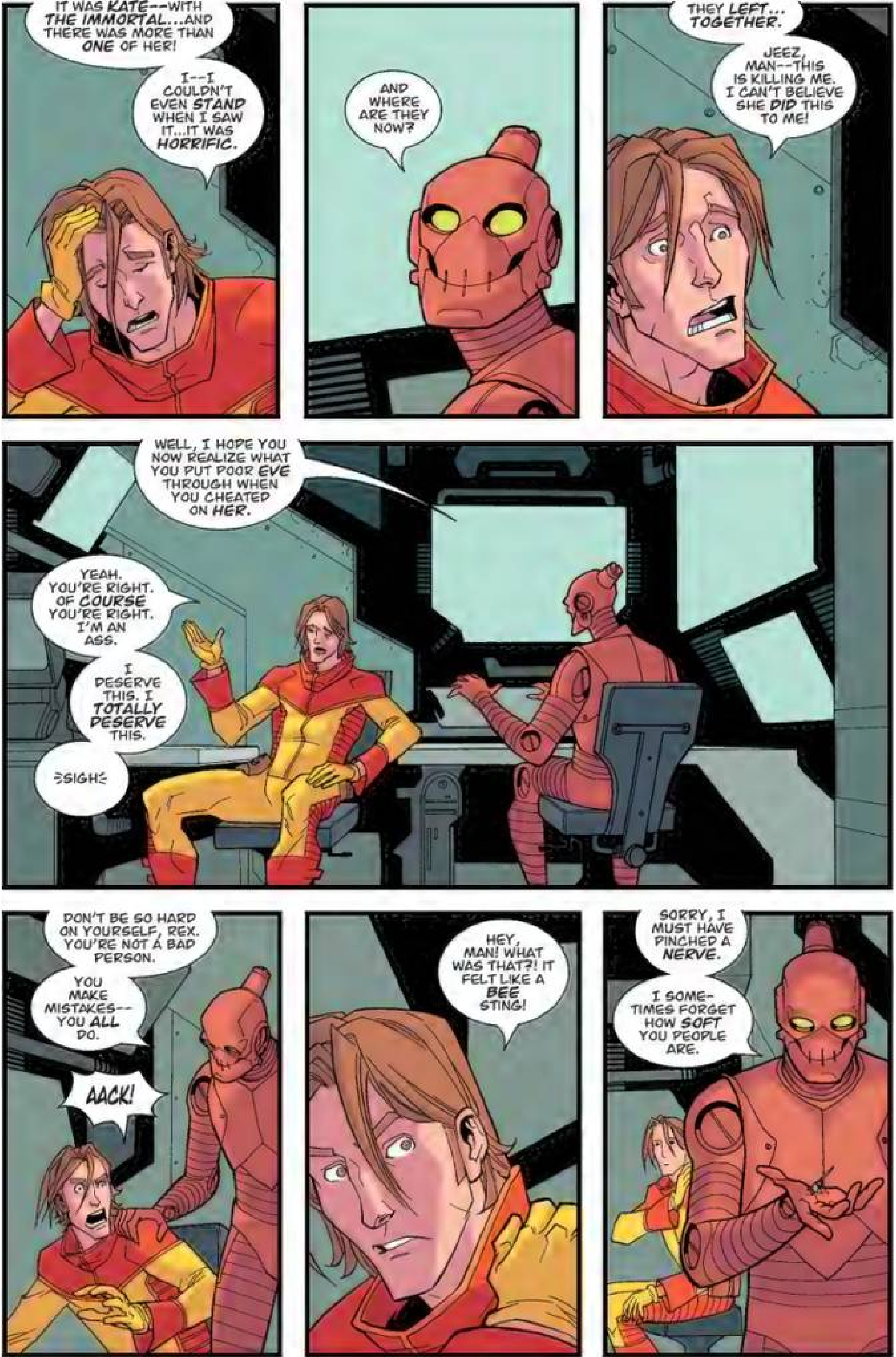

HUNGH?
IT LIVES--JEEZ, MAN, IT'S WELL AFTER LUNCH-TIME. YOU'RE TURNING INTO A REGULAR RICK SHERIDAN OVER THERE.
PFFT.
WHAT ARE YOU--MISTER PRODUCTIVE ALL OF A SUDDEN? WHAT HAVE YOU ACCOMPLISHED TODAY?
I'VE ACCOMPLISHED A LITTLE TODAY...
SORRY, I FORGOT YOU WERE MISTER SAVING-THE-WORLD-DAILY, THE SUPER-HERO.
...NOT DAILY.
SPEAKING OF RICK--HIS ROOMMATE, CHRIS--CALLED ME YESTERDAY. HE'S BEEN MISSING FOR OVER A WEEK NOW. CHRIS IS GETTING WORRIED.
NOBODY'S SEEN HIM AT ALL?
NOPE, CHRIS SAID HE HASN'T SHOWN UP TO ANY OF HIS CLASSES EITHER.
WELL, THAT DOESN'T MEAN ANYTHING. HE HASN'T BEEN IN MY BIOLOGY CLASS FOR ALMOST TWO WEEKS.
STILL, THOUGH--IT'S KINDA WEIRD FOR HIM NOT TO GO BACK TO HIS DORM ROOM. MAYBE WE SHOULD ASK CHRIS IF HE'S TALKED TO RICK'S PARENTS.
ALL RIGHT--LET'S GO OVER THERE. WE COULD GRAB A LATE LUNCH AFTER WE TALK TO HIM.
DO WE HAVE TO?

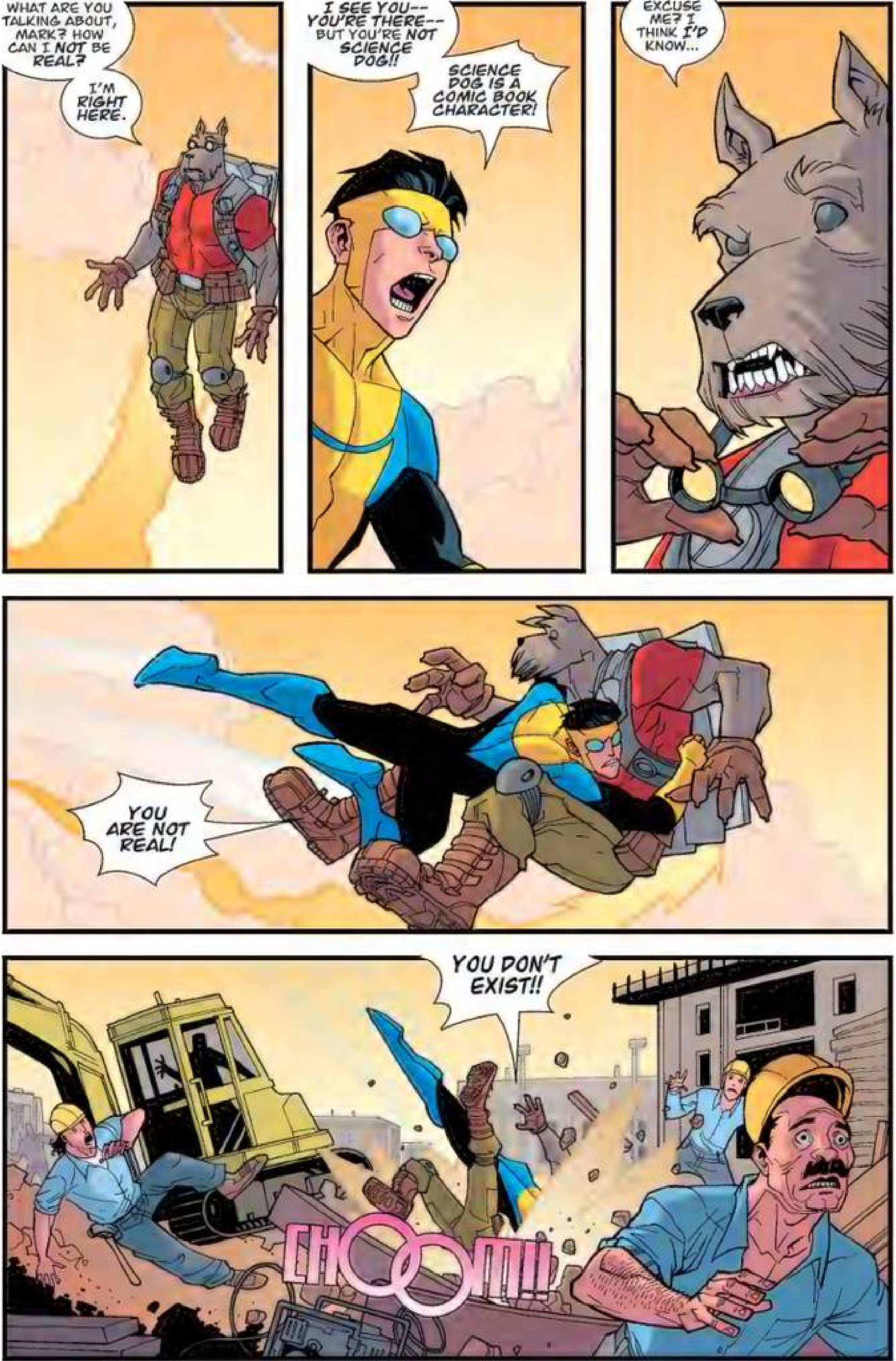

THIS IS IT. YOU GOING TO DO THE TALKING? I DON'T KNOW THIS GUY.
YOU TALKED TO HIM **LAST NIGHT.** YOU SHOULD DO THE TALKING. WHAT ARE YOU--SHY ALL OF A SUDDEN?
NO, IT'S JUST, ALL RICK EVER TALKED ABOUT WAS HOW MUCH OF A **JERK** THIS GUY WAS... I DON'T--
LONG TIME, NO SEE, BOYS.
PRINCIPAL WINSLOW? WHAT ARE ***YOU*** DOING HERE?
THAT'S **DEAN** WINSLOW, ACTUALLY--AND NOW YOU KNOW WHY I RETIRED AS PRINCIPAL. IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU BOYS--YES, EVEN YOU WILLIAM, BUT LISTEN, I WAS ABOUT TO CALL YOU.
SEEMS THIS BOY, RICK SHERIDAN, HAS GONE MISSING. HIS ROOMMATE SAID HE KNEW YOU AND I JUST WANTED TO MAKE SURE YOU HADN'T SEEN HIM.
NO, WE WERE COMING HERE TO TALK TO HIS ROOMMATE-- WE HAVEN'T HEARD FROM HIM IN A WEEK.
WELL, I JUST TALKED TO CHRIS. HE SAID HIS MOTHER CALLED AND SHE HAD A FIGHT WITH HIM ABOUT HIS GRADES THE DAY BEFORE HE DISAPPEARED.
ALSO, HE'S DONE THIS BEFORE, BACK IN HIGH SCHOOL... SO HIS MOTHER ISN'T VERY WORRIED, BUT I WANT TO--
OH, MAN! I WAS SUPPOSED TO HAVE LUNCH WITH MY ***MOM*** TODAY!
I GOTTA ***GO!***
...AND CALL HER TO APOLOGIZE AND TELL HER I'M NOT GOING TO MAKE IT... 'CAUSE IT'S SUCH A LONG DRIVE FROM HERE.
HE DOES THAT--ALL THE TIME.
SO RICK'S A RUNAWAY, HUH--TYPICAL. WE WERE WORRYING FOR ***NOTHING.***

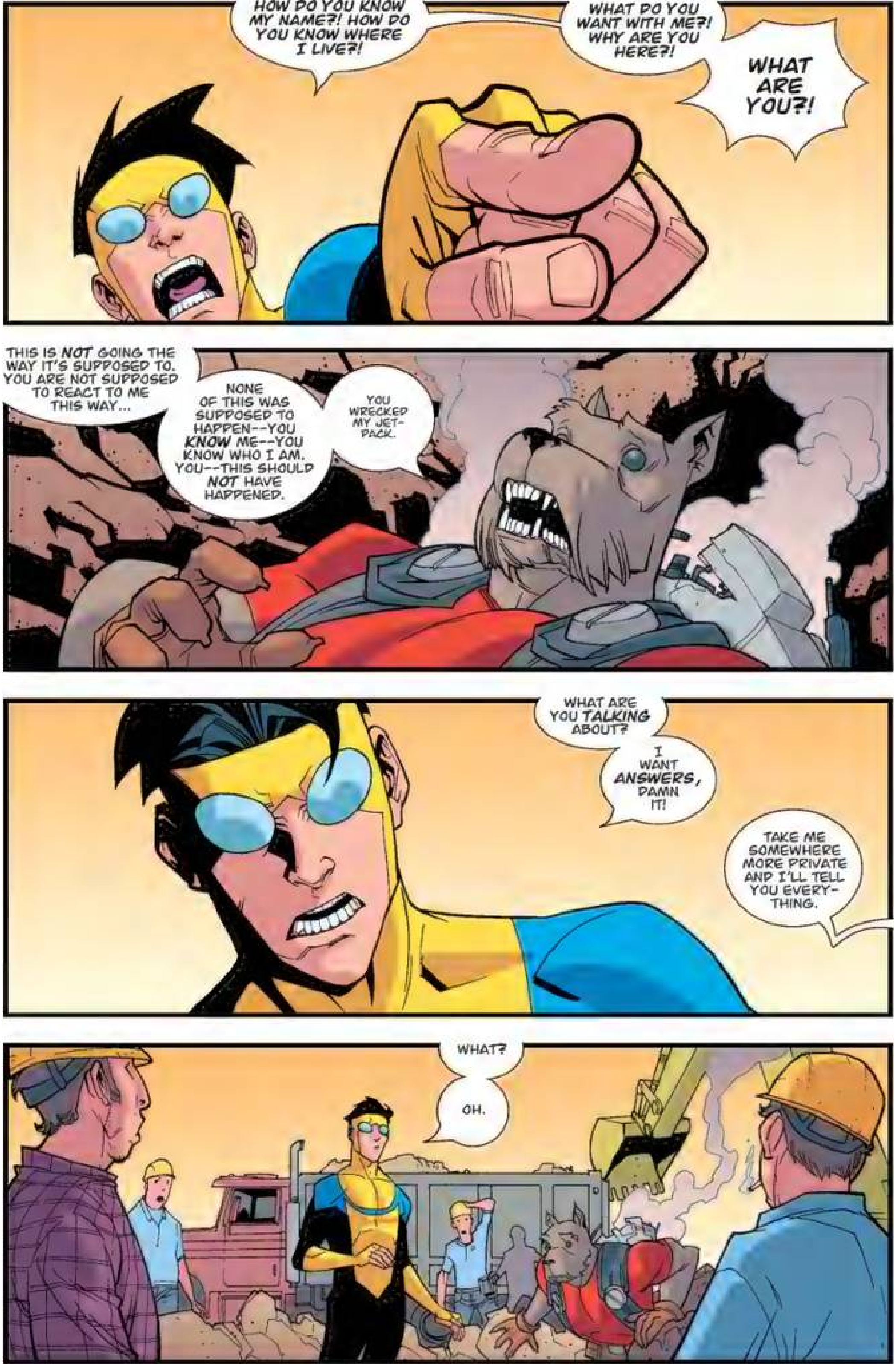

YOU'RE LATE.
SORRY, THERE WAS SOME DRAMA AT SCHOOL AND IT SLIPPED MY MIND.
WELL, I WAITED AS LONG AS I COULD AND THEN I JUST MADE SOMETHING **HERE**. YOU WANT ME TO MAKE YOU A SANDWICH?
NO... I CAN DO IT. YOU EAT.
SO HOW'S THAT GIRLFRIEND OF YOURS-- AMBER?
SHE HASN'T TOLD ANYONE MY SECRET IDENTITY IF **THAT'S** WHAT YOU'RE ASKING. SHE'S **FINE**-- I TOOK HER FLYING THE OTHER DAY. PEOPLE LOVE THAT.
YOUR FATHER USED TO TAKE ME--
YEAH.
PEOPLE **LOVE** THAT.
KNOCK! KNOCK!
IS THAT THE FRONT DOOR?
PROBABLY UPS, STAY OUT OF SIGHT-- I'LL GET IT.

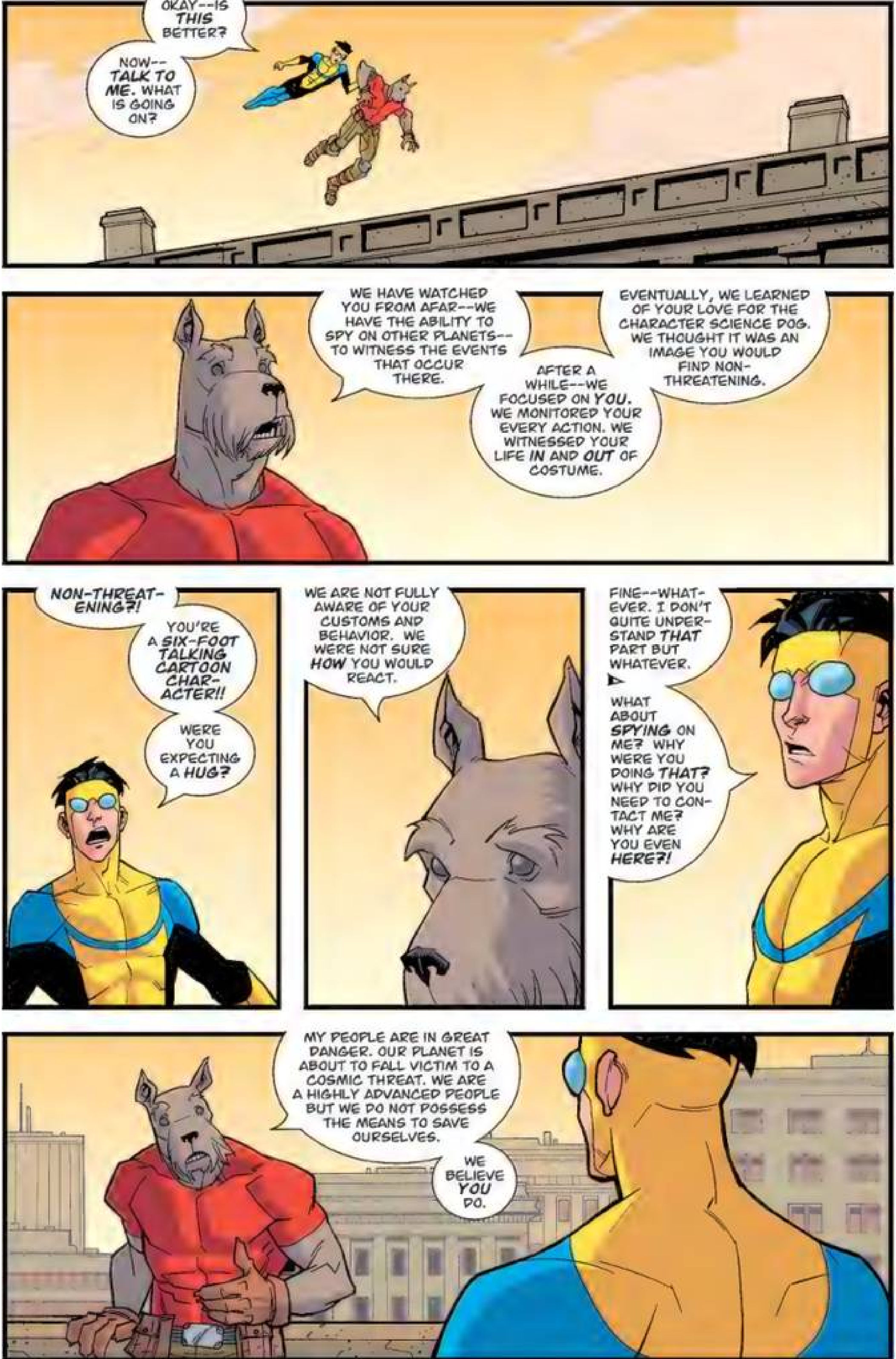

MARK!!
GET IN HERE!!!

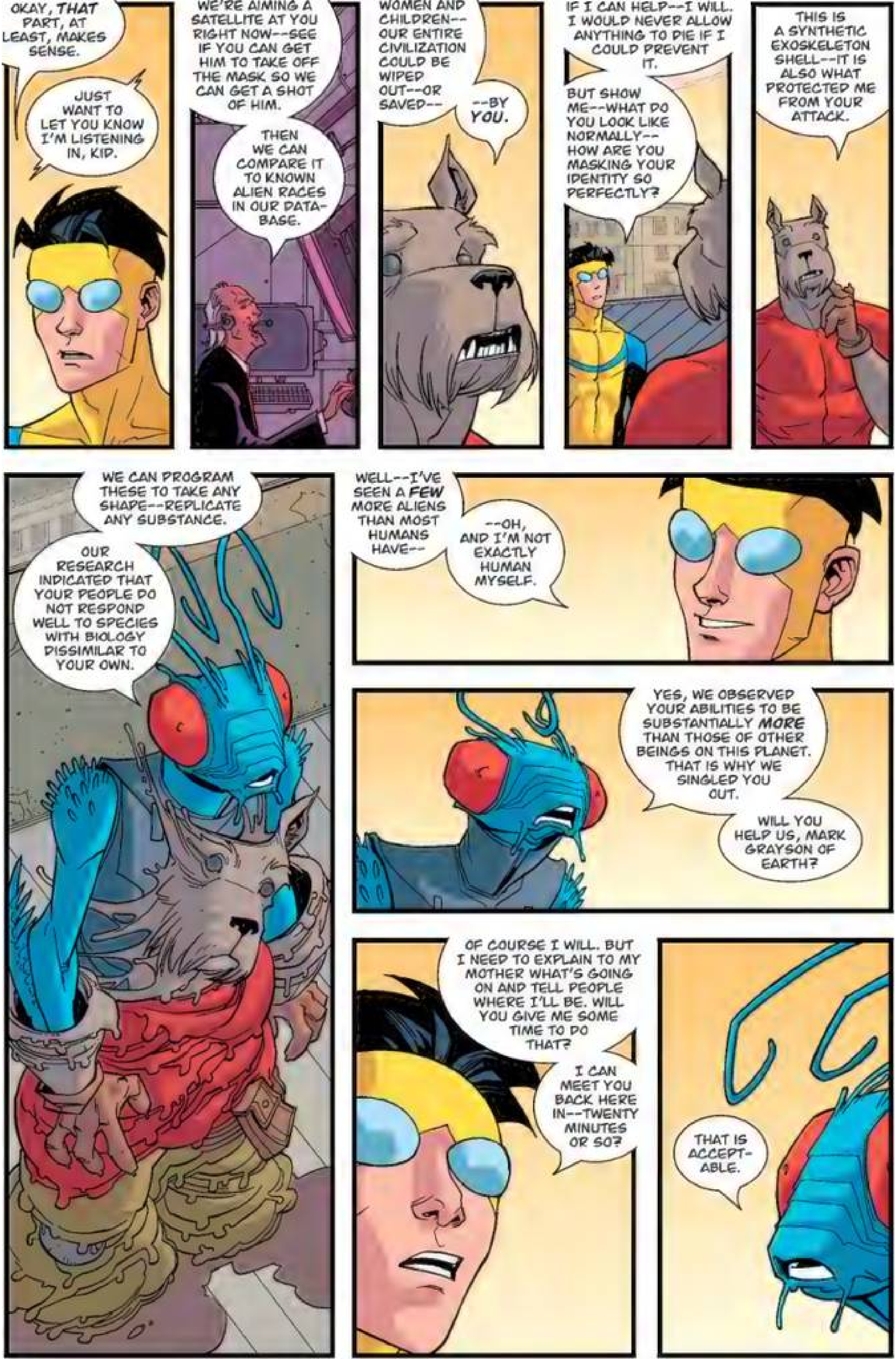

THWOOM!
WHAT ARE YOU?!
YOU KNOW EXACTLY WHO I AM, MARK!
I'M SCIENCE DOG!!
NO YOU'RE NOT!
SCIENCE DOG ISN'T REAL!

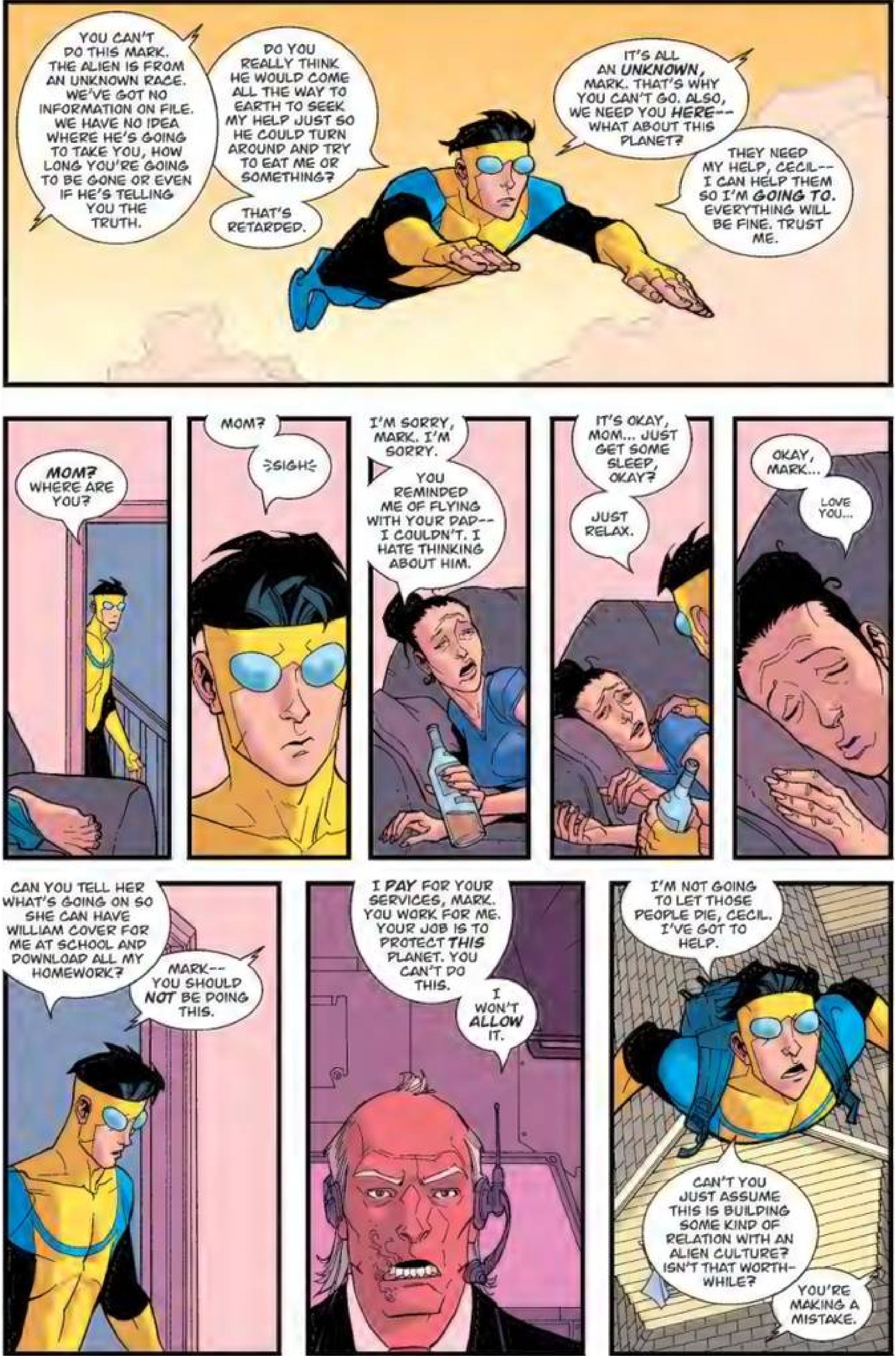

IT WAS KATE--WITH THE IMMORTAL...AND THERE WAS MORE THAN ONE OF HER!
I--I COULDN'T EVEN STAND WHEN I SAW IT...IT WAS HORRIFIC.
AND WHERE ARE THEY NOW?
THEY LEFT... TOGETHER.
JEEZ, MAN--THIS IS KILLING ME. I CAN'T BELIEVE SHE DID THIS TO ME!
WELL, I HOPE YOU NOW REALIZE WHAT YOU PUT POOR EVE THROUGH WHEN YOU CHEATED ON HER.
YEAH. YOU'RE RIGHT. OF COURSE YOU'RE RIGHT. I'M AN ASS.
I DESERVE THIS. I TOTALLY DESERVE THIS.
SIGH
DON'T BE SO HARD ON YOURSELF, REX. YOU'RE NOT A BAD PERSON.
YOU MAKE MISTAKES--YOU ALL DO.
AACK!
HEY, MAN! WHAT WAS THAT?! IT FELT LIKE A BEE STING!
SORRY, I MUST HAVE PINCHED A NERVE.
I SOME-TIMES FORGET HOW SOFT YOU PEOPLE ARE.

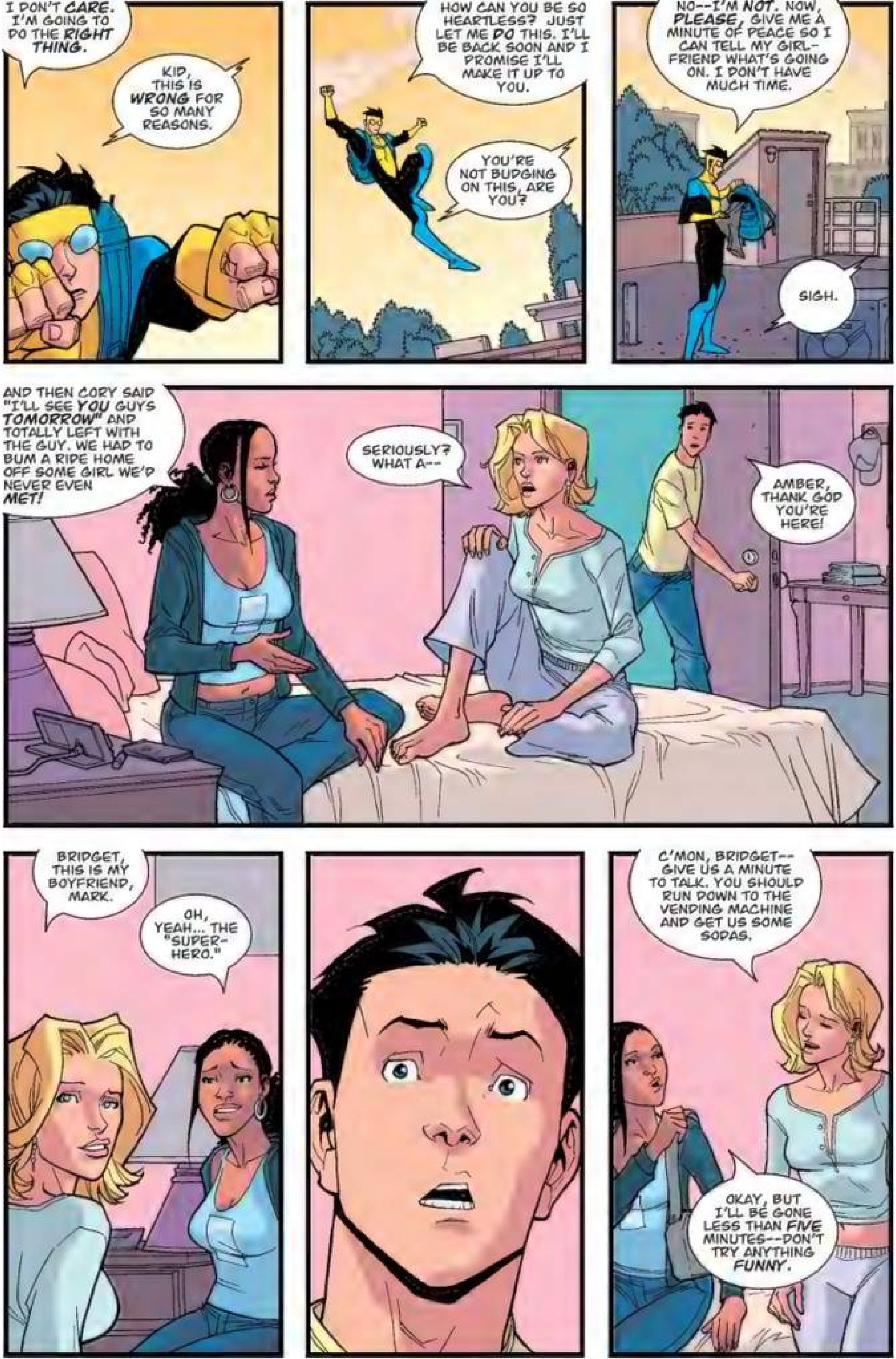

WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT, MARK? HOW CAN I NOT BE REAL?
I'M RIGHT HERE.
I SEE YOU-- YOU'RE THERE-- BUT YOU'RE NOT SCIENCE DOG!!
SCIENCE DOG IS A COMIC BOOK CHARACTER!
EXCUSE ME? I THINK I'D KNOW...
YOU ARE NOT REAL!
YOU DON'T EXIST!!
CHOOM!!

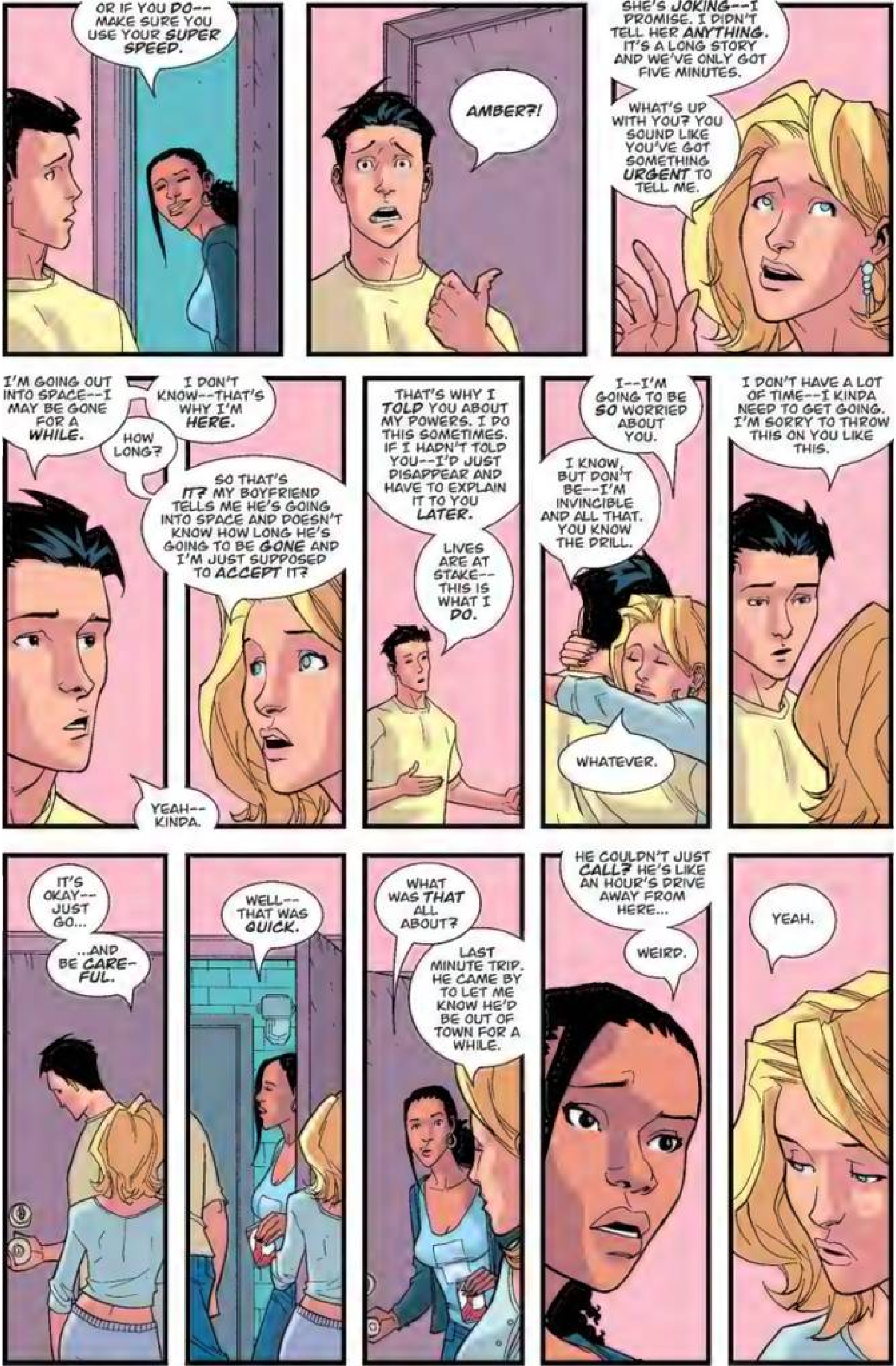

HOW DO YOU KNOW MY NAME?! HOW DO YOU KNOW WHERE I LIVE?!
WHAT DO YOU WANT WITH ME?! WHY ARE YOU HERE?!
WHAT ARE YOU?!
THIS IS NOT GOING THE WAY IT'S SUPPOSED TO. YOU ARE NOT SUPPOSED TO REACT TO ME THIS WAY...
NONE OF THIS WAS SUPPOSED TO HAPPEN--YOU KNOW ME--YOU KNOW WHO I AM. YOU--THIS SHOULD NOT HAVE HAPPENED.
YOU WRECKED MY JET-PACK.
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
I WANT ANSWERS, DAMN IT!
TAKE ME SOMEWHERE MORE PRIVATE AND I'LL TELL YOU EVERYTHING.
WHAT?
OH.

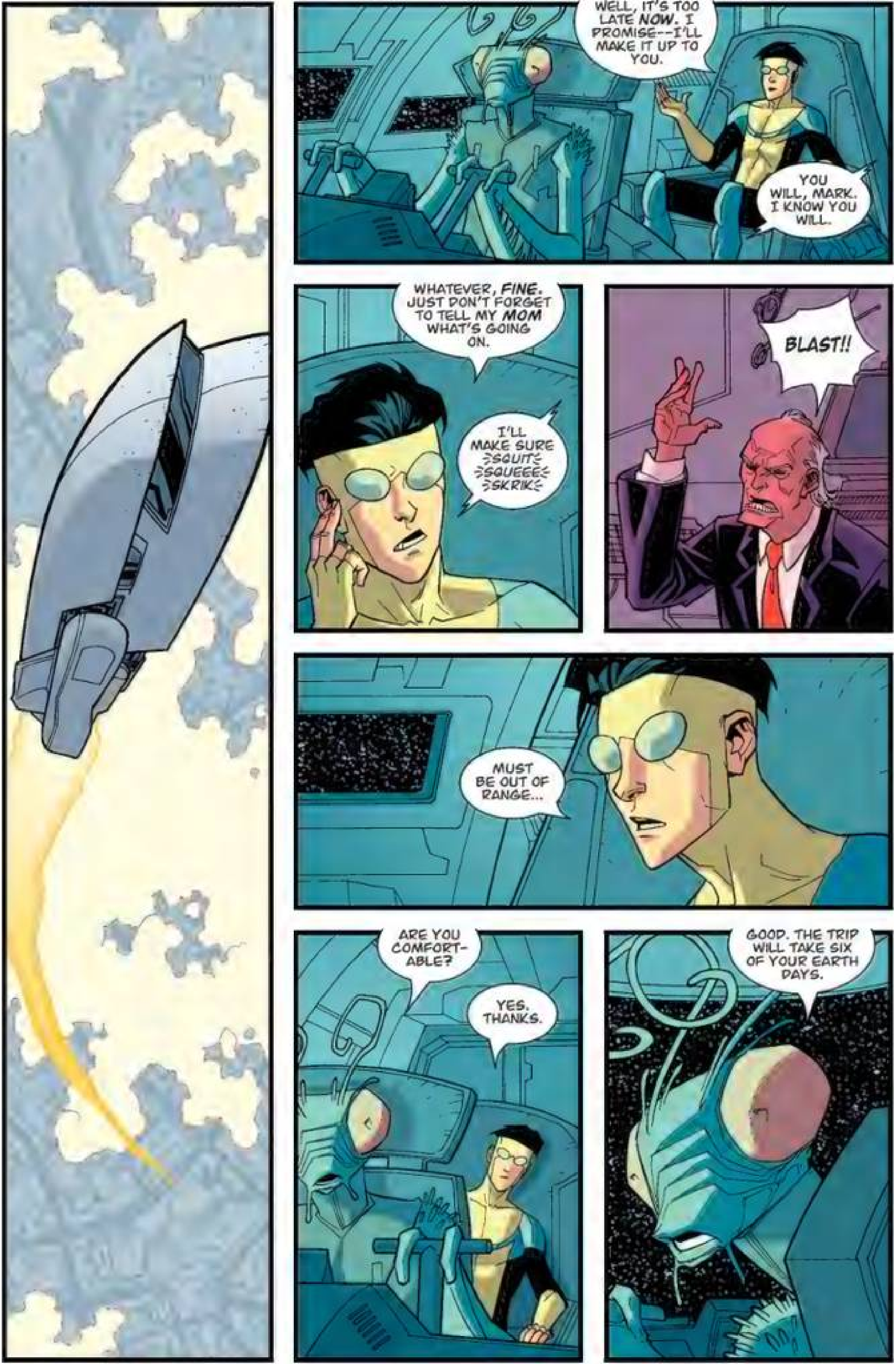

OKAY--IS THIS BETTER?
NOW-- TALK TO ME. WHAT IS GOING ON?
WE HAVE WATCHED YOU FROM AFAR--WE HAVE THE ABILITY TO SPY ON OTHER PLANETS-- TO WITNESS THE EVENTS THAT OCCUR THERE.
AFTER A WHILE--WE FOCUSED ON YOU. WE MONITORED YOUR EVERY ACTION. WE WITNESSED YOUR LIFE IN AND OUT OF COSTUME.
EVENTUALLY, WE LEARNED OF YOUR LOVE FOR THE CHARACTER SCIENCE DOG. WE THOUGHT IT WAS AN IMAGE YOU WOULD FIND NON-THREATENING.
NON-THREATENING?!
YOU'RE A SIX-FOOT TALKING CARTOON CHARACTER!!
WERE YOU EXPECTING A HUG?
WE ARE NOT FULLY AWARE OF YOUR CUSTOMS AND BEHAVIOR. WE WERE NOT SURE HOW YOU WOULD REACT.
FINE--WHATEVER. I DON'T QUITE UNDERSTAND THAT PART BUT WHATEVER.
WHAT ABOUT SPYING ON ME? WHY WERE YOU DOING THAT? WHY DID YOU NEED TO CONTACT ME? WHY ARE YOU EVEN HERE?!
MY PEOPLE ARE IN GREAT DANGER. OUR PLANET IS ABOUT TO FALL VICTIM TO A COSMIC THREAT. WE ARE A HIGHLY ADVANCED PEOPLE BUT WE DO NOT POSSESS THE MEANS TO SAVE OURSELVES.
WE BELIEVE YOU DO.

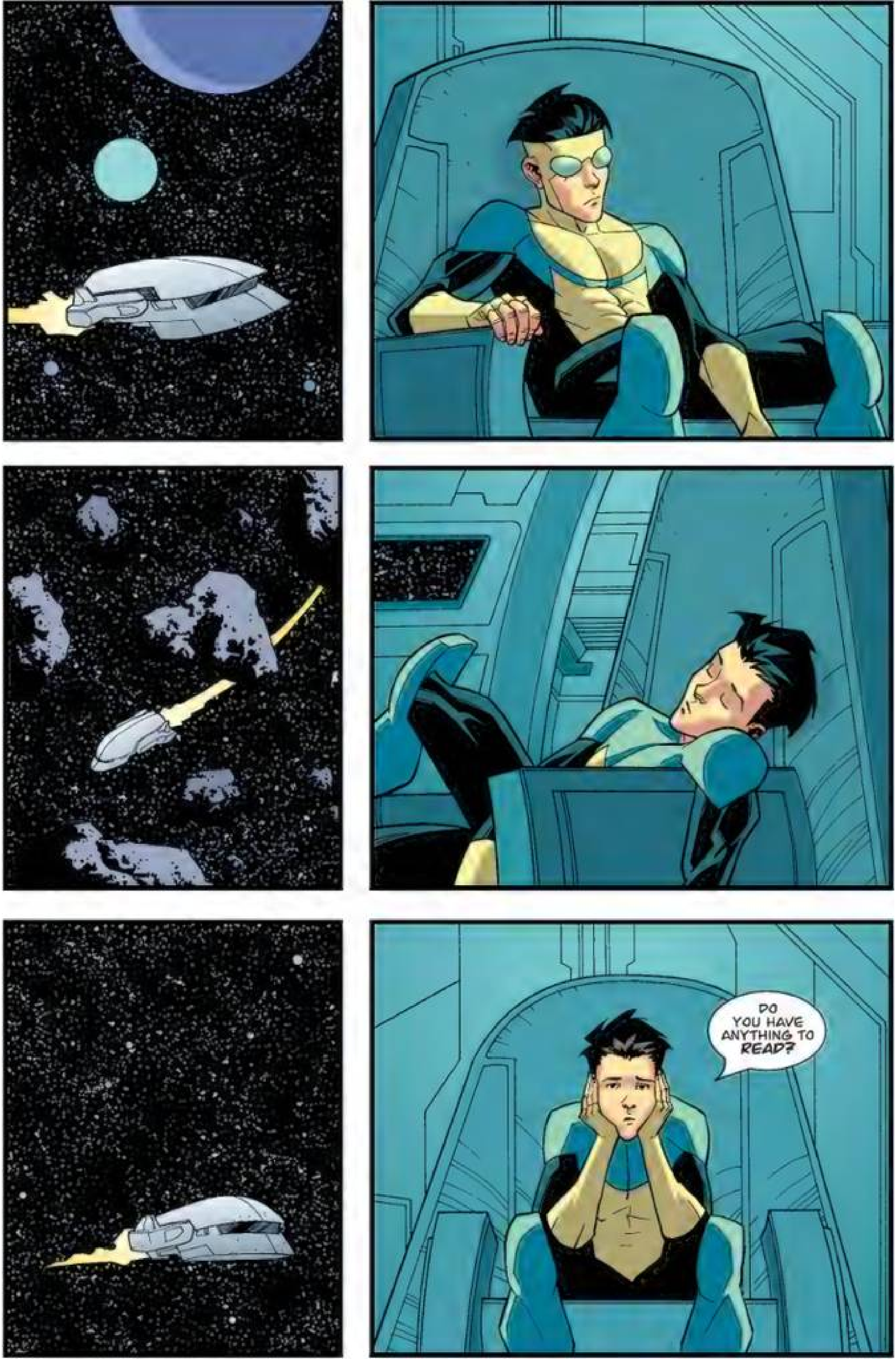

OKAY, *THAT* PART, AT LEAST, MAKES SENSE.
JUST WANT TO LET YOU KNOW I'M LISTENING IN, KID.
WE'RE AIMING A SATELLITE AT YOU RIGHT NOW--SEE IF YOU CAN GET HIM TO TAKE OFF THE MASK SO WE CAN GET A SHOT OF HIM.
THEN WE CAN COMPARE IT TO KNOWN ALIEN RACES IN OUR DATABASE.
WOMEN AND CHILDREN--OUR ENTIRE CIVILIZATION COULD BE WIPED OUT--OR SAVED--
--BY *YOU.*
IF I CAN HELP--I WILL. I WOULD NEVER ALLOW ANYTHING TO DIE IF I COULD PREVENT IT.
BUT SHOW ME--WHAT DO YOU LOOK LIKE NORMALLY--HOW ARE YOU MASKING YOUR IDENTITY SO PERFECTLY?
THIS IS A SYNTHETIC EXOSKELETON SHELL--IT IS ALSO WHAT PROTECTED ME FROM YOUR ATTACK.
WE CAN PROGRAM THESE TO TAKE ANY SHAPE--REPLICATE ANY SUBSTANCE.
OUR RESEARCH INDICATED THAT YOUR PEOPLE DO NOT RESPOND WELL TO SPECIES WITH BIOLOGY DISSIMILAR TO YOUR OWN.
WELL--I'VE SEEN A *FEW* MORE ALIENS THAN MOST HUMANS HAVE--
--OH, AND I'M NOT EXACTLY HUMAN MYSELF.
YES, WE OBSERVED YOUR ABILITIES TO BE SUBSTANTIALLY *MORE* THAN THOSE OF OTHER BEINGS ON THIS PLANET. THAT IS WHY WE SINGLED YOU OUT.
WILL YOU HELP US, MARK GRAYSON OF EARTH?
OF COURSE I WILL. BUT I NEED TO EXPLAIN TO MY MOTHER WHAT'S GOING ON AND TELL PEOPLE WHERE I'LL BE. WILL YOU GIVE ME SOME TIME TO DO THAT?
I CAN MEET YOU BACK HERE IN--TWENTY MINUTES OR SO?
THAT IS ACCEPTABLE.

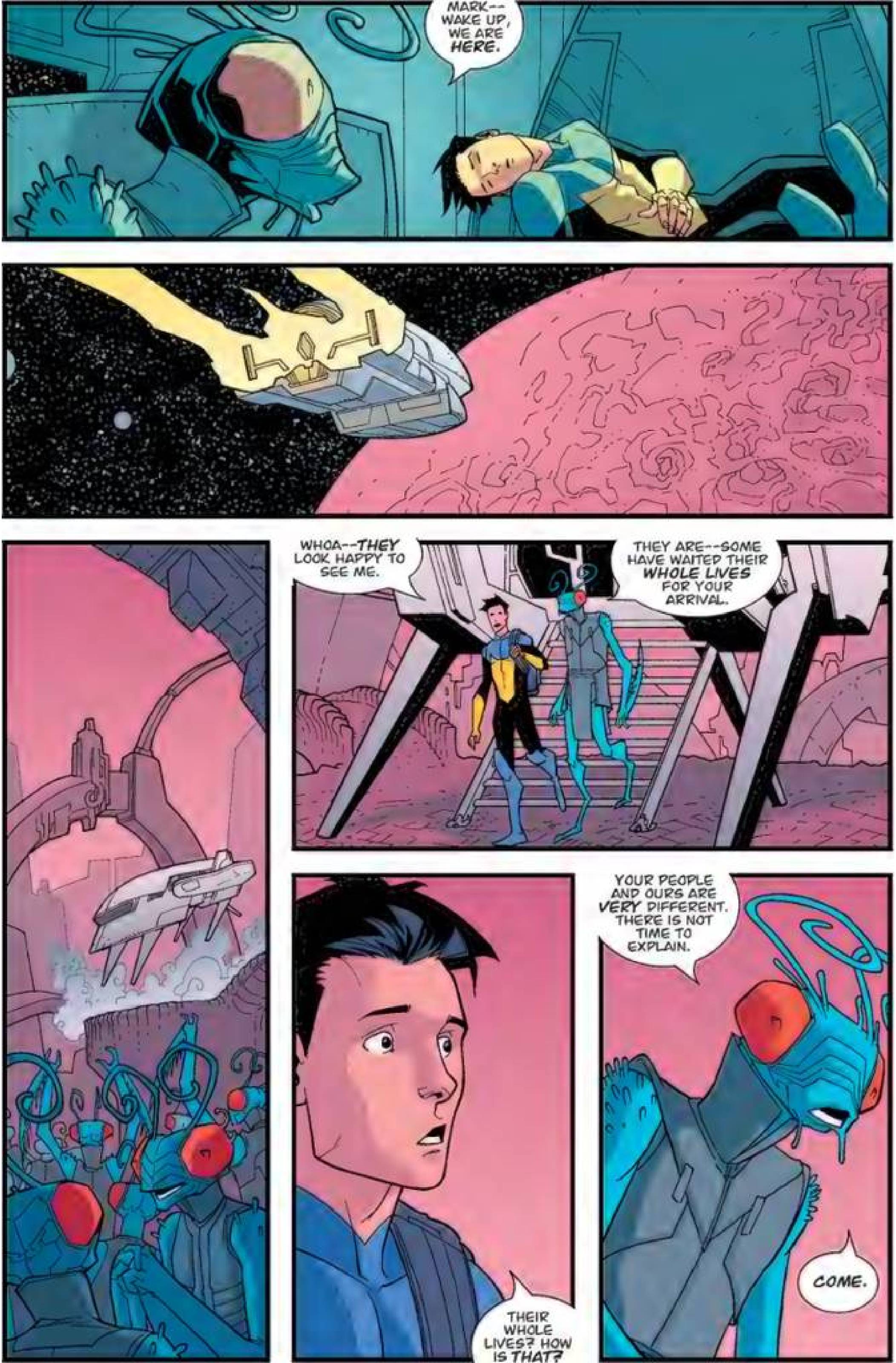

YOU CAN'T DO THIS MARK. THE ALIEN IS FROM AN UNKNOWN RACE. WE'VE GOT NO INFORMATION ON FILE. WE HAVE NO IDEA WHERE HE'S GOING TO TAKE YOU, HOW LONG YOU'RE GOING TO BE GONE OR EVEN IF HE'S TELLING YOU THE TRUTH.
DO YOU REALLY THINK HE WOULD COME ALL THE WAY TO EARTH TO SEEK MY HELP JUST SO HE COULD TURN AROUND AND TRY TO EAT ME OR SOMETHING?
THAT'S RETARDED.
IT'S ALL AN *UNKNOWN*, MARK. THAT'S WHY YOU CAN'T GO. ALSO, WE NEED YOU *HERE*-- WHAT ABOUT THIS PLANET?
THEY NEED MY HELP, CECIL-- I CAN HELP THEM SO I'M *GOING TO.* EVERYTHING WILL BE FINE. TRUST ME.
MOM? WHERE ARE YOU?
MOM?
SIGH
I'M SORRY, MARK. I'M SORRY.
YOU REMINDED ME OF FLYING WITH YOUR DAD-- I COULDN'T. I HATE THINKING ABOUT HIM.
IT'S OKAY, MOM... JUST GET SOME SLEEP, OKAY?
JUST RELAX.
OKAY, MARK...
LOVE YOU...
CAN YOU TELL HER WHAT'S GOING ON SO SHE CAN HAVE WILLIAM COVER FOR ME AT SCHOOL AND DOWNLOAD ALL MY HOMEWORK?
MARK-- YOU SHOULD *NOT* BE DOING THIS.
I *PAY* FOR YOUR SERVICES, MARK. YOU WORK FOR ME. YOUR JOB IS TO PROTECT *THIS* PLANET. YOU CAN'T DO THIS.
I WON'T *ALLOW* IT.
I'M NOT GOING TO LET THOSE PEOPLE DIE, CECIL. I'VE GOT TO HELP.
CAN'T YOU JUST ASSUME THIS IS BUILDING SOME KIND OF RELATION WITH AN ALIEN CULTURE? ISN'T THAT WORTHWHILE?
YOU'RE MAKING A MISTAKE.

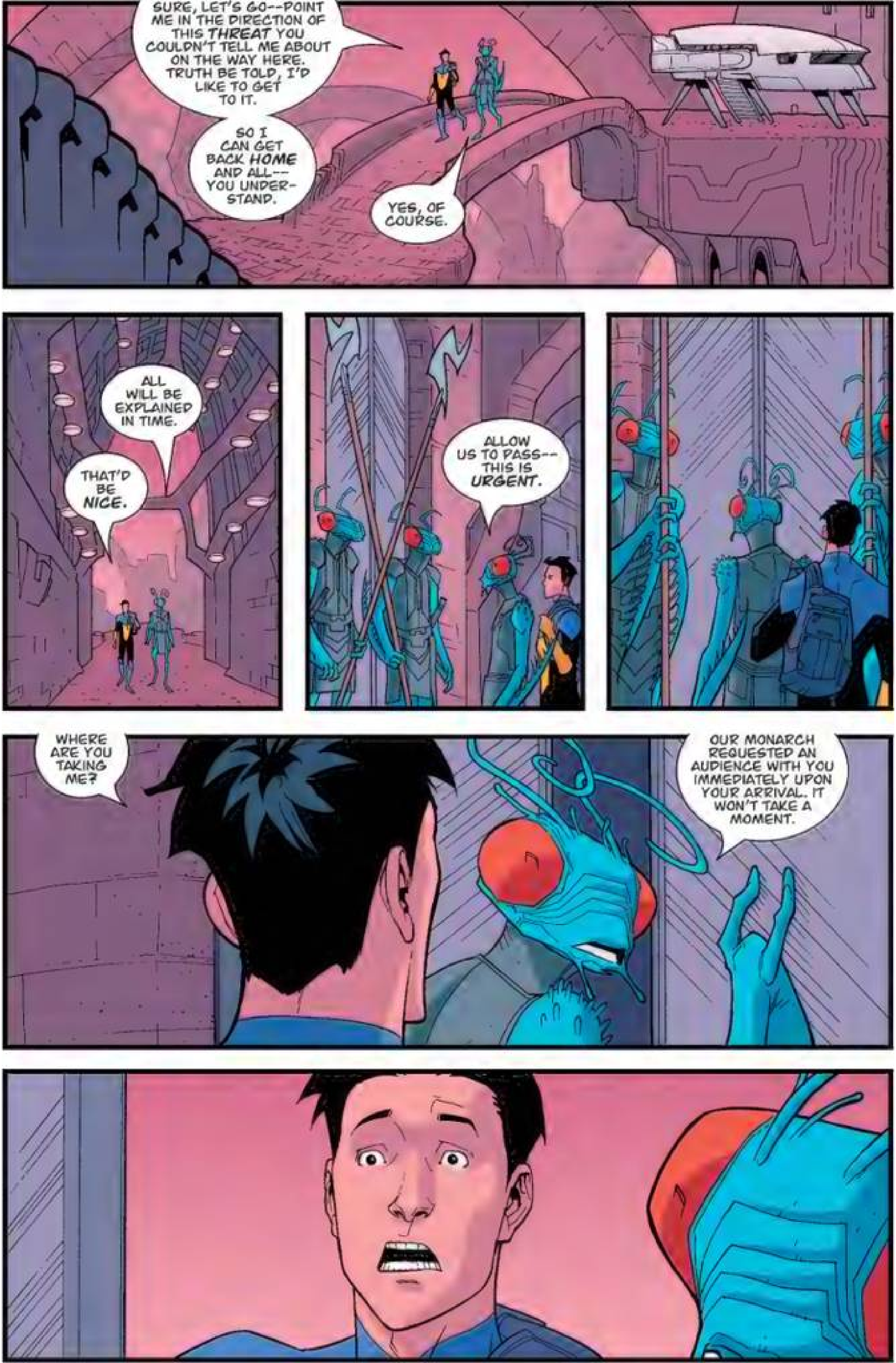

I DON'T CARE. I'M GOING TO DO THE RIGHT THING.
KID, THIS IS WRONG FOR SO MANY REASONS.
HOW CAN YOU BE SO HEARTLESS? JUST LET ME DO THIS. I'LL BE BACK SOON AND I PROMISE I'LL MAKE IT UP TO YOU.
YOU'RE NOT BUDGING ON THIS, ARE YOU?
NO--I'M NOT. NOW, PLEASE, GIVE ME A MINUTE OF PEACE SO I CAN TELL MY GIRLFRIEND WHAT'S GOING ON. I DON'T HAVE MUCH TIME.
SIGH.
AND THEN CORY SAID "I'LL SEE YOU GUYS TOMORROW" AND TOTALLY LEFT WITH THE GUY. WE HAD TO BUM A RIDE HOME OFF SOME GIRL WE'D NEVER EVEN MET!
SERIOUSLY? WHAT A--
AMBER, THANK GOD YOU'RE HERE!
BRIDGET, THIS IS MY BOYFRIEND, MARK.
OH, YEAH... THE "SUPER-HERO."
C'MON, BRIDGET--GIVE US A MINUTE TO TALK. YOU SHOULD RUN DOWN TO THE VENDING MACHINE AND GET US SOME SODAS.
OKAY, BUT I'LL BE GONE LESS THAN FIVE MINUTES--DON'T TRY ANYTHING FUNNY.

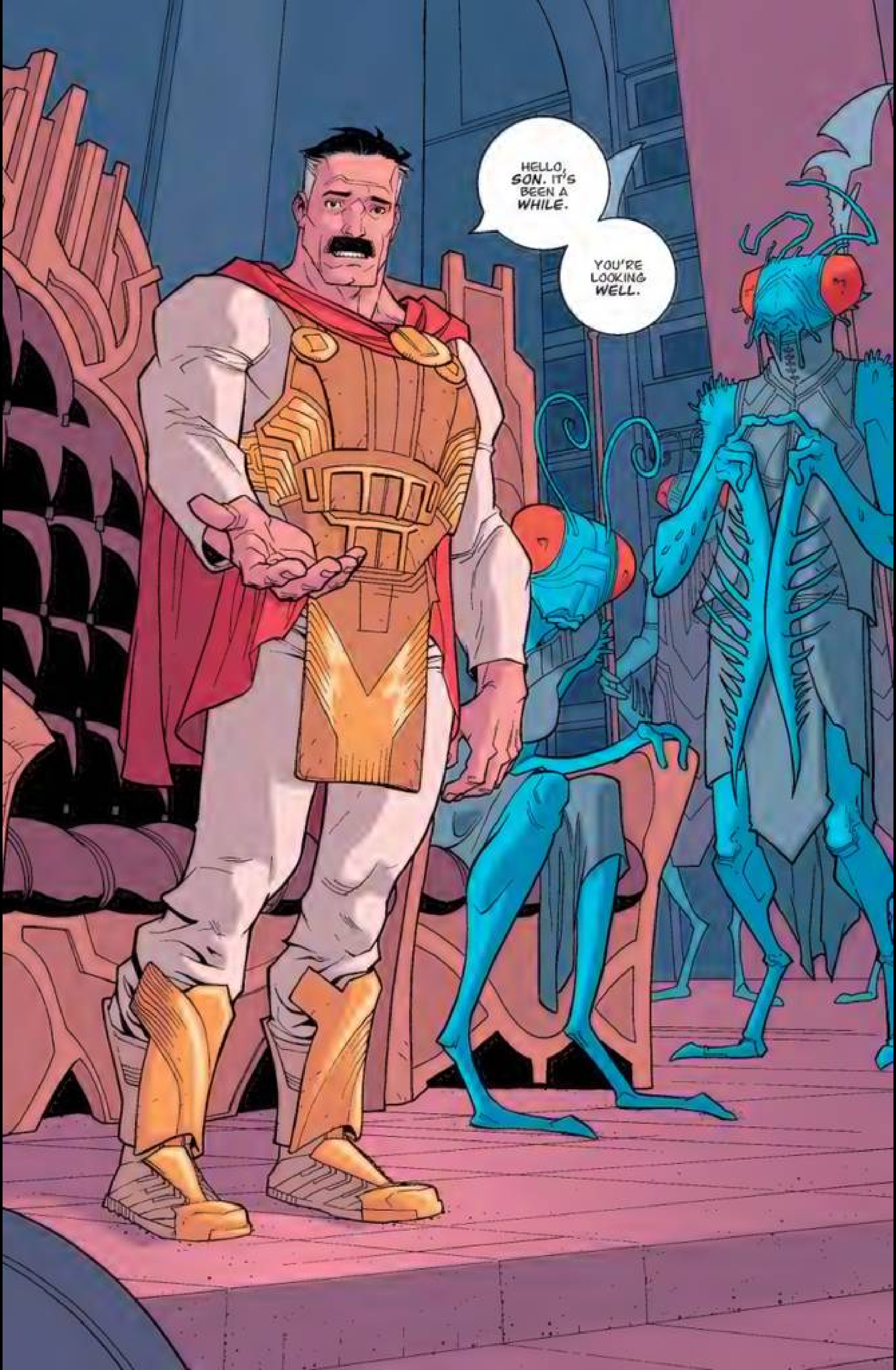

OR IF YOU DO-- MAKE SURE YOU USE YOUR SUPER SPEED.
AMBER?!
SHE'S JOKING--I PROMISE. I DIDN'T TELL HER ANYTHING. IT'S A LONG STORY AND WE'VE ONLY GOT FIVE MINUTES.
WHAT'S UP WITH YOU? YOU SOUND LIKE YOU'VE GOT SOMETHING URGENT TO TELL ME.
I'M GOING OUT INTO SPACE--I MAY BE GONE FOR A WHILE.
HOW LONG?
I DON'T KNOW--THAT'S WHY I'M HERE.
SO THAT'S IT? MY BOYFRIEND TELLS ME HE'S GOING INTO SPACE AND DOESN'T KNOW HOW LONG HE'S GOING TO BE GONE AND I'M JUST SUPPOSED TO ACCEPT IT?
YEAH-- KINDA.
THAT'S WHY I TOLD YOU ABOUT MY POWERS. I DO THIS SOMETIMES. IF I HADN'T TOLD YOU--I'D JUST DISAPPEAR AND HAVE TO EXPLAIN IT TO YOU LATER.
LIVES ARE AT STAKE-- THIS IS WHAT I DO.
I--I'M GOING TO BE SO WORRIED ABOUT YOU.
I KNOW, BUT DON'T BE--I'M INVINCIBLE AND ALL THAT. YOU KNOW THE DRILL.
WHATEVER.
I DON'T HAVE A LOT OF TIME--I KINDA NEED TO GET GOING. I'M SORRY TO THROW THIS ON YOU LIKE THIS.
IT'S OKAY-- JUST GO...
...AND BE CAREFUL.
WELL-- THAT WAS QUICK.
WHAT WAS THAT ALL ABOUT?
LAST MINUTE TRIP. HE CAME BY TO LET ME KNOW HE'D BE OUT OF TOWN FOR A WHILE.
HE COULDN'T JUST CALL? HE'S LIKE AN HOUR'S DRIVE AWAY FROM HERE...
WEIRD.
YEAH.


WELL, IT'S TOO LATE *NOW*. I PROMISE--I'LL MAKE IT UP TO YOU.
YOU WILL, MARK. I KNOW YOU WILL.
WHATEVER, *FINE*. JUST DON'T FORGET TO TELL MY *MOM* WHAT'S GOING ON.
I'LL MAKE SURE SQUIT SQUEEE SKRIK
BLAST!!
MUST BE OUT OF RANGE...
ARE YOU COMFORT-ABLE?
YES. THANKS.
GOOD. THE TRIP WILL TAKE SIX OF YOUR EARTH DAYS.

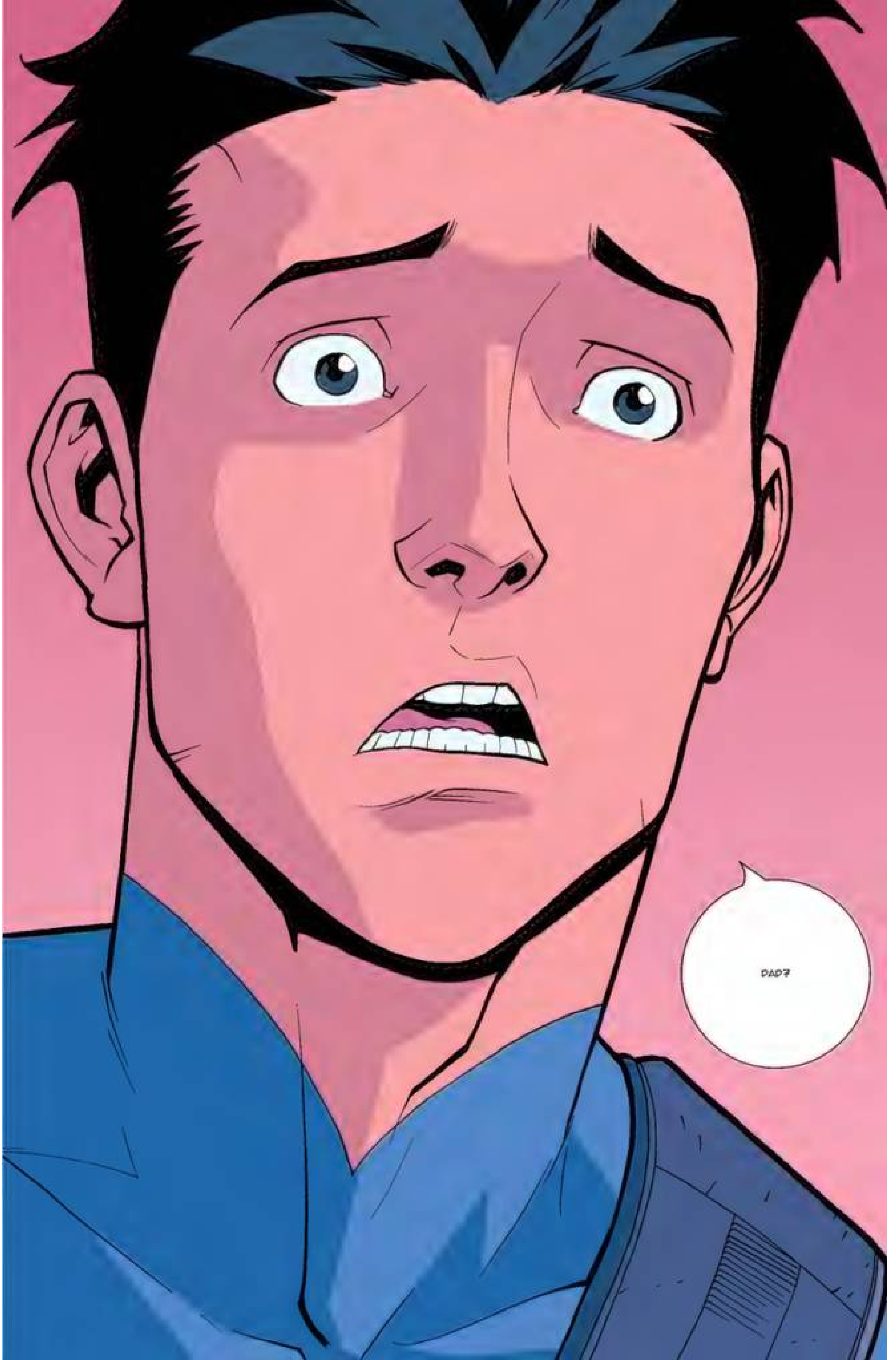

DO YOU HAVE ANYTHING TO READ?

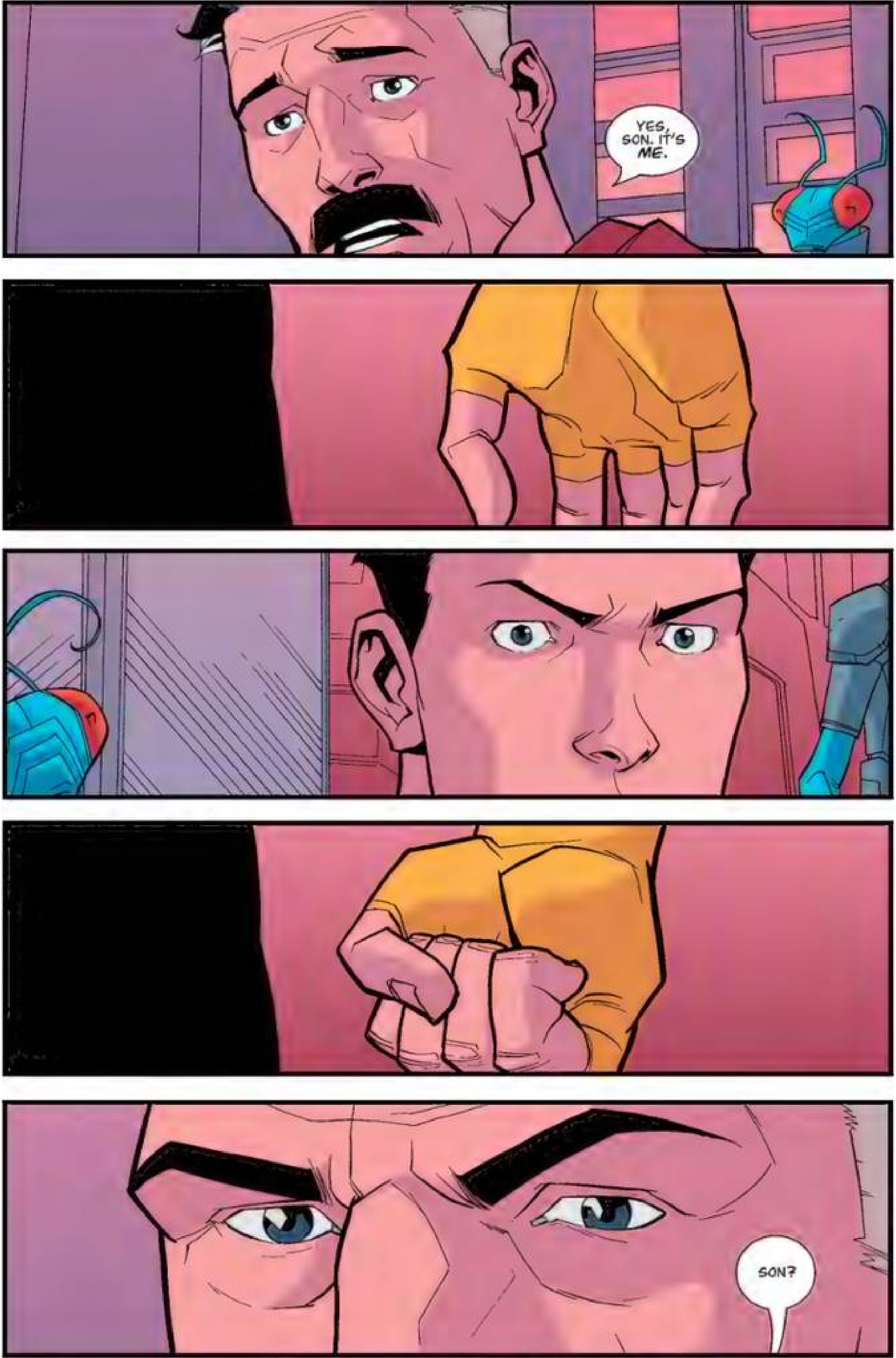

MARK-- WAKE UP, WE ARE *HERE*.
WHOA--*THEY* LOOK HAPPY TO SEE ME.
THEY ARE--SOME HAVE WAITED THEIR *WHOLE LIVES* FOR YOUR ARRIVAL.
THEIR WHOLE LIVES? HOW IS *THAT?*
YOUR PEOPLE AND OURS ARE *VERY* DIFFERENT. THERE IS NOT TIME TO EXPLAIN.
COME.

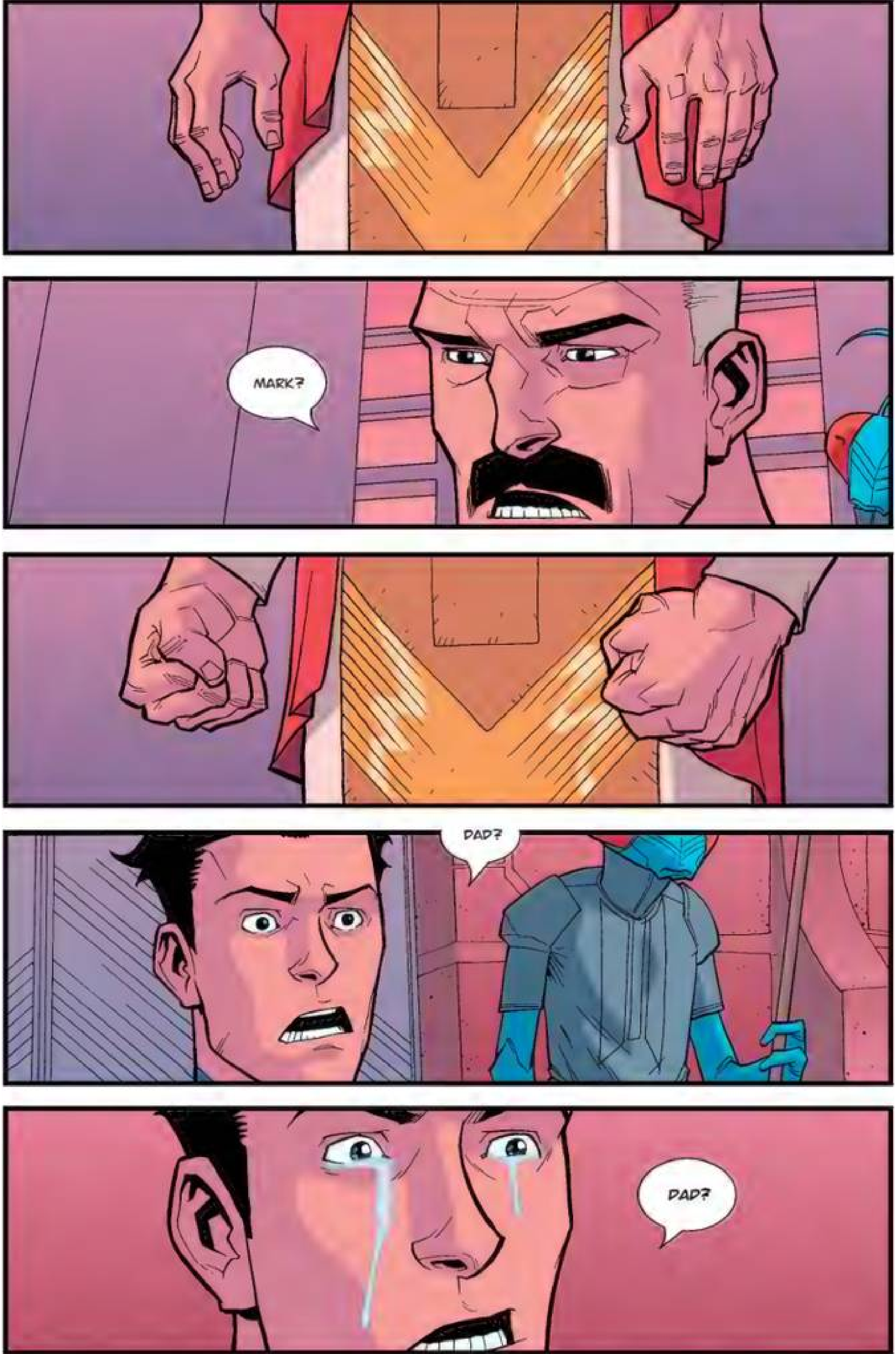

SURE, LET'S GO--POINT ME IN THE DIRECTION OF THIS *THREAT* YOU COULDN'T TELL ME ABOUT ON THE WAY HERE. TRUTH BE TOLD, I'D LIKE TO GET TO IT.
SO I CAN GET BACK *HOME* AND ALL-- YOU UNDERSTAND.
YES, OF COURSE.
ALL WILL BE EXPLAINED IN TIME.
THAT'D BE *NICE.*
ALLOW US TO PASS-- THIS IS *URGENT.*
WHERE ARE YOU TAKING ME?
OUR MONARCH REQUESTED AN AUDIENCE WITH YOU IMMEDIATELY UPON YOUR ARRIVAL. IT WON'T TAKE A MOMENT.

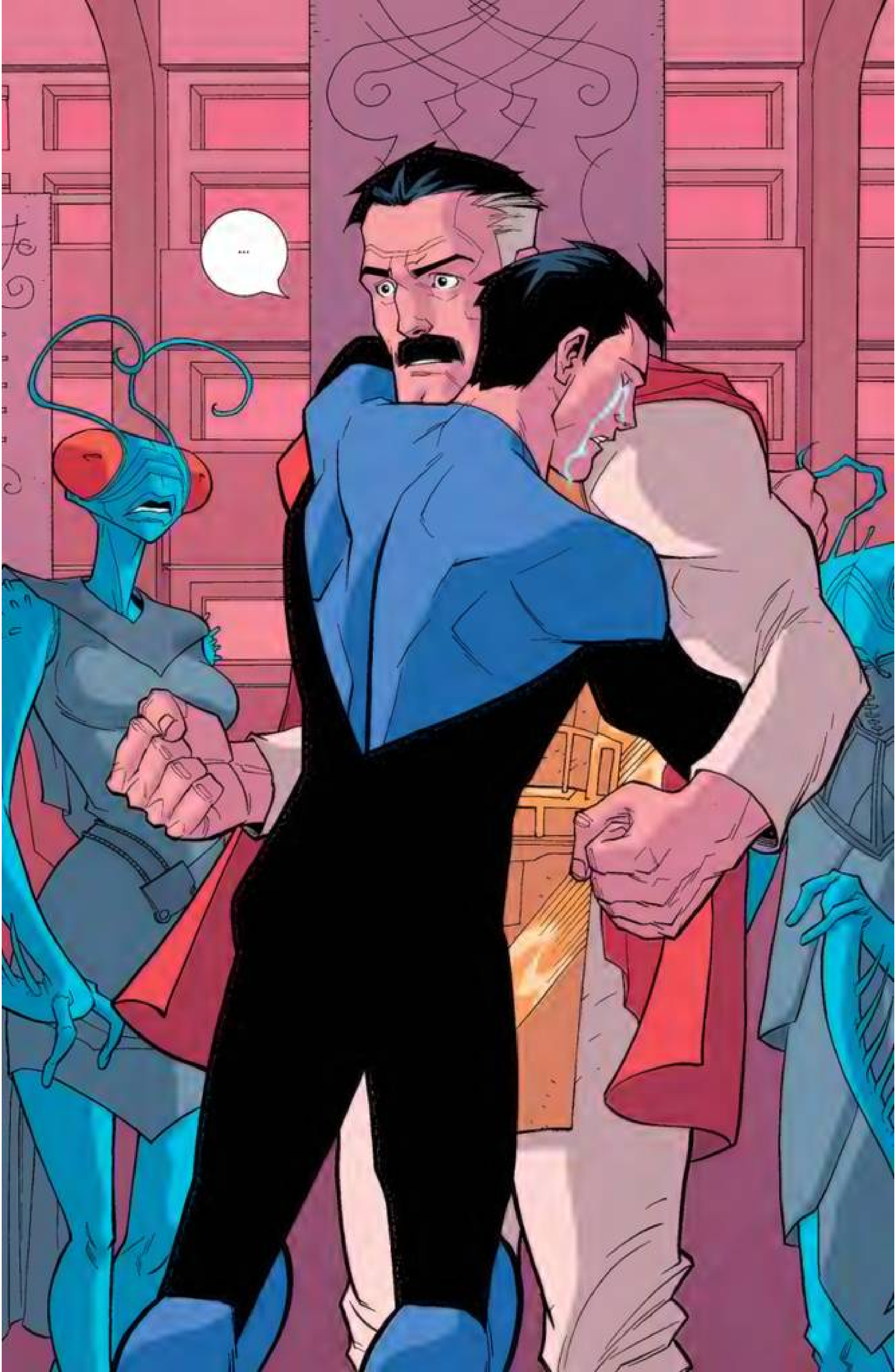

HELLO, SON. IT'S BEEN A WHILE.
YOU'RE LOOKING WELL.

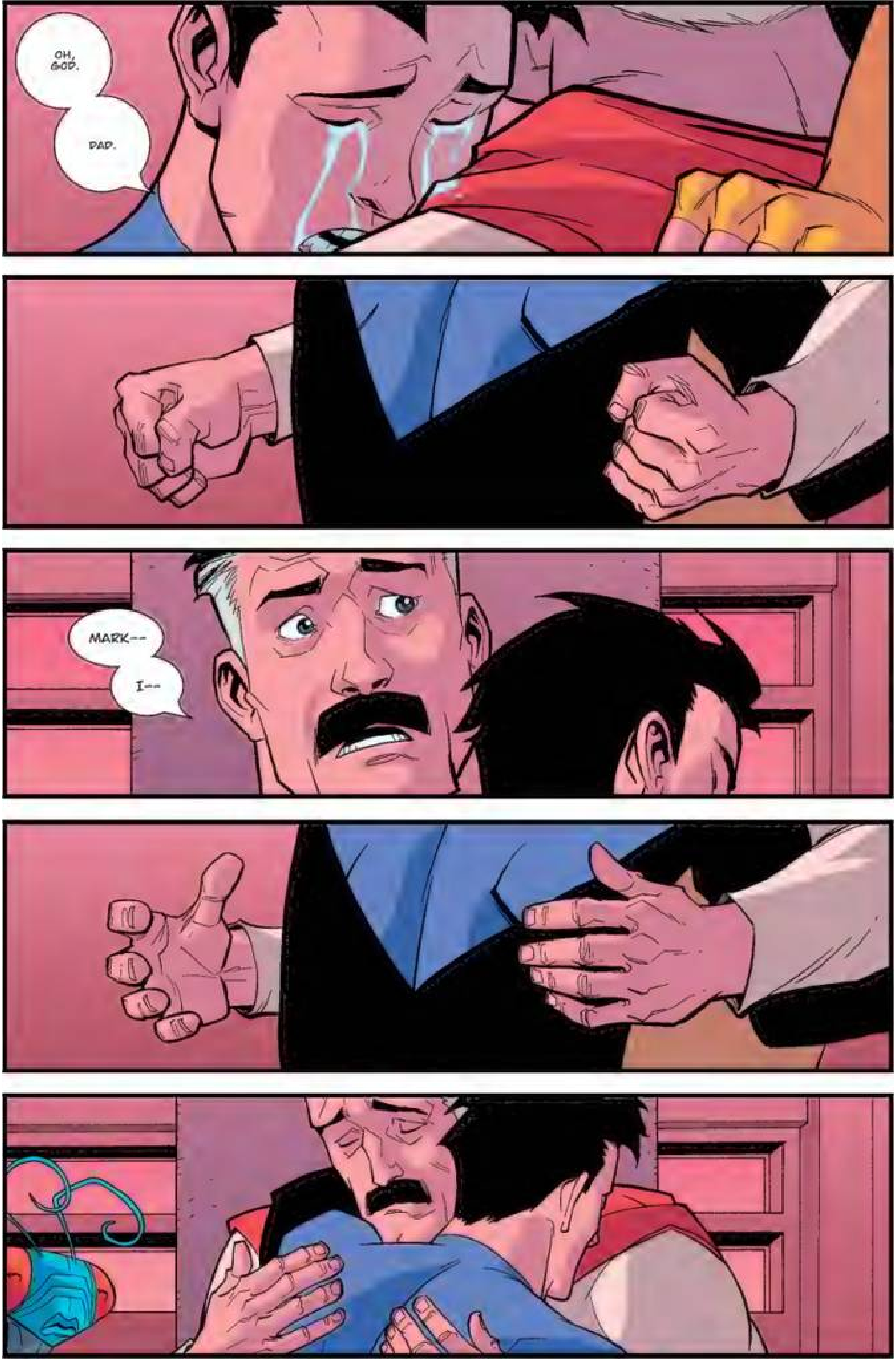
ISSUE TWENTY-SIX

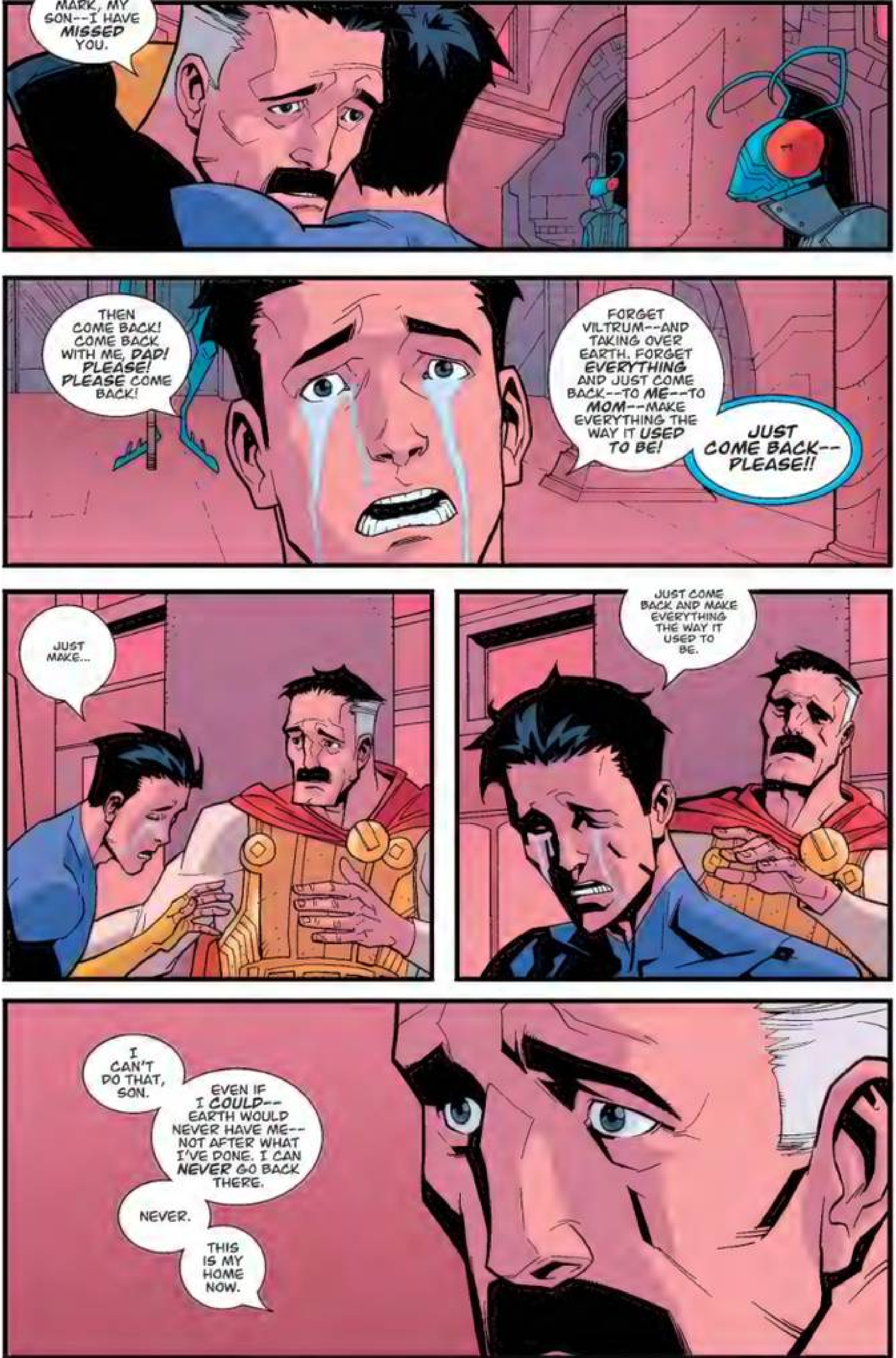

DAD?

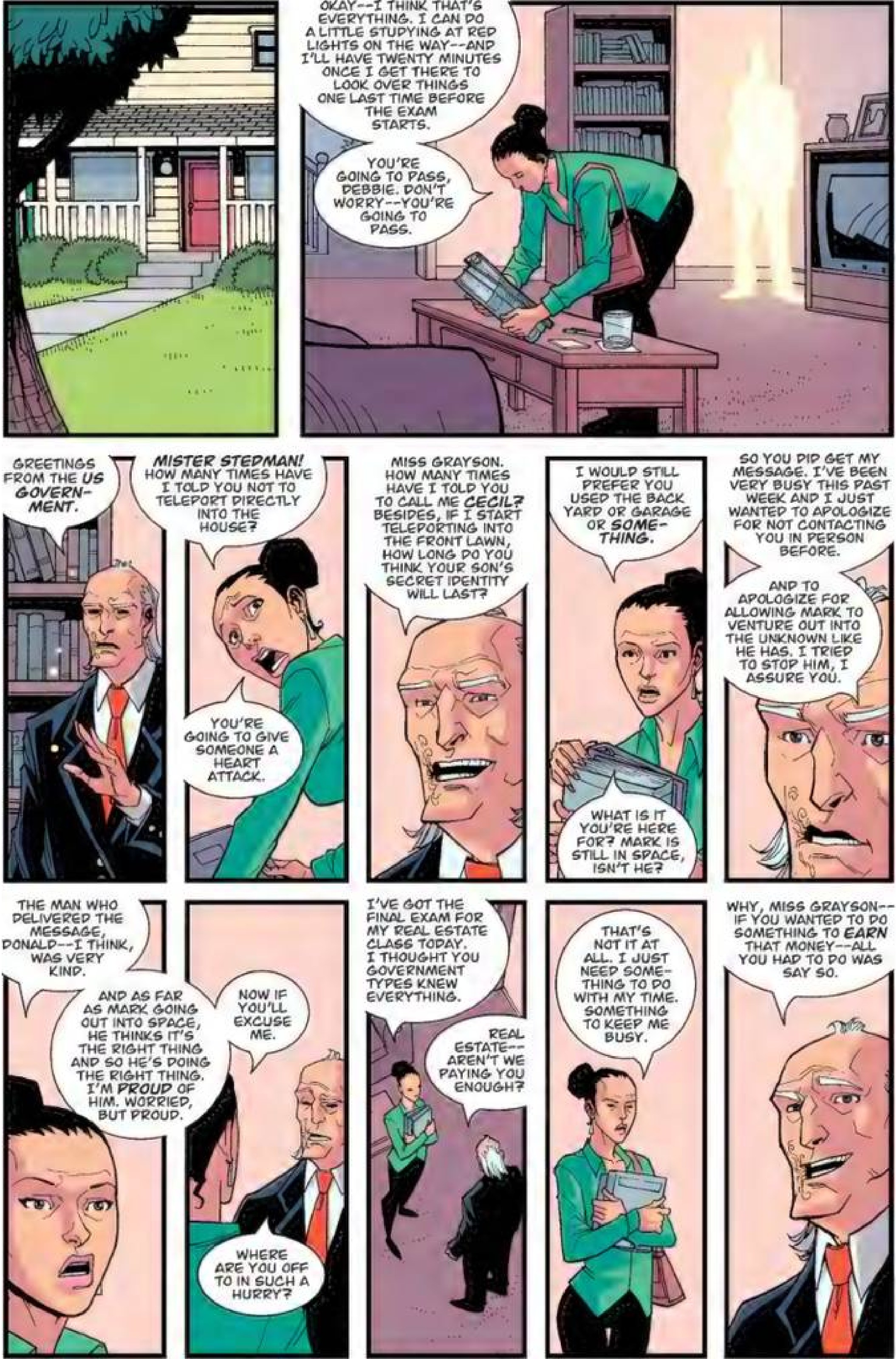

YES, SON. IT'S ME.
SON?

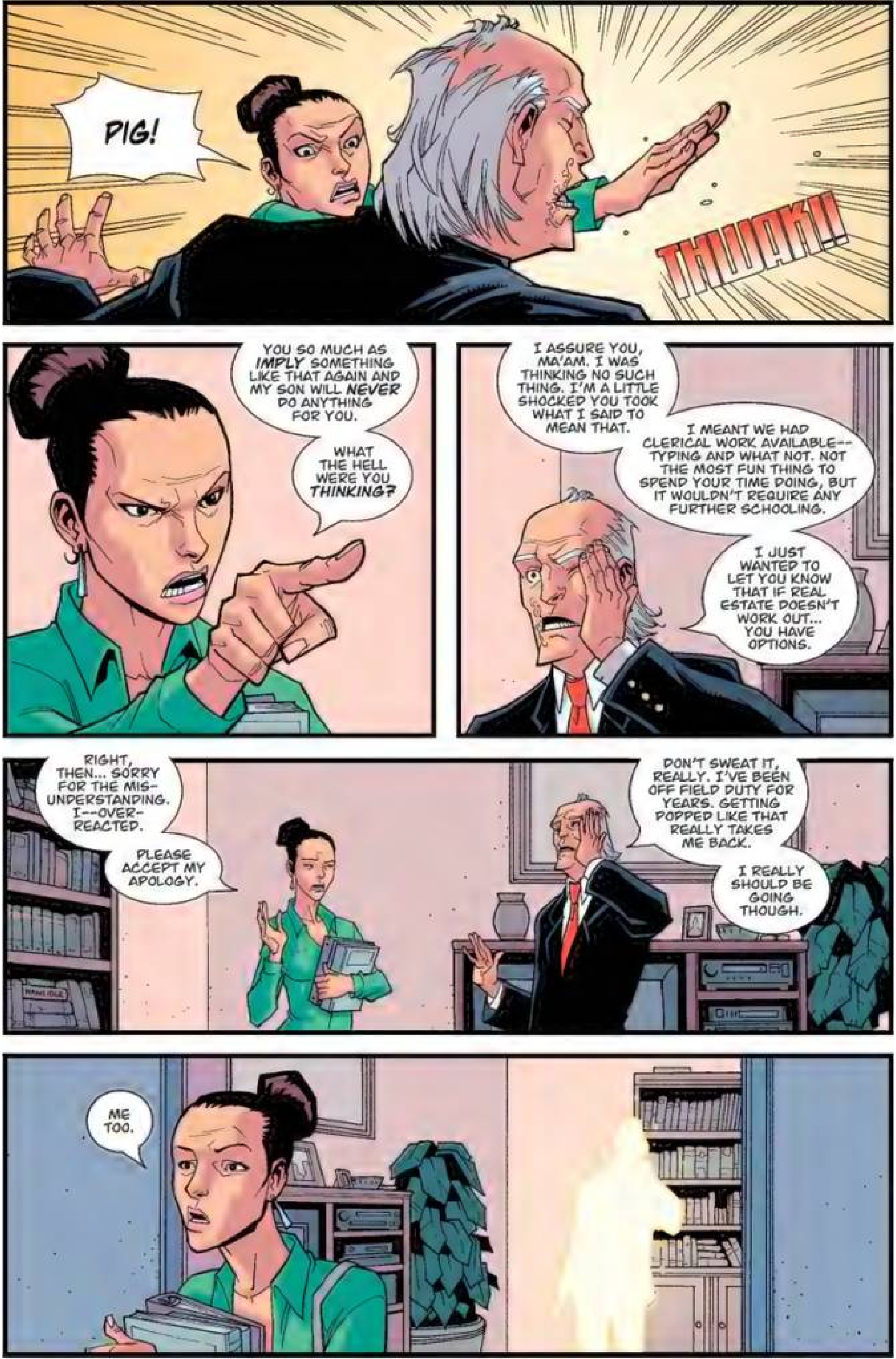

MARK?
DAD?
DAD?

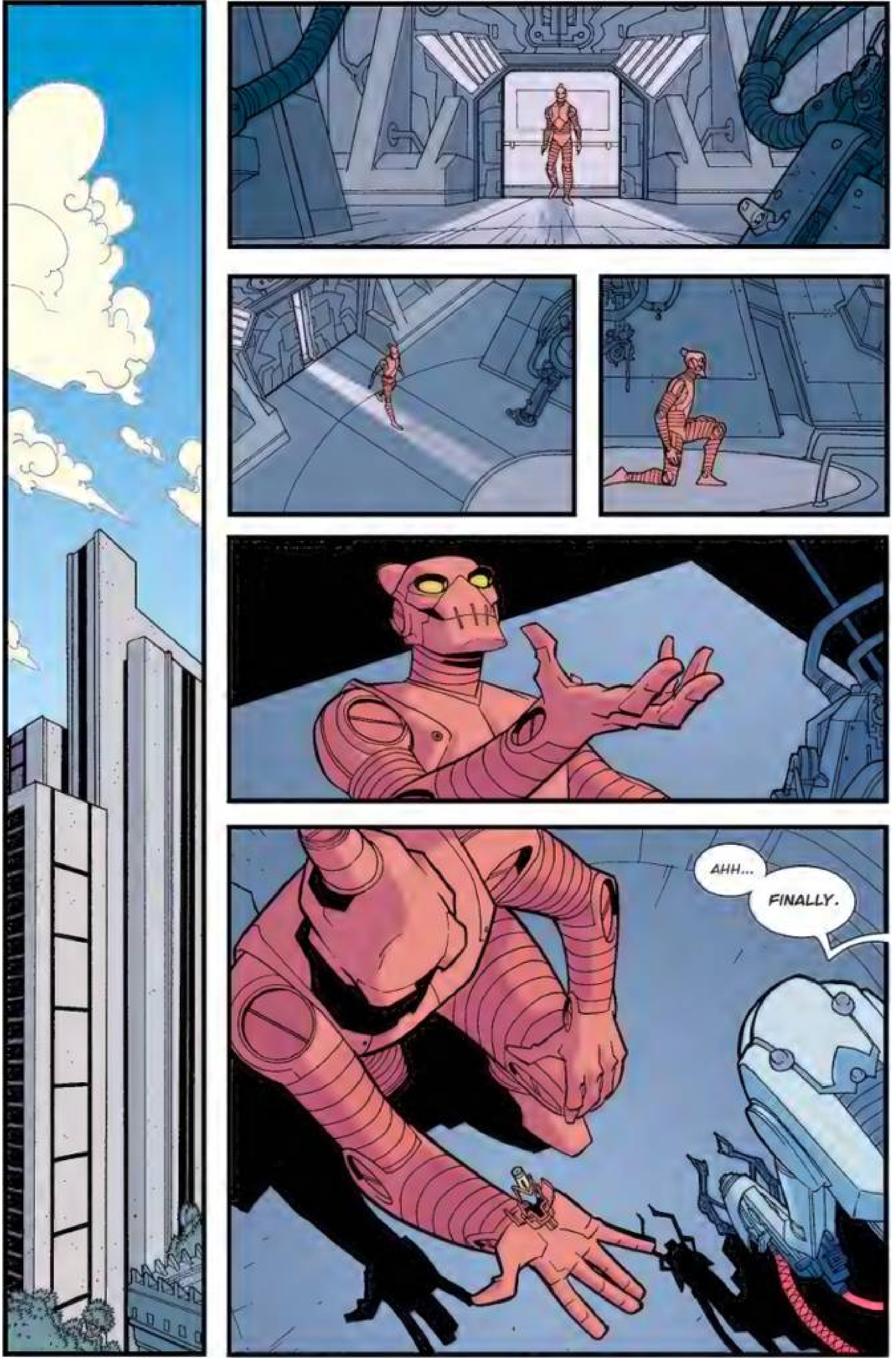


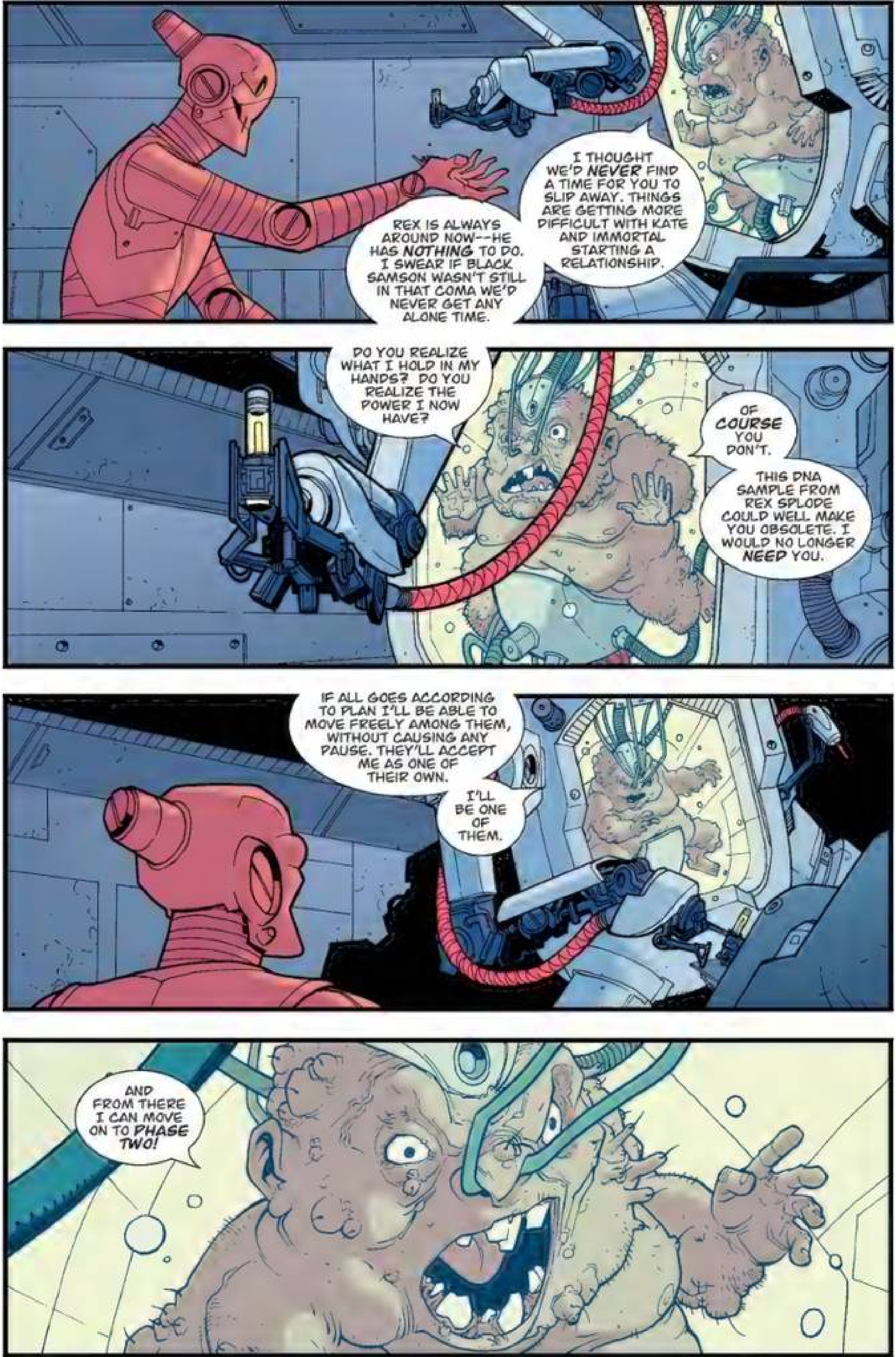

OH, GOD.
DAD.
MARK--
I--

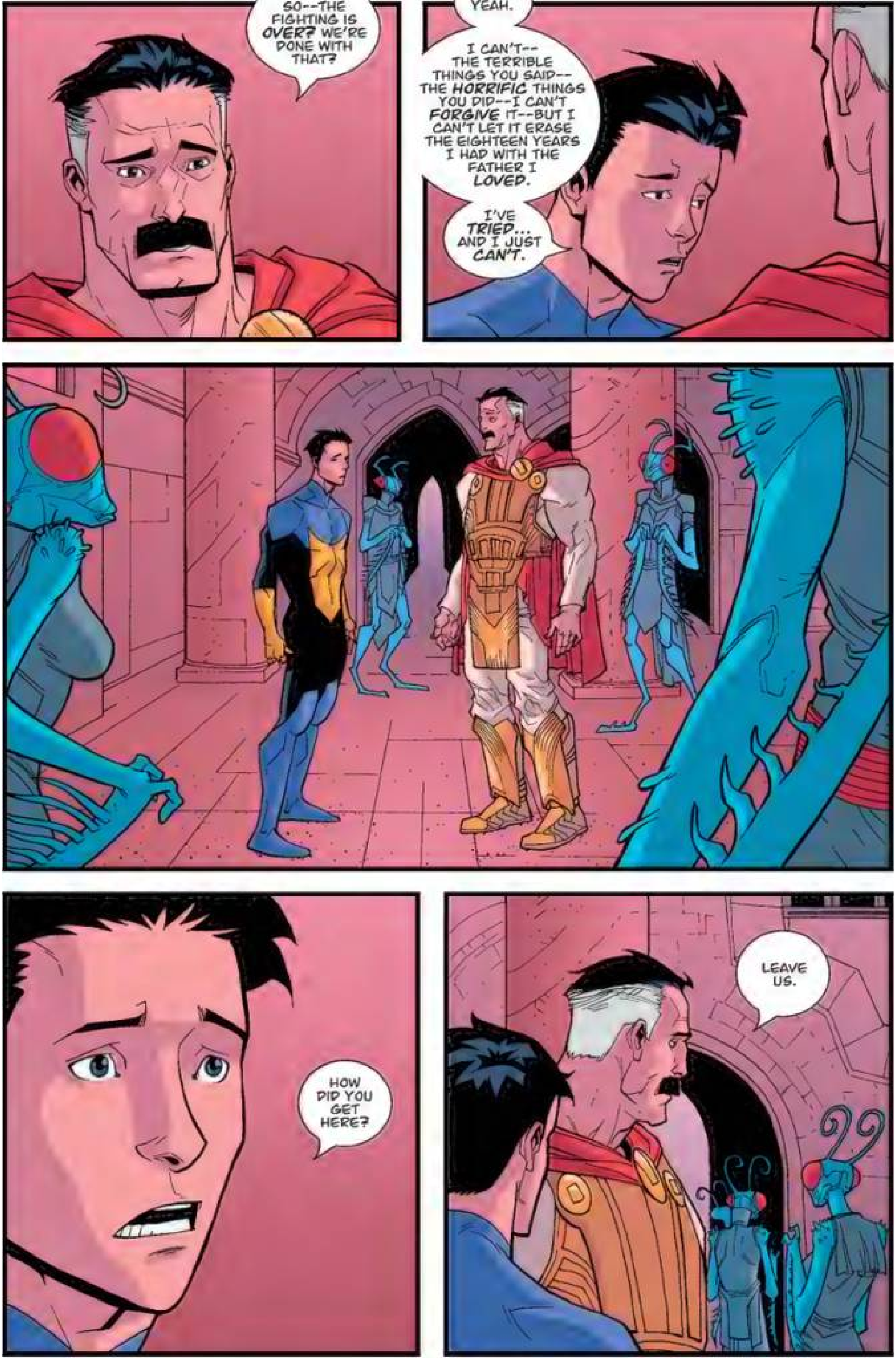

MARK, MY SON--I HAVE MISSED YOU.
THEN COME BACK! COME BACK WITH ME, DAD! PLEASE! PLEASE COME BACK!
FORGET VILTRUM--AND TAKING OVER EARTH. FORGET EVERYTHING AND JUST COME BACK--TO ME--TO MOM--MAKE EVERYTHING THE WAY IT USED TO BE!
JUST COME BACK--PLEASE!!
JUST MAKE...
JUST COME BACK AND MAKE EVERYTHING THE WAY IT USED TO BE.
I CAN'T DO THAT, SON.
EVEN IF I COULD--EARTH WOULD NEVER HAVE ME--NOT AFTER WHAT I'VE DONE. I CAN NEVER GO BACK THERE.
NEVER.
THIS IS MY HOME NOW.

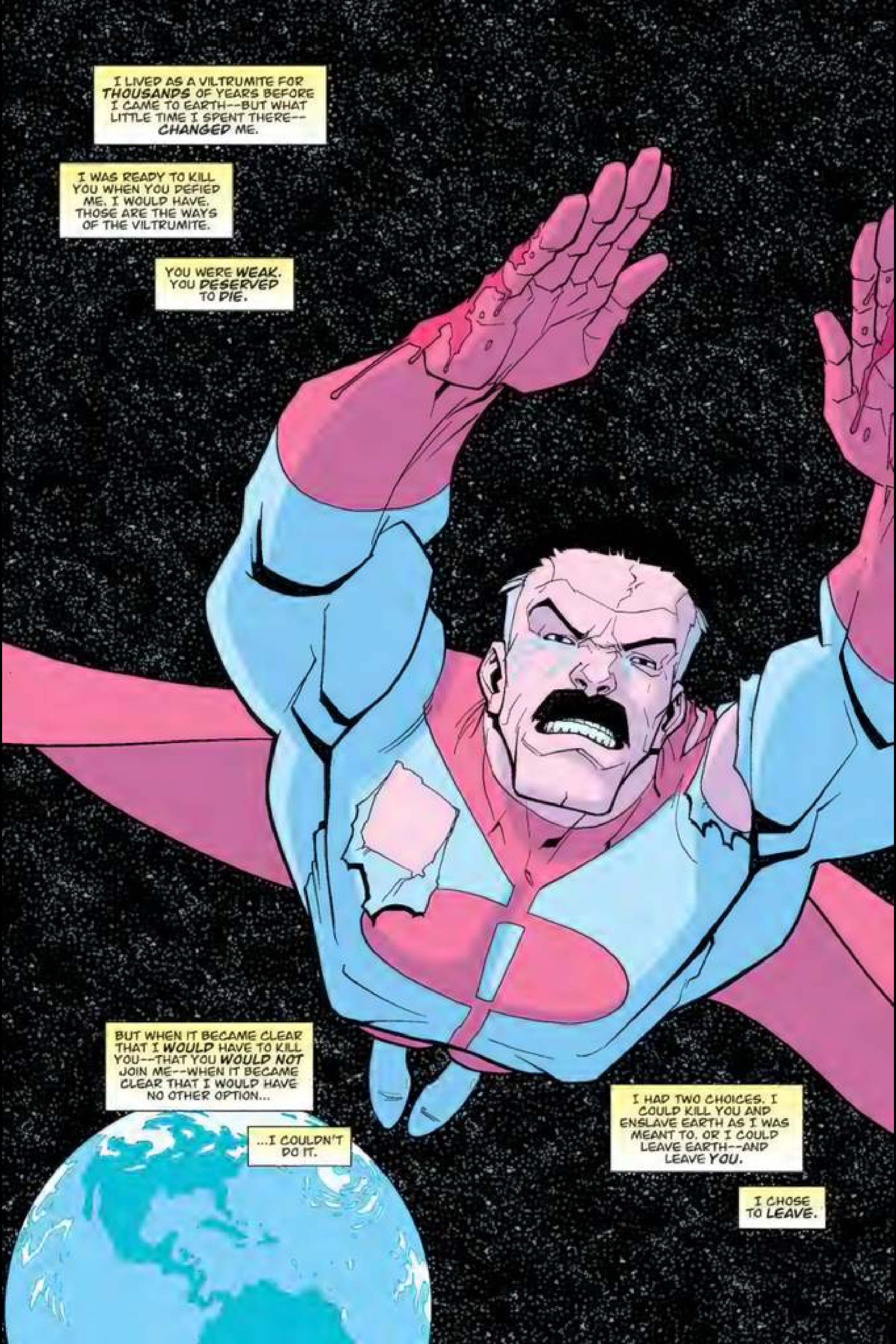

OKAY--I THINK THAT'S EVERYTHING. I CAN DO A LITTLE STUDYING AT RED LIGHTS ON THE WAY--AND I'LL HAVE TWENTY MINUTES ONCE I GET THERE TO LOOK OVER THINGS ONE LAST TIME BEFORE THE EXAM STARTS.
YOU'RE GOING TO PASS, DEBBIE. DON'T WORRY--YOU'RE GOING TO PASS.
GREETINGS FROM THE *US GOVERNMENT*.
MISTER STEDMAN! HOW MANY TIMES HAVE I TOLD YOU NOT TO TELEPORT DIRECTLY INTO THE HOUSE?
YOU'RE GOING TO GIVE SOMEONE A HEART ATTACK.
MISS GRAYSON. HOW MANY TIMES HAVE I TOLD YOU TO CALL ME *CECIL?* BESIDES, IF I START TELEPORTING INTO THE FRONT LAWN, HOW LONG DO YOU THINK YOUR SON'S SECRET IDENTITY WILL LAST?
I WOULD STILL PREFER YOU USED THE BACK YARD OR GARAGE OR *SOMETHING*.
WHAT IS IT YOU'RE HERE FOR? MARK IS STILL IN SPACE, ISN'T HE?
SO YOU DID GET MY MESSAGE. I'VE BEEN VERY BUSY THIS PAST WEEK AND I JUST WANTED TO APOLOGIZE FOR NOT CONTACTING YOU IN PERSON BEFORE.
AND TO APOLOGIZE FOR ALLOWING MARK TO VENTURE OUT INTO THE UNKNOWN LIKE HE HAS. I TRIED TO STOP HIM, I ASSURE YOU.
THE MAN WHO DELIVERED THE MESSAGE, DONALD--I THINK, WAS VERY KIND.
AND AS FAR AS MARK GOING OUT INTO SPACE, HE THINKS IT'S THE RIGHT THING AND SO HE'S DOING THE RIGHT THING. I'M *PROUD* OF HIM. WORRIED, BUT PROUD.
NOW IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME.
WHERE ARE YOU OFF TO IN SUCH A HURRY?
I'VE GOT THE FINAL EXAM FOR MY REAL ESTATE CLASS TODAY. I THOUGHT YOU GOVERNMENT TYPES KNEW EVERYTHING.
REAL ESTATE--AREN'T WE PAYING YOU ENOUGH?
THAT'S NOT IT AT ALL. I JUST NEED SOMETHING TO DO WITH MY TIME. SOMETHING TO KEEP ME BUSY.
WHY, MISS GRAYSON--IF YOU WANTED TO DO SOMETHING TO *EARN* THAT MONEY--ALL YOU HAD TO DO WAS SAY SO.

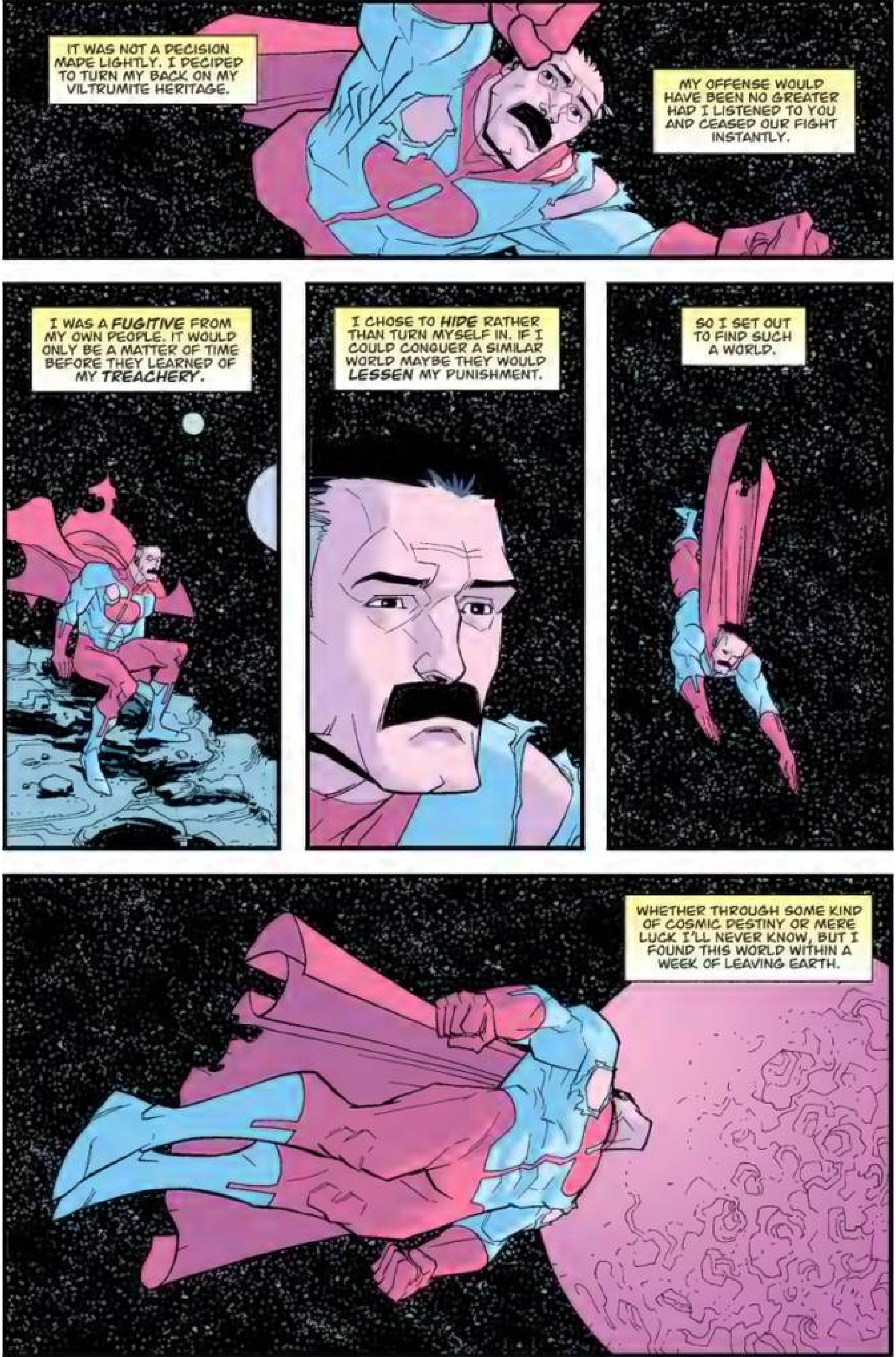

PIG!
THOOK!!
YOU SO MUCH AS *IMPLY* SOMETHING LIKE THAT AGAIN AND MY SON WILL *NEVER* DO ANYTHING FOR YOU.
WHAT THE HELL WERE YOU *THINKING?*
I ASSURE YOU, MA'AM. I WAS THINKING NO SUCH THING. I'M A LITTLE SHOCKED YOU TOOK WHAT I SAID TO MEAN THAT.
I MEANT WE HAD CLERICAL WORK AVAILABLE-- TYPING AND WHAT NOT. NOT THE MOST FUN THING TO SPEND YOUR TIME DOING, BUT IT WOULDN'T REQUIRE ANY FURTHER SCHOOLING.
I JUST WANTED TO LET YOU KNOW THAT IF REAL ESTATE DOESN'T WORK OUT... YOU HAVE OPTIONS.
RIGHT, THEN... SORRY FOR THE MISUNDERSTANDING. I--OVERREACTED.
PLEASE ACCEPT MY APOLOGY.
DON'T SWEAT IT, REALLY. I'VE BEEN OFF FIELD DUTY FOR YEARS. GETTING POPPED LIKE THAT REALLY TAKES ME BACK.
I REALLY SHOULD BE GOING THOUGH.
ME TOO.

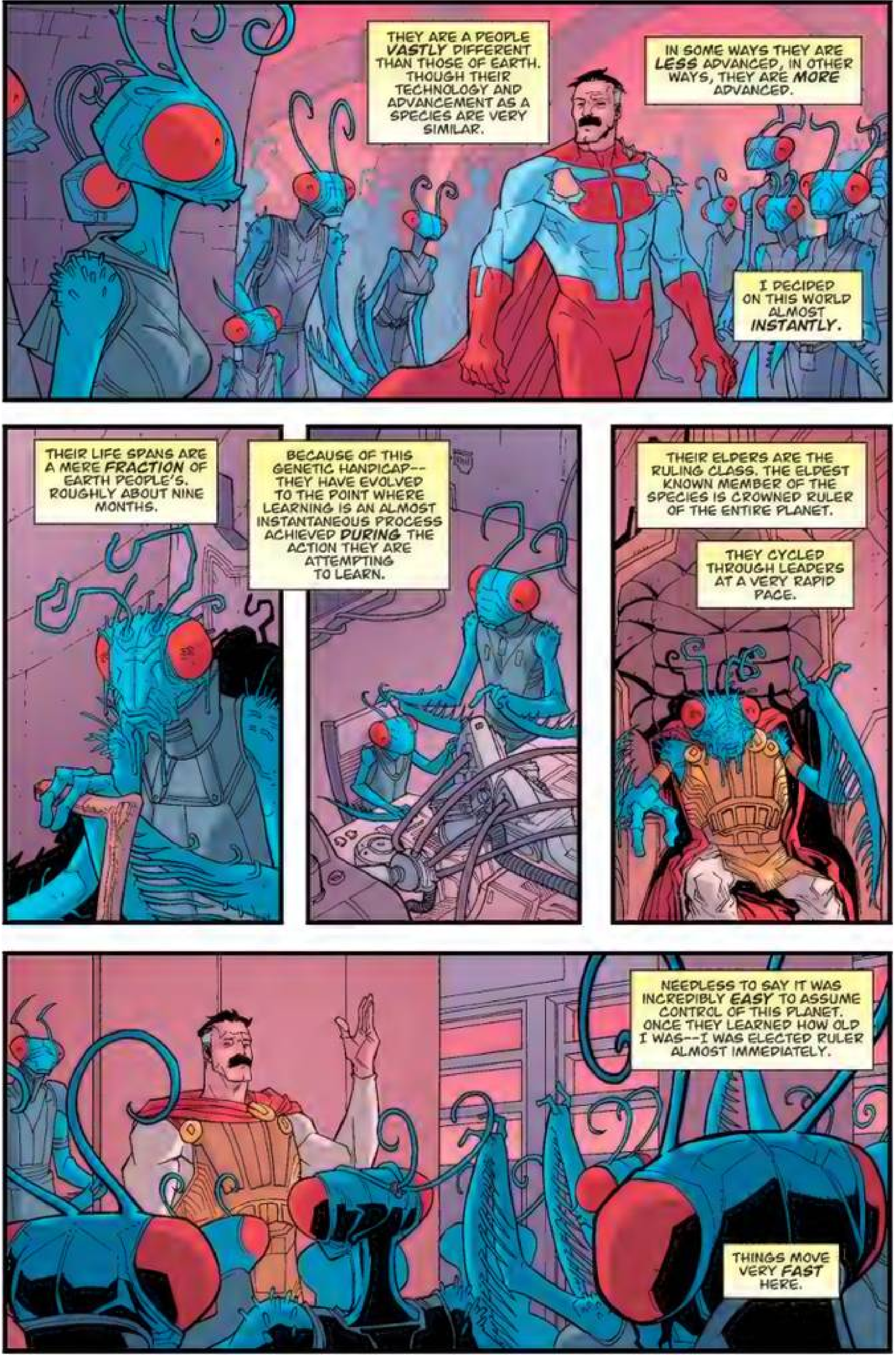

AHH...
FINALLY.

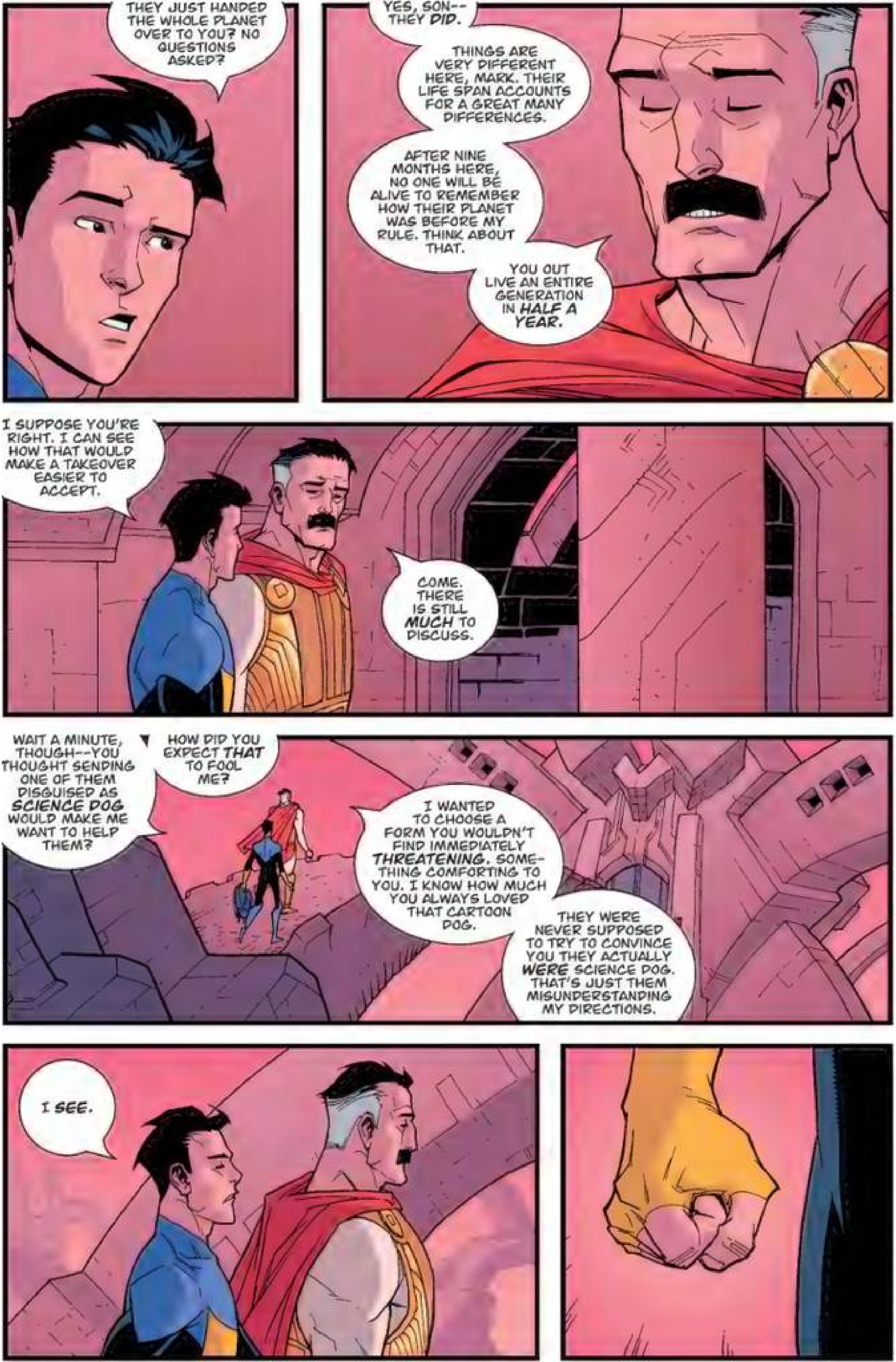

REX IS ALWAYS AROUND NOW--HE HAS **NOTHING** TO DO. I SWEAR IF BLACK SAMSON WASN'T STILL IN THAT COMA WE'D NEVER GET ANY ALONE TIME.
I THOUGHT WE'D **NEVER** FIND A TIME FOR YOU TO SLIP AWAY. THINGS ARE GETTING MORE DIFFICULT WITH KATE AND IMMORTAL STARTING A RELATIONSHIP.
DO YOU REALIZE WHAT I HOLD IN MY HANDS? DO YOU REALIZE THE POWER I NOW HAVE?
OF **COURSE** YOU DON'T.
THIS DNA SAMPLE FROM REX SPLODE COULD WELL MAKE YOU OBSOLETE. I WOULD NO LONGER **NEED** YOU.
IF ALL GOES ACCORDING TO PLAN I'LL BE ABLE TO MOVE FREELY AMONG THEM, WITHOUT CAUSING ANY PAUSE. THEY'LL ACCEPT ME AS ONE OF THEIR OWN.
I'LL BE ONE OF THEM.
AND FROM THERE I CAN MOVE ON TO **PHASE TWO!**

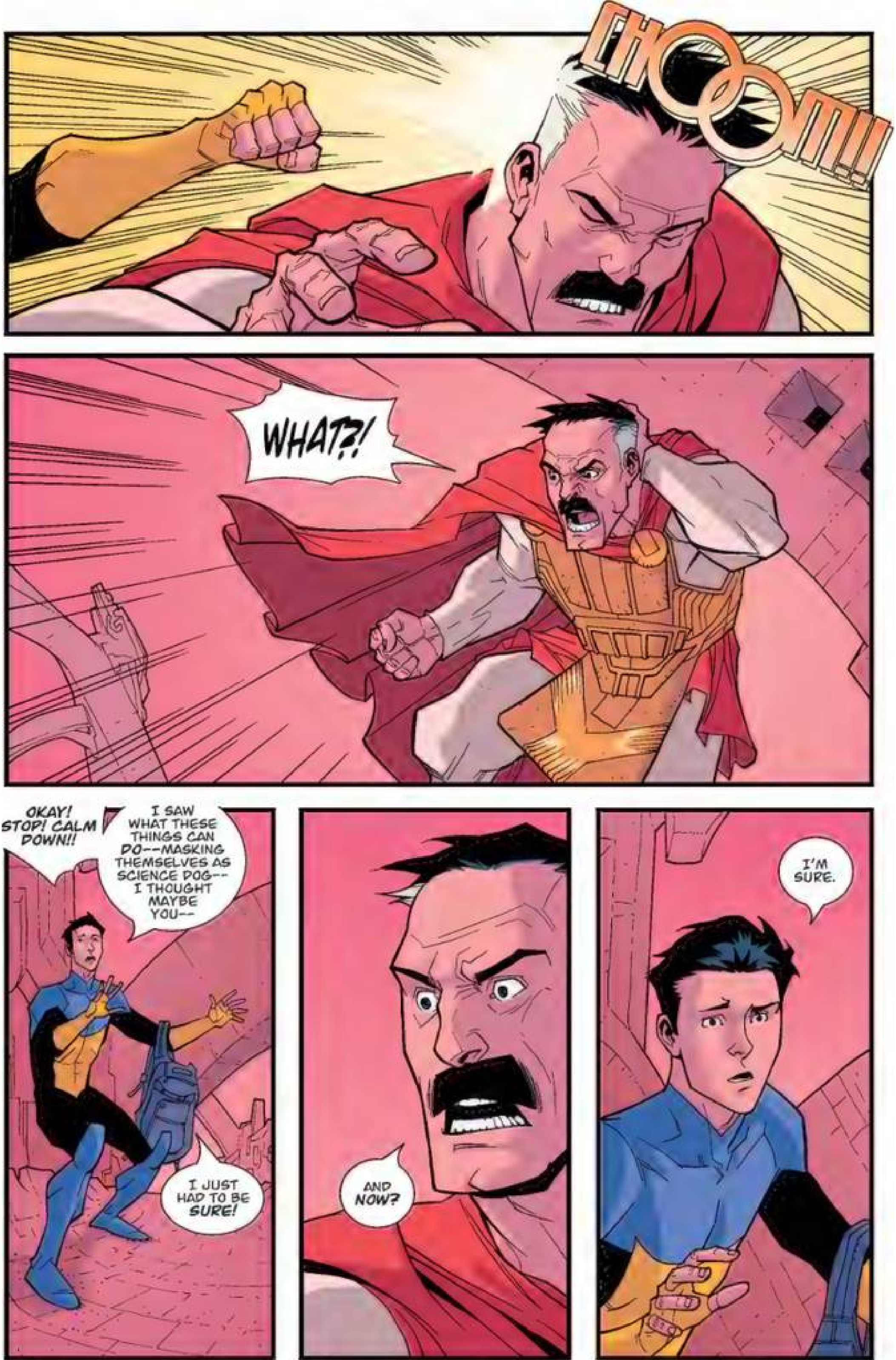

SO--THE FIGHTING IS OVER? WE'RE DONE WITH THAT?
YEAH.
I CAN'T-- THE TERRIBLE THINGS YOU SAID-- THE HORRIFIC THINGS YOU DID--I CAN'T FORGIVE IT--BUT I CAN'T LET IT ERASE THE EIGHTEEN YEARS I HAD WITH THE FATHER I LOVED.
I'VE TRIED... AND I JUST CAN'T.
HOW DID YOU GET HERE?
LEAVE US.

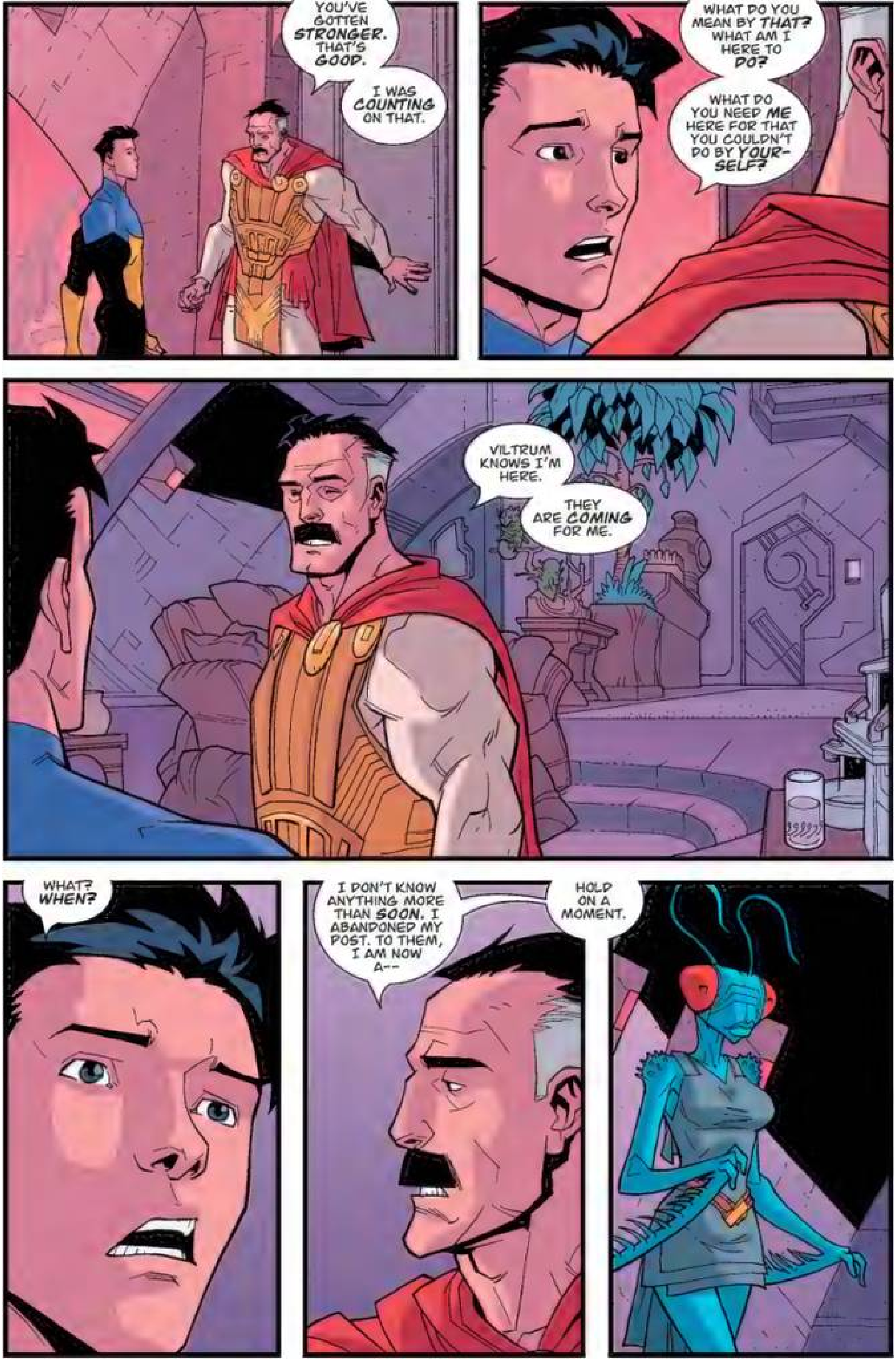

I LIVED AS A VILTRUMITE FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS BEFORE I CAME TO EARTH--BUT WHAT LITTLE TIME I SPENT THERE--CHANGED ME.
I WAS READY TO KILL YOU WHEN YOU DEFIED ME. I WOULD HAVE. THOSE ARE THE WAYS OF THE VILTRUMITE.
YOU WERE WEAK. YOU DESERVED TO DIE.
BUT WHEN IT BECAME CLEAR THAT I WOULD HAVE TO KILL YOU--THAT YOU WOULD NOT JOIN ME--WHEN IT BECAME CLEAR THAT I WOULD HAVE NO OTHER OPTION...
...I COULDN'T DO IT.
I HAD TWO CHOICES. I COULD KILL YOU AND ENSLAVE EARTH AS I WAS MEANT TO. OR I COULD LEAVE EARTH--AND LEAVE YOU.
I CHOSE TO LEAVE.

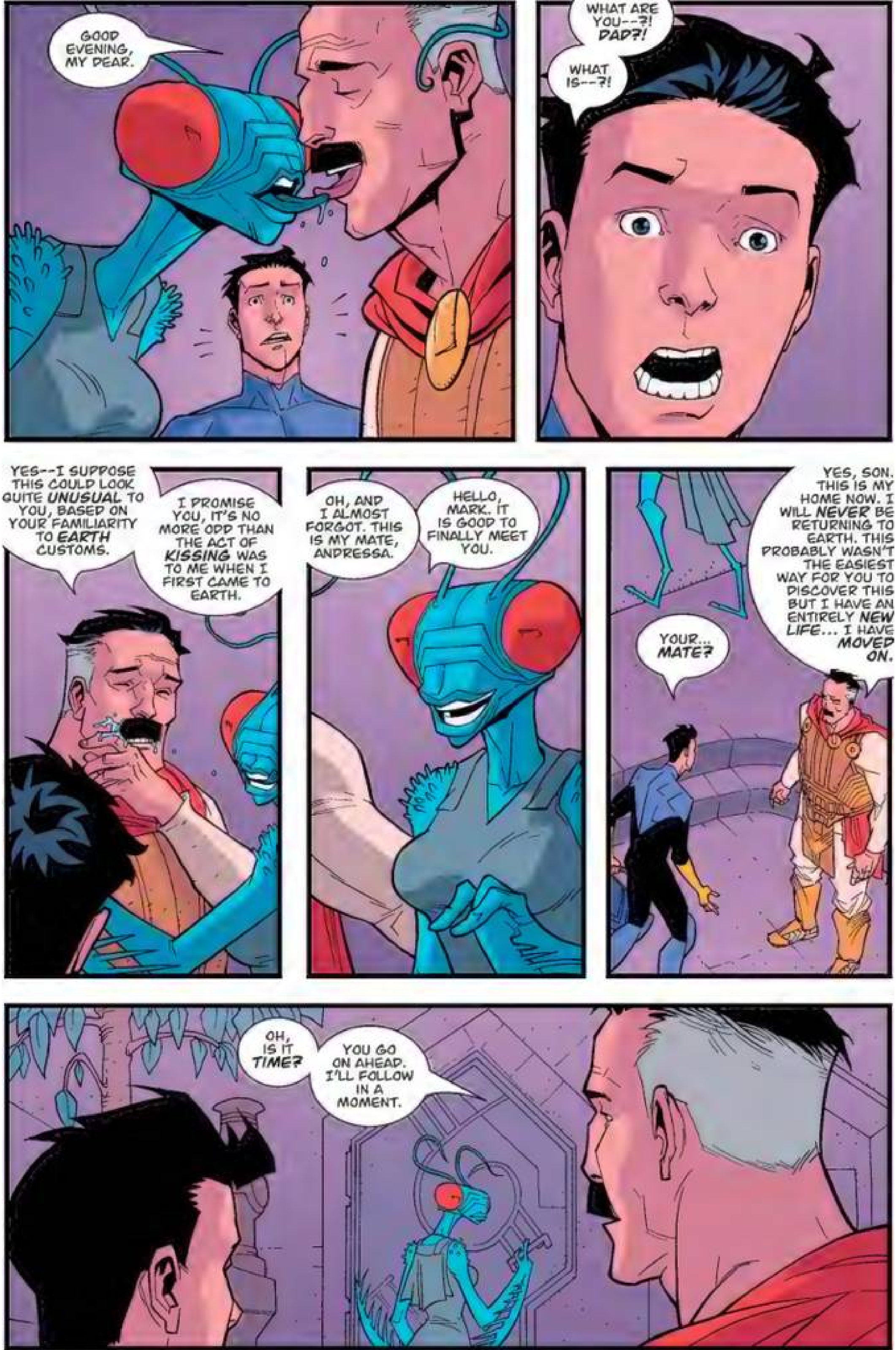

IT WAS NOT A DECISION MADE LIGHTLY. I DECIDED TO TURN MY BACK ON MY VILTRUMITE HERITAGE.
MY OFFENSE WOULD HAVE BEEN NO GREATER HAD I LISTENED TO YOU AND CEASED OUR FIGHT INSTANTLY.
I WAS A *FUGITIVE* FROM MY OWN PEOPLE. IT WOULD ONLY BE A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE THEY LEARNED OF MY *TREACHERY*.
I CHOSE TO **HIDE** RATHER THAN TURN MYSELF IN. IF I COULD CONQUER A SIMILAR WORLD MAYBE THEY WOULD *LESSEN* MY PUNISHMENT.
SO I SET OUT TO FIND SUCH A WORLD.
WHETHER THROUGH SOME KIND OF COSMIC DESTINY OR MERE LUCK I'LL NEVER KNOW, BUT I FOUND THIS WORLD WITHIN A WEEK OF LEAVING EARTH.

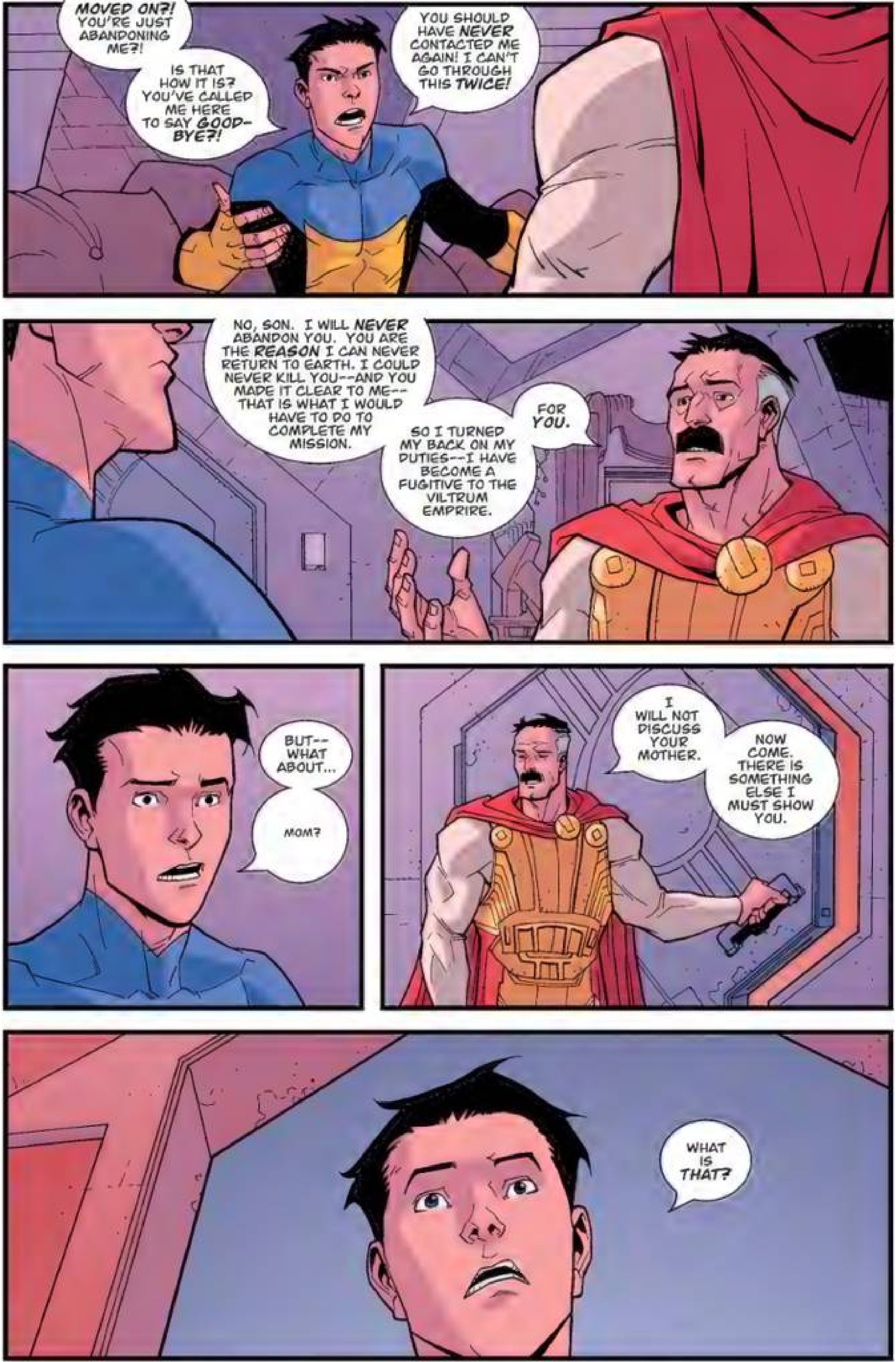

THEY ARE A PEOPLE VASTLY DIFFERENT THAN THOSE OF EARTH. THOUGH THEIR TECHNOLOGY AND ADVANCEMENT AS A SPECIES ARE VERY SIMILAR.
IN SOME WAYS THEY ARE LESS ADVANCED, IN OTHER WAYS, THEY ARE MORE ADVANCED.
I DECIDED ON THIS WORLD ALMOST INSTANTLY.
THEIR LIFE SPANS ARE A MERE FRACTION OF EARTH PEOPLE'S. ROUGHLY ABOUT NINE MONTHS.
BECAUSE OF THIS GENETIC HANDICAP-- THEY HAVE EVOLVED TO THE POINT WHERE LEARNING IS AN ALMOST INSTANTANEOUS PROCESS ACHIEVED DURING THE ACTION THEY ARE ATTEMPTING TO LEARN.
THEIR ELDERS ARE THE RULING CLASS. THE ELDEST KNOWN MEMBER OF THE SPECIES IS CROWNED RULER OF THE ENTIRE PLANET.
THEY CYCLED THROUGH LEADERS AT A VERY RAPID PACE.
NEEDLESS TO SAY IT WAS INCREDIBLY EASY TO ASSUME CONTROL OF THIS PLANET. ONCE THEY LEARNED HOW OLD I WAS--I WAS ELECTED RULER ALMOST IMMEDIATELY.
THINGS MOVE VERY FAST HERE.

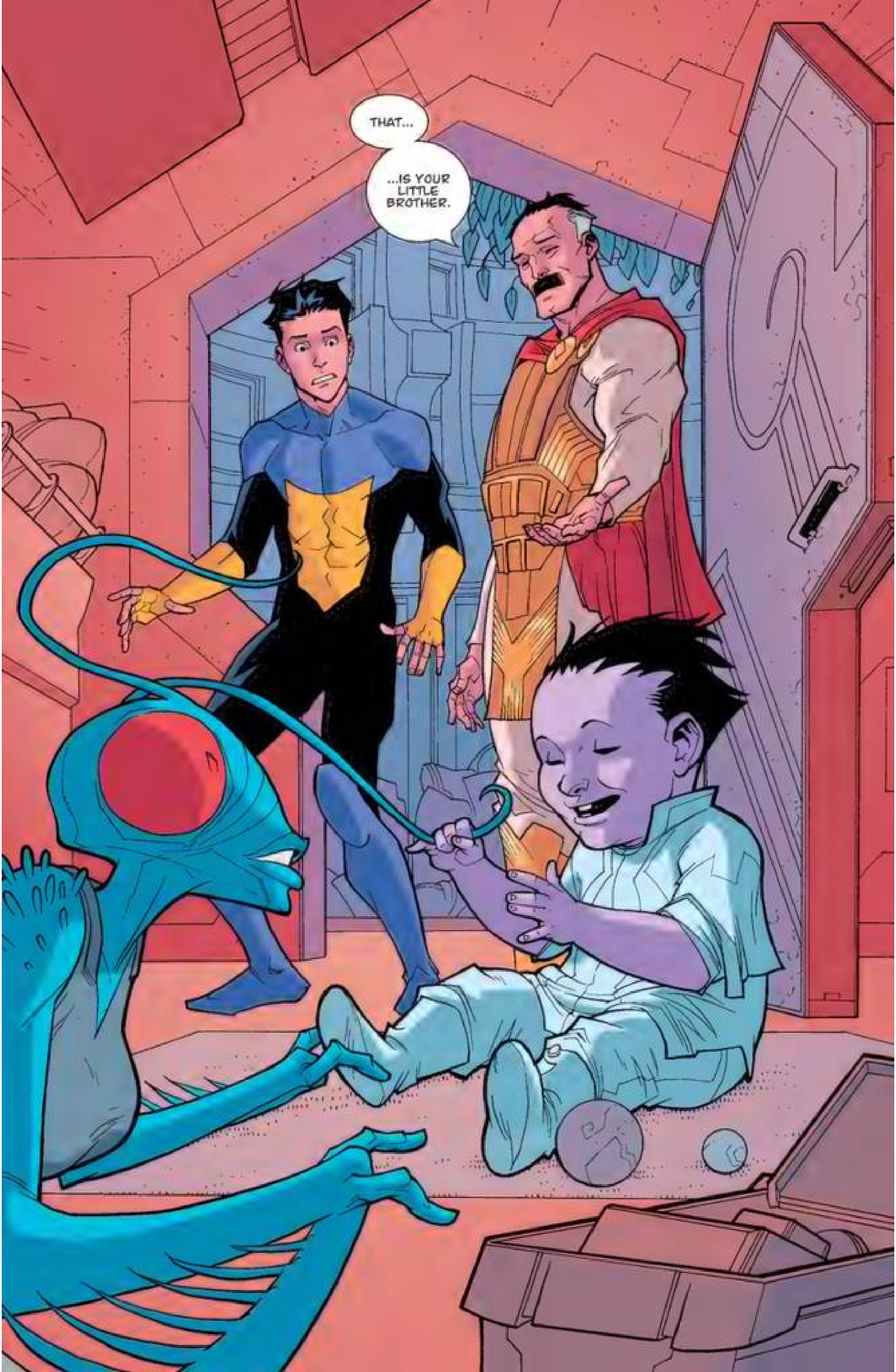

THEY JUST HANDED THE WHOLE PLANET OVER TO YOU? NO QUESTIONS ASKED?
YES, SON-- THEY *DID*.
THINGS ARE VERY DIFFERENT HERE, MARK. THEIR LIFE SPAN ACCOUNTS FOR A GREAT MANY DIFFERENCES.
AFTER NINE MONTHS HERE, NO ONE WILL BE ALIVE TO REMEMBER HOW THEIR PLANET WAS BEFORE MY RULE. THINK ABOUT THAT.
YOU OUT LIVE AN ENTIRE GENERATION IN *HALF A YEAR*.
I SUPPOSE YOU'RE RIGHT. I CAN SEE HOW THAT WOULD MAKE A TAKEOVER EASIER TO ACCEPT.
COME. THERE IS STILL *MUCH* TO DISCUSS.
WAIT A MINUTE, THOUGH--YOU THOUGHT SENDING ONE OF THEM DISGUISED AS *SCIENCE DOG* WOULD MAKE ME WANT TO HELP THEM?
HOW DID YOU EXPECT *THAT* TO FOOL ME?
I WANTED TO CHOOSE A FORM YOU WOULDN'T FIND IMMEDIATELY *THREATENING*. SOMETHING COMFORTING TO YOU. I KNOW HOW MUCH YOU ALWAYS LOVED THAT CARTOON DOG.
THEY WERE NEVER SUPPOSED TO TRY TO CONVINCE YOU THEY ACTUALLY *WERE* SCIENCE DOG. THAT'S JUST THEM MISUNDERSTANDING MY DIRECTIONS.
I *SEE*.

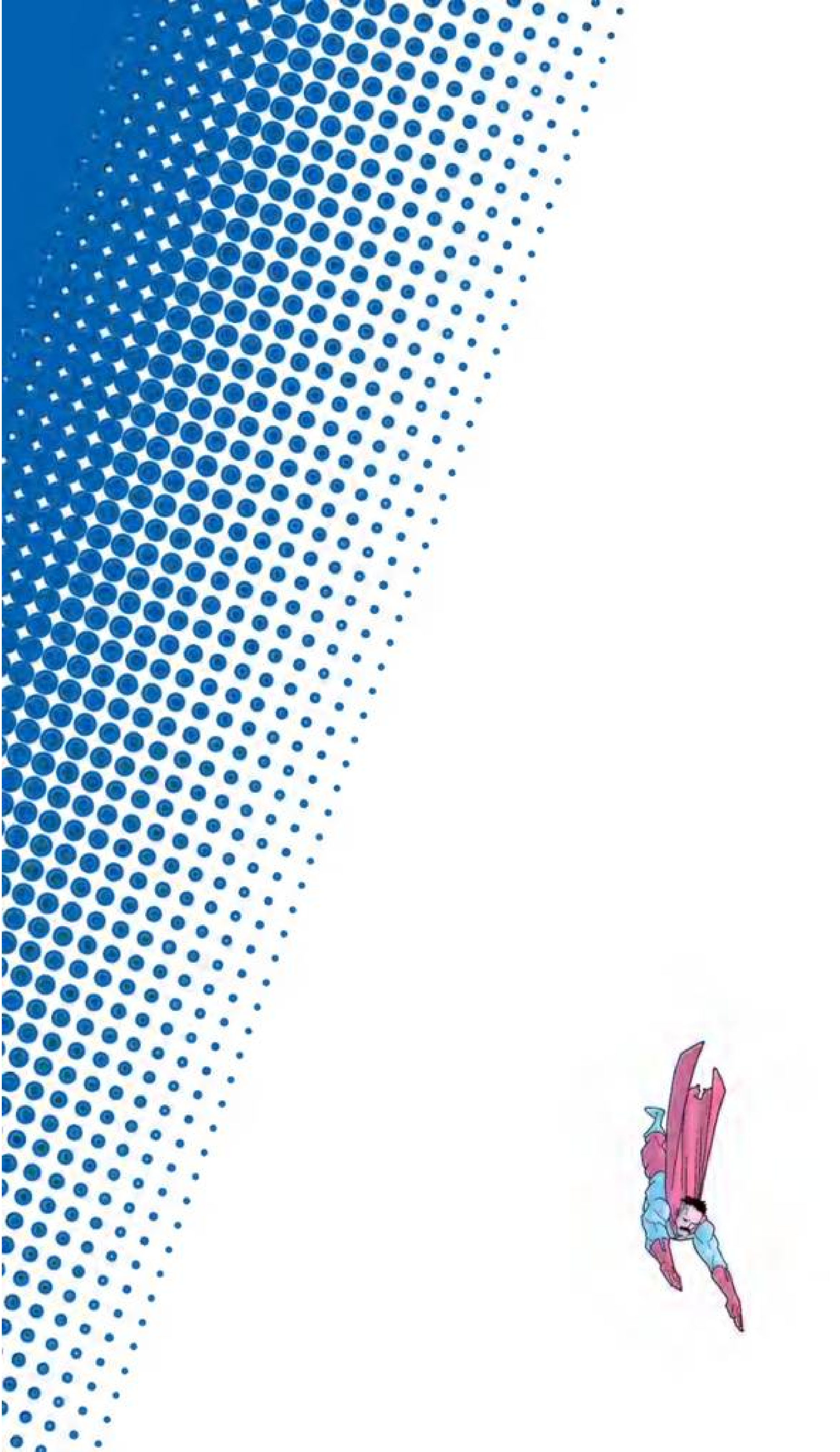

THOOM!!
WHAT?!
OKAY! STOP! CALM DOWN!!
I SAW WHAT THESE THINGS CAN DO--MASKING THEMSELVES AS SCIENCE DOG--I THOUGHT MAYBE YOU--
I JUST HAD TO BE SURE!
AND NOW?
I'M SURE.


YOU'VE GOTTEN **STRONGER.** THAT'S **GOOD.**
I WAS **COUNTING** ON THAT.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY **THAT?** WHAT AM I HERE TO **DO?**
WHAT DO YOU NEED **ME** HERE FOR THAT YOU COULDN'T DO BY **YOURSELF?**
VILTRUM KNOWS I'M HERE.
THEY ARE **COMING** FOR ME.
WHAT? **WHEN?**
I DON'T KNOW ANYTHING MORE THAN **SOON.** I ABANDONED MY POST. TO THEM, I AM NOW A--
HOLD ON A MOMENT.

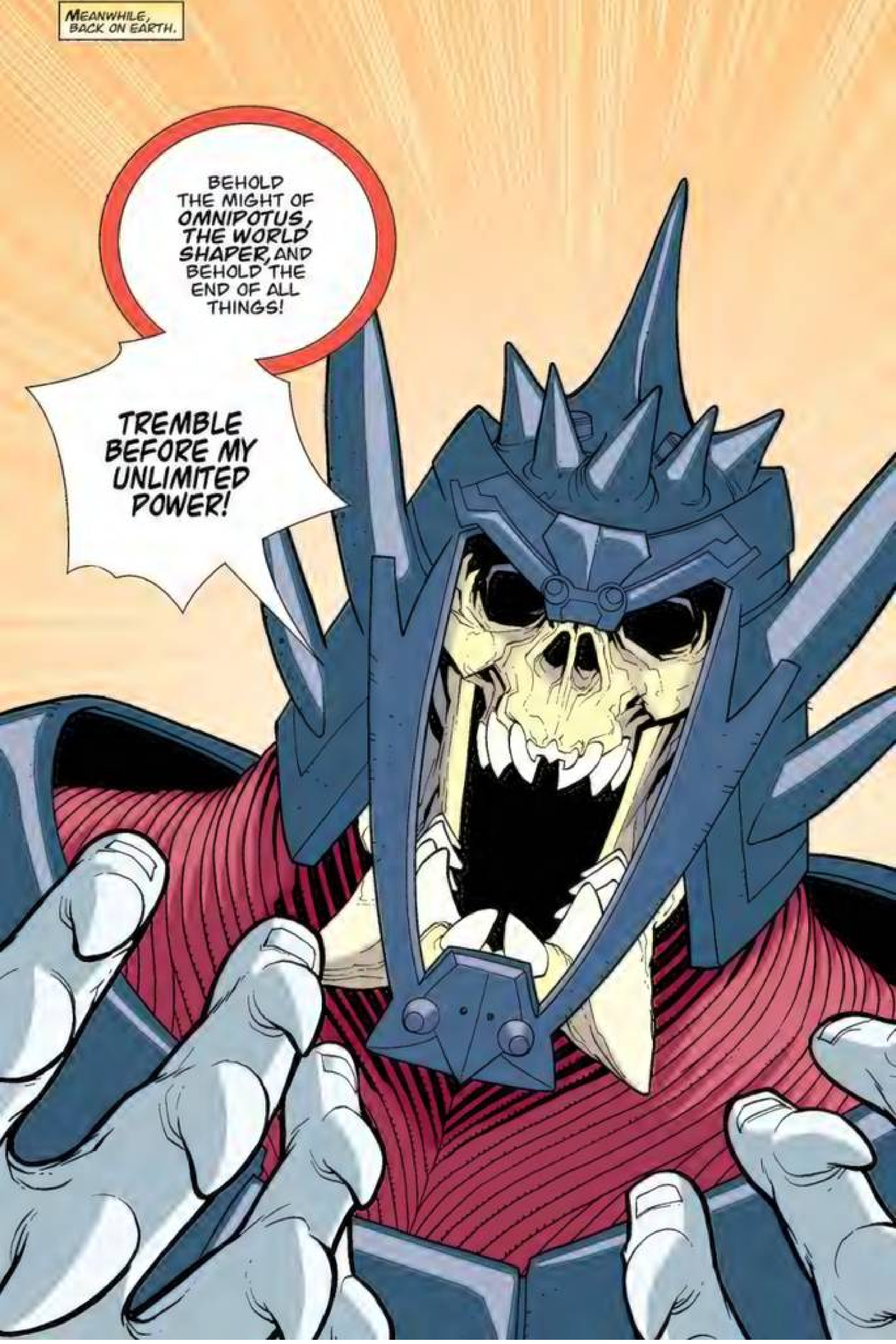

GOOD EVENING, MY DEAR.
WHAT ARE YOU--?! *DAD?!*
WHAT IS--?!
YES--I SUPPOSE THIS COULD LOOK QUITE *UNUSUAL* TO YOU, BASED ON YOUR FAMILIARITY TO *EARTH* CUSTOMS.
I PROMISE YOU, IT'S NO MORE ODD THAN THE ACT OF *KISSING* WAS TO ME WHEN I FIRST CAME TO EARTH.
OH, AND I ALMOST FORGOT. THIS IS MY MATE, ANDRESSA.
HELLO, MARK. IT IS GOOD TO FINALLY MEET YOU.
YES, SON. THIS IS MY HOME NOW. I WILL *NEVER* BE RETURNING TO EARTH. THIS PROBABLY WASN'T THE EASIEST WAY FOR YOU TO DISCOVER THIS BUT I HAVE AN ENTIRELY *NEW LIFE*... I HAVE *MOVED ON.*
YOUR... *MATE?*
OH, IS IT *TIME?*
YOU GO ON AHEAD. I'LL FOLLOW IN A MOMENT.

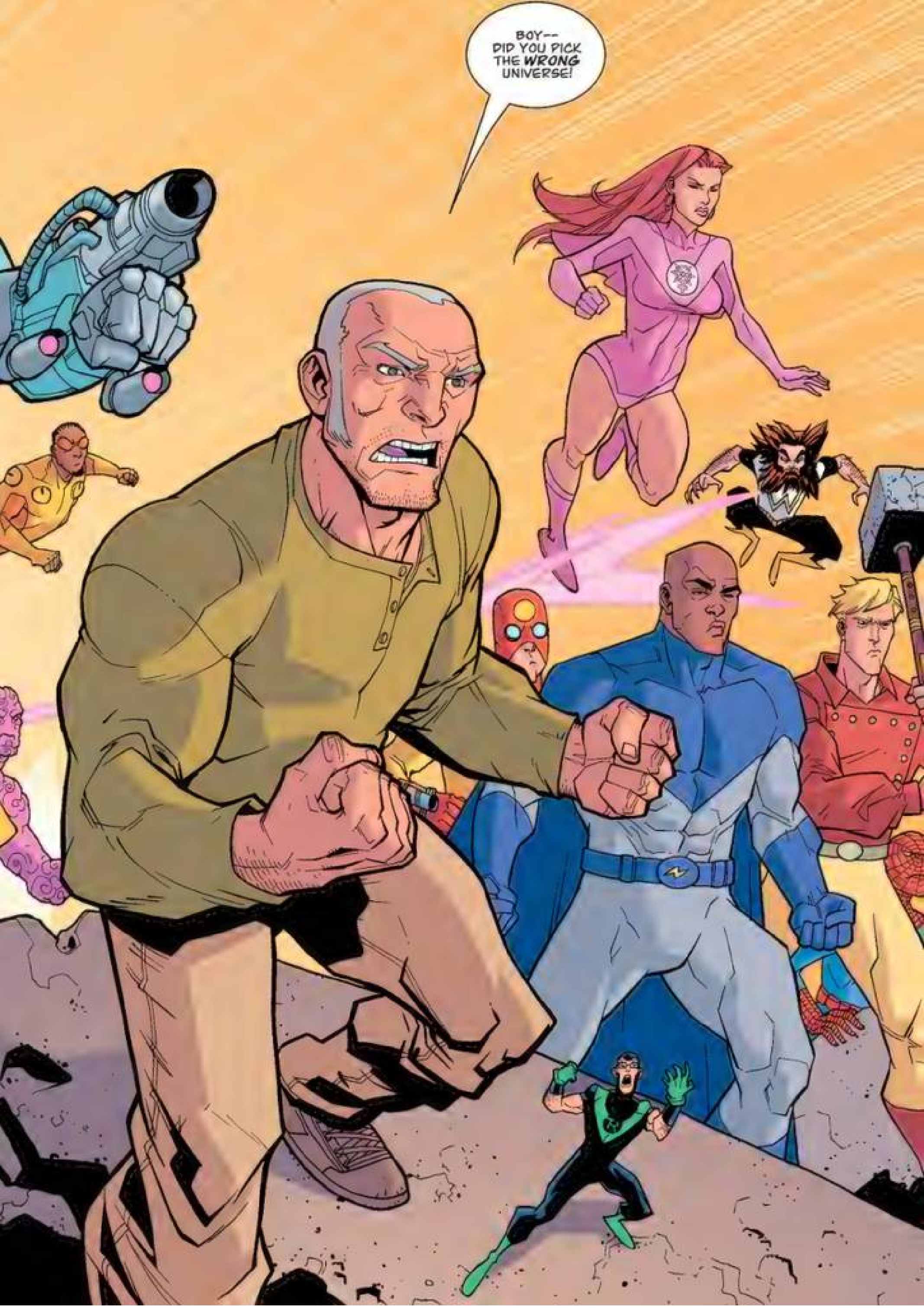

MOVED ON?! YOU'RE JUST ABANDONING ME?!
IS THAT HOW IT IS? YOU'VE CALLED ME HERE TO SAY GOOD-BYE?!
YOU SHOULD HAVE NEVER CONTACTED ME AGAIN! I CAN'T GO THROUGH THIS TWICE!
NO, SON. I WILL NEVER ABANDON YOU. YOU ARE THE REASON I CAN NEVER RETURN TO EARTH. I COULD NEVER KILL YOU--AND YOU MADE IT CLEAR TO ME--THAT IS WHAT I WOULD HAVE TO DO TO COMPLETE MY MISSION.
SO I TURNED MY BACK ON MY DUTIES--I HAVE BECOME A FUGITIVE TO THE VILTRUM EMPRIRE.
FOR YOU.
BUT-- WHAT ABOUT...
MOM?
I WILL NOT DISCUSS YOUR MOTHER.
NOW COME. THERE IS SOMETHING ELSE I MUST SHOW YOU.
WHAT IS THAT?

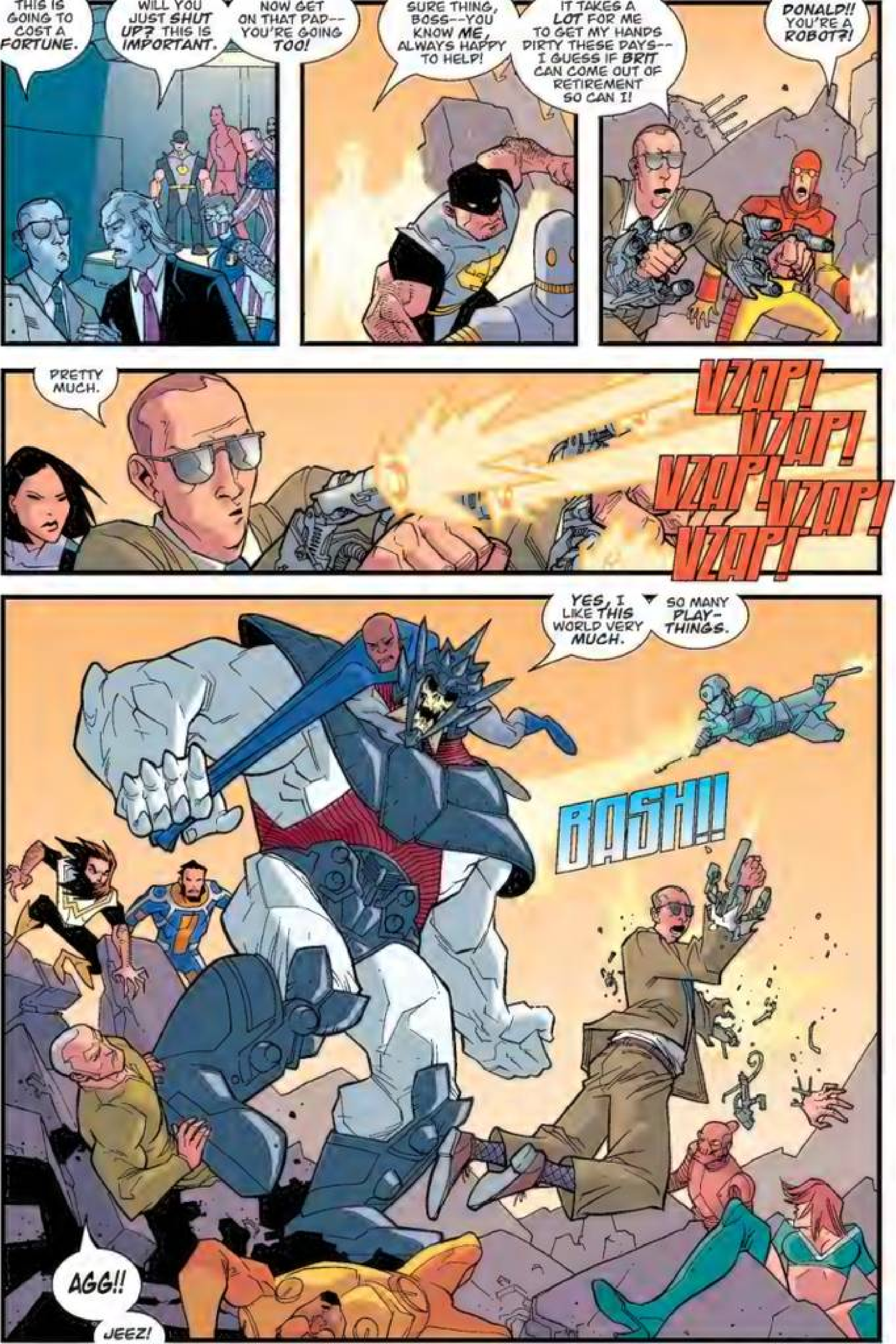

THAT...
...IS YOUR LITTLE BROTHER.

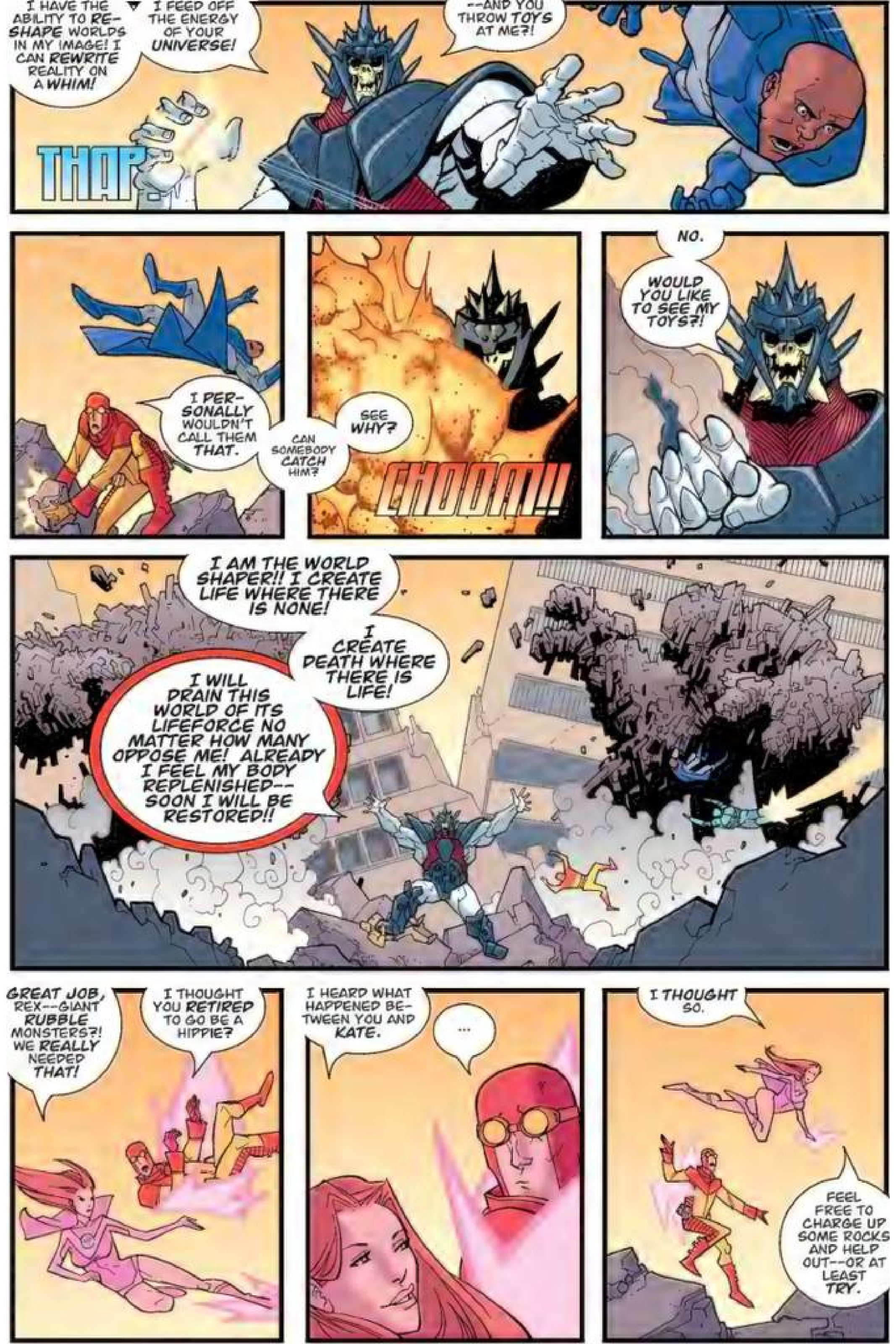


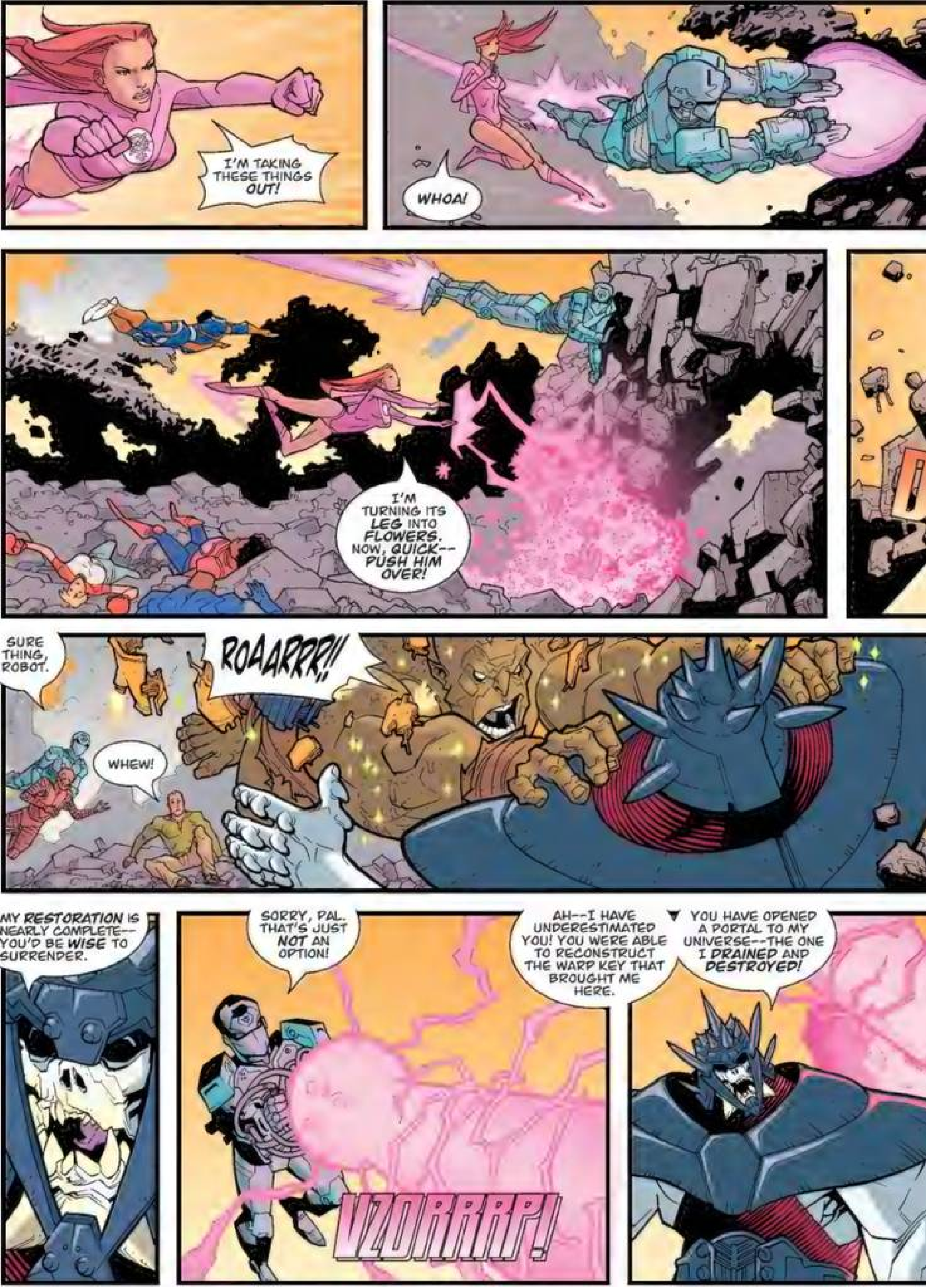
ISSUE TWENTY-SEVEN

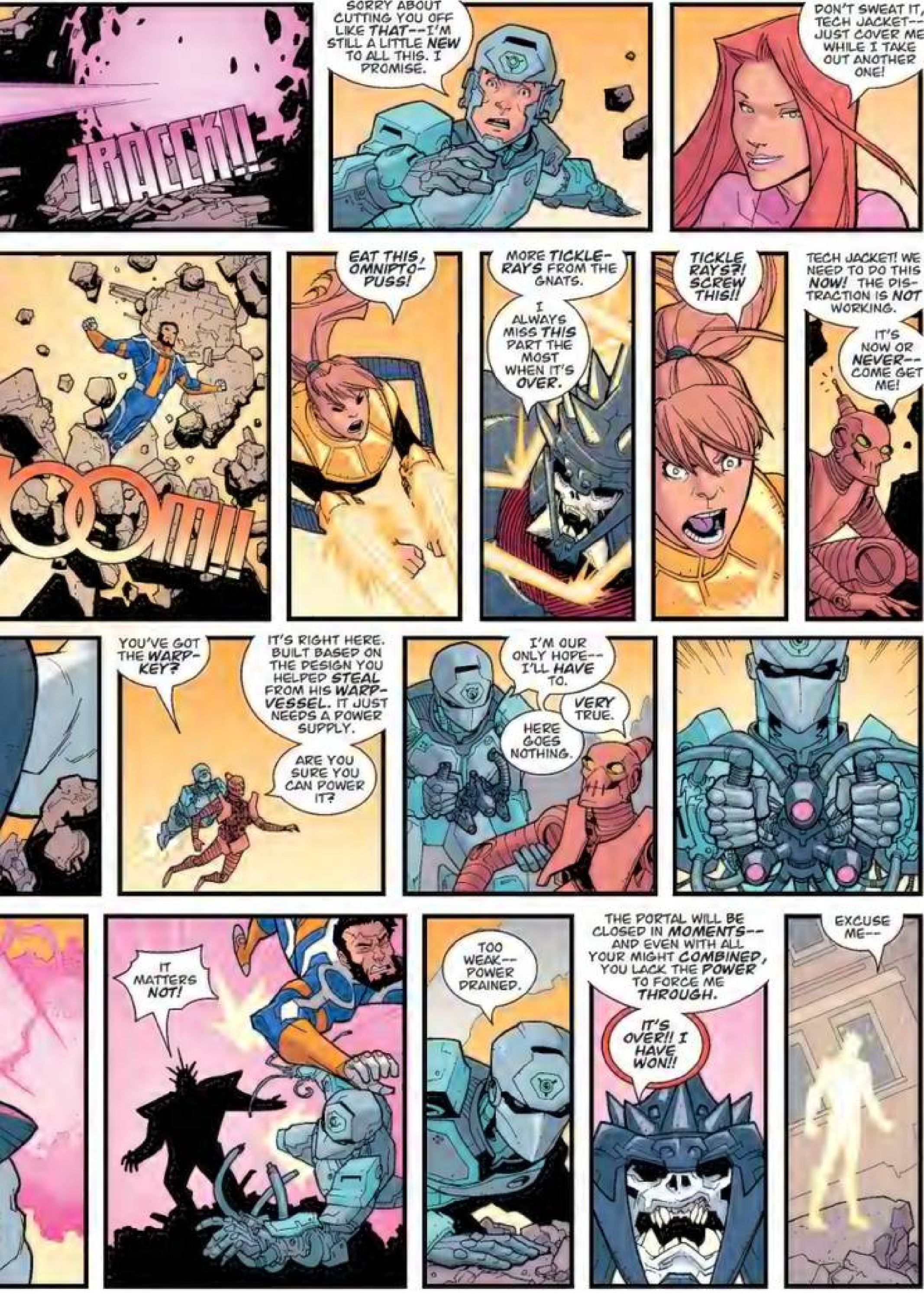

MEANWHILE, BACK ON EARTH.
BEHOLD THE MIGHT OF OMNIPOTUS, THE WORLD SHAPER, AND BEHOLD THE END OF ALL THINGS!
TREMBLE BEFORE MY UNLIMITED POWER!

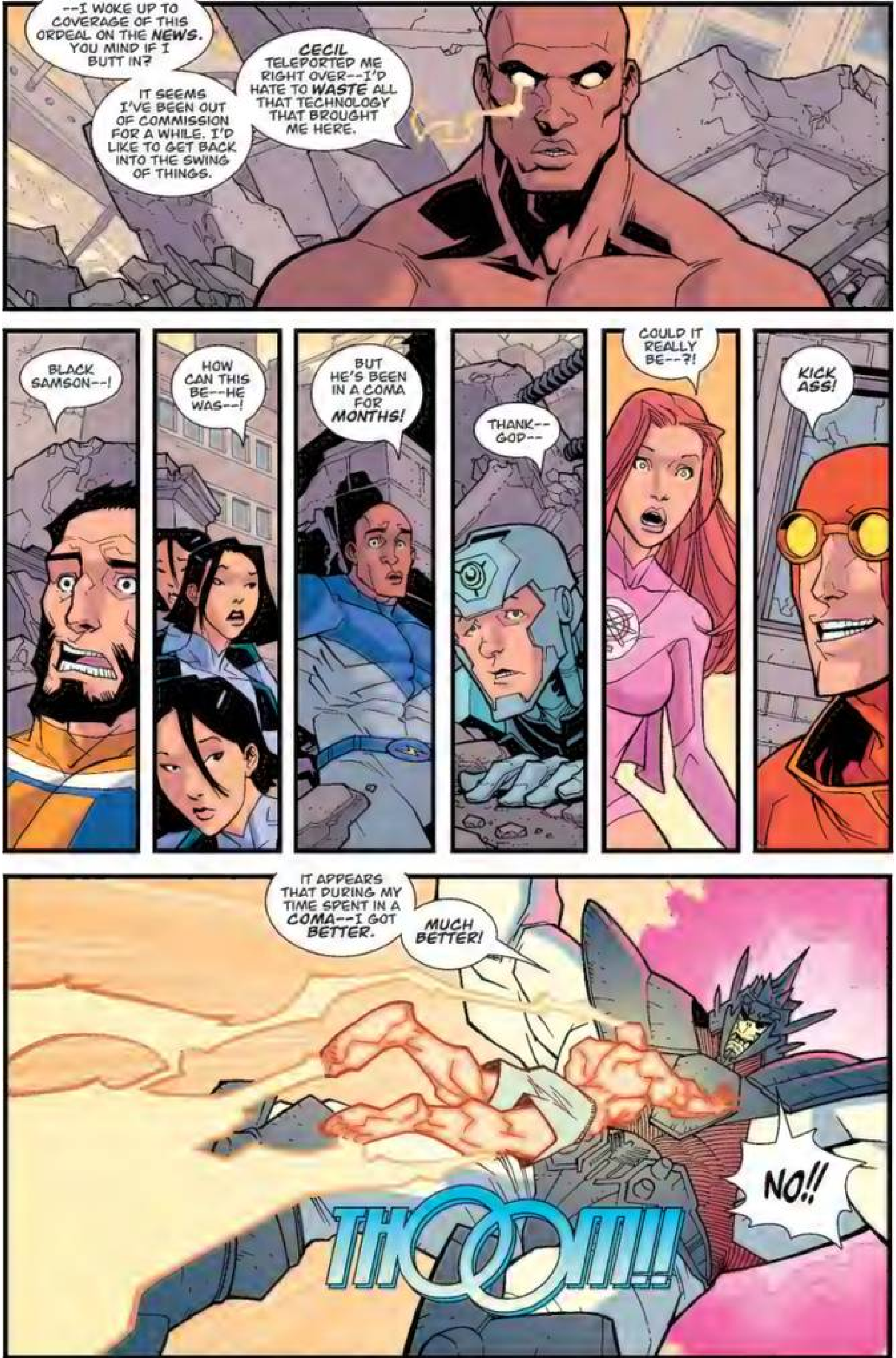

BOY-- DID YOU PICK THE *WRONG* UNIVERSE!

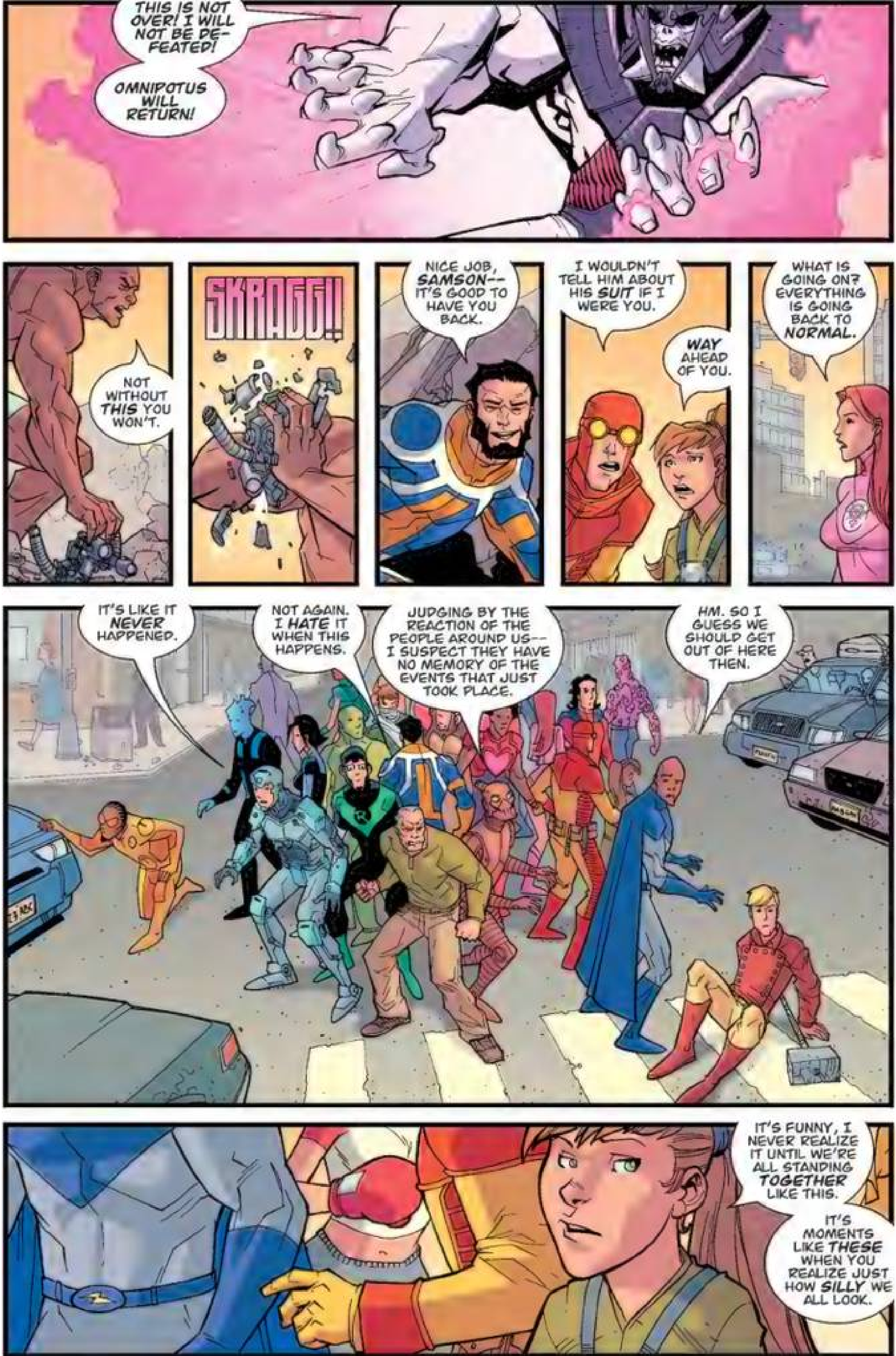

THIS IS GOING TO COST A FORTUNE.
WILL YOU JUST SHUT UP? THIS IS IMPORTANT.
NOW GET ON THAT PAD-- YOU'RE GOING TOO!
SURE THING, BOSS--YOU KNOW ME, ALWAYS HAPPY TO HELP!
IT TAKES A LOT FOR ME TO GET MY HANDS DIRTY THESE DAYS-- I GUESS IF BRIT CAN COME OUT OF RETIREMENT SO CAN I!
DONALD!! YOU'RE A ROBOT?!
PRETTY MUCH.
VZAP!
VZAP!
VZAP!
VZAP!
VZAP!
YES, I LIKE THIS WORLD VERY MUCH.
SO MANY PLAY-THINGS.
BASH!!
AGG!!
JEEZ!

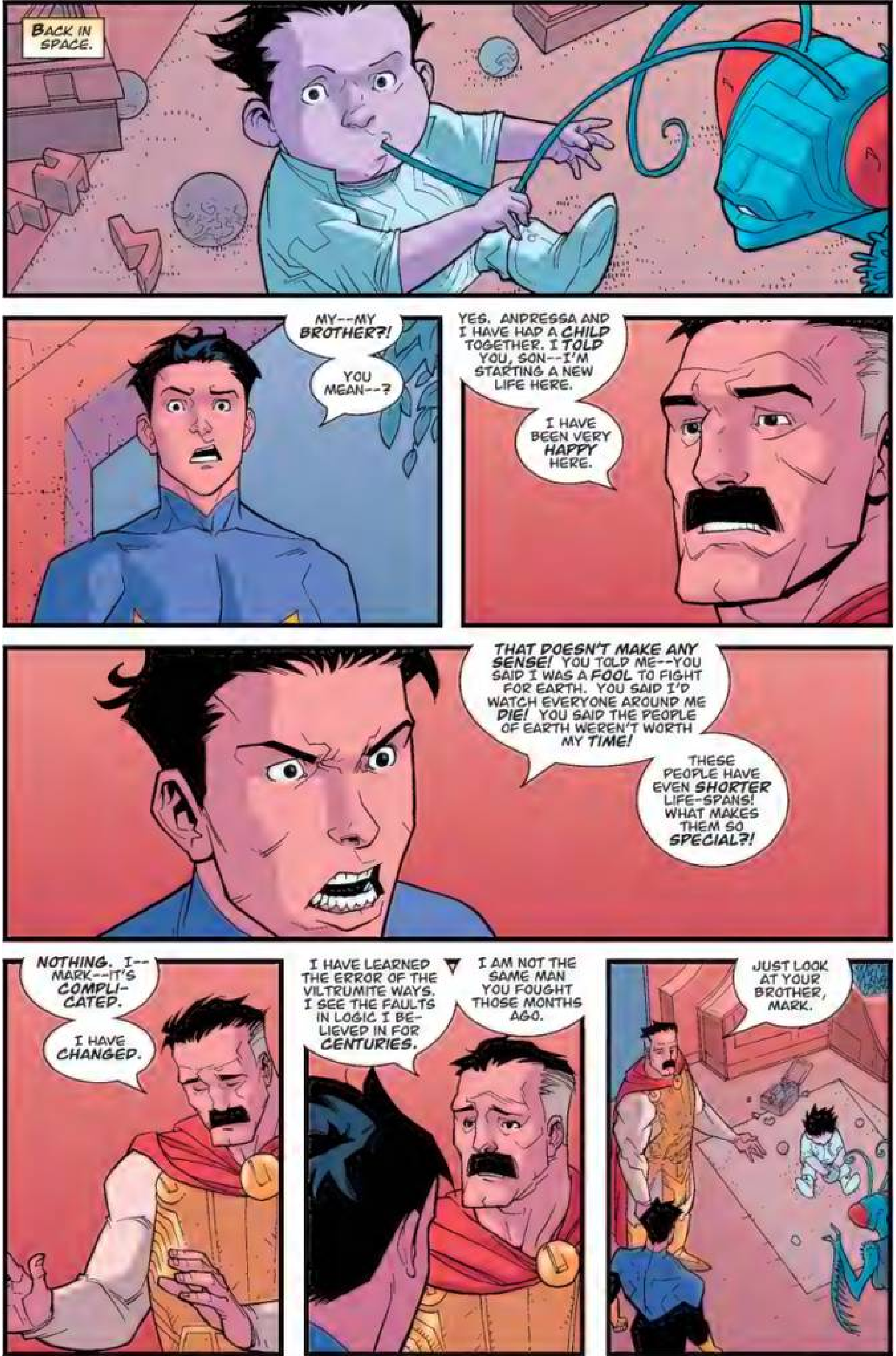

I HAVE THE ABILITY TO RESHAPE WORLDS IN MY IMAGE! I CAN REWRITE REALITY ON A WHIM!
I FEED OFF THE ENERGY OF YOUR UNIVERSE!
--AND YOU THROW TOYS AT ME?!
THAP!
I PERSONALLY WOULDN'T CALL THEM THAT.
CAN SOMEBODY CATCH HIM?
SEE WHY?
CHOOM!!
NO.
WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE MY TOYS?!
I AM THE WORLD SHAPER!! I CREATE LIFE WHERE THERE IS NONE!
I CREATE DEATH WHERE THERE IS LIFE!
I WILL DRAIN THIS WORLD OF ITS LIFEFORCE NO MATTER HOW MANY OPPOSE ME! ALREADY I FEEL MY BODY REPLENISHED-- SOON I WILL BE RESTORED!!
GREAT JOB, REX--GIANT RUBBLE MONSTERS?! WE REALLY NEEDED THAT!
I THOUGHT YOU RETIRED TO GO BE A HIPPIE?
I HEARD WHAT HAPPENED BETWEEN YOU AND KATE.
...
I THOUGHT SO.
FEEL FREE TO CHARGE UP SOME ROCKS AND HELP OUT--OR AT LEAST TRY.

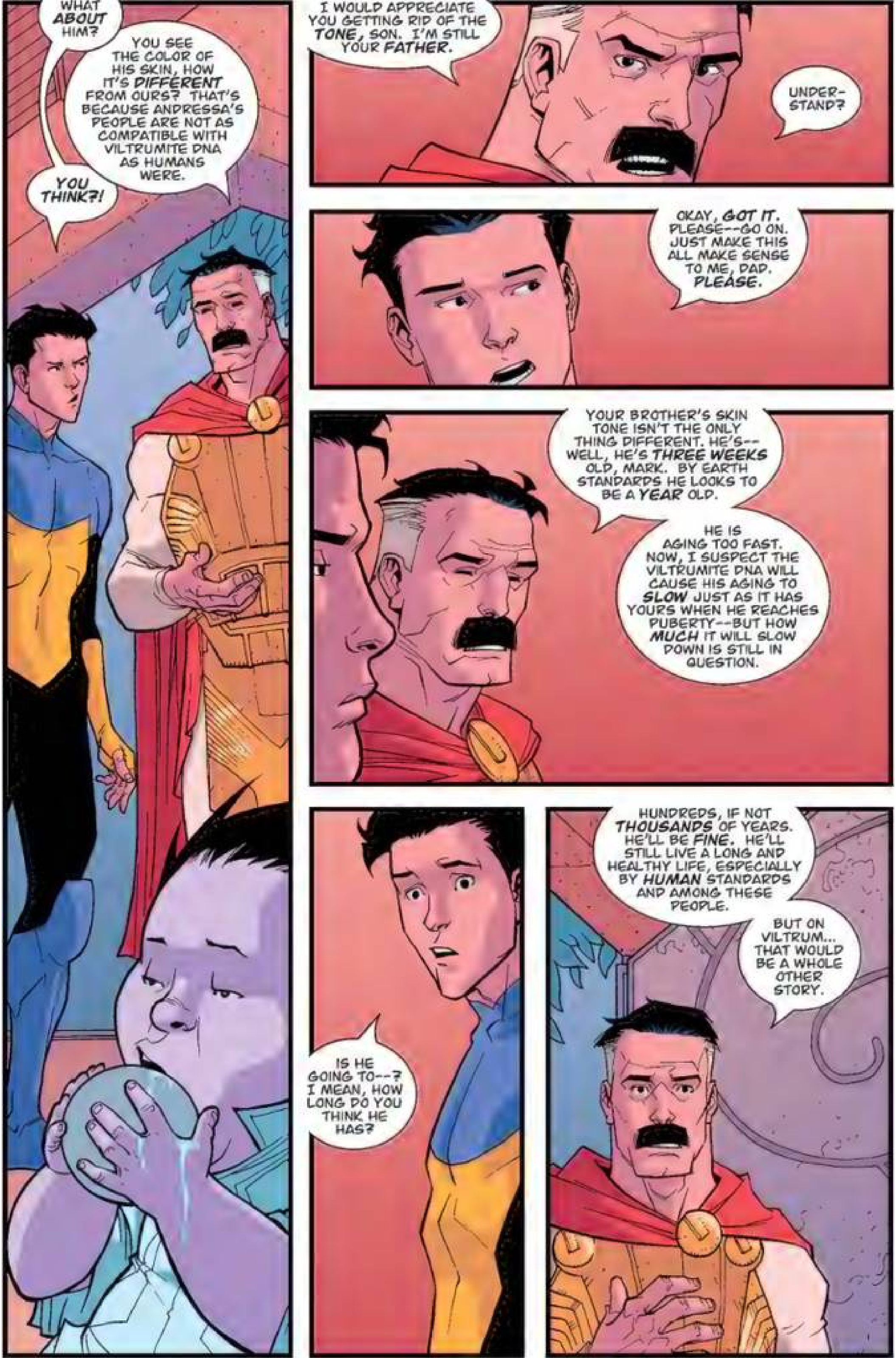

I'M TAKING THESE THINGS *OUT!*
WHOA!
I'M TURNING ITS *LEG* INTO *FLOWERS.* NOW, *QUICK*-- PUSH HIM OVER!
SURE THING, ROBOT.
ROAARRR!!
WHEW!
MY *RESTORATION* IS NEARLY COMPLETE-- YOU'D BE *WISE* TO SURRENDER.
SORRY, PAL. THAT'S JUST *NOT* AN OPTION!
VZORRRP!
AH--I HAVE UNDERESTIMATED YOU! YOU WERE ABLE TO RECONSTRUCT THE WARP KEY THAT BROUGHT ME HERE.
YOU HAVE OPENED A PORTAL TO MY UNIVERSE--THE ONE I *DRAINED* AND *DESTROYED!*

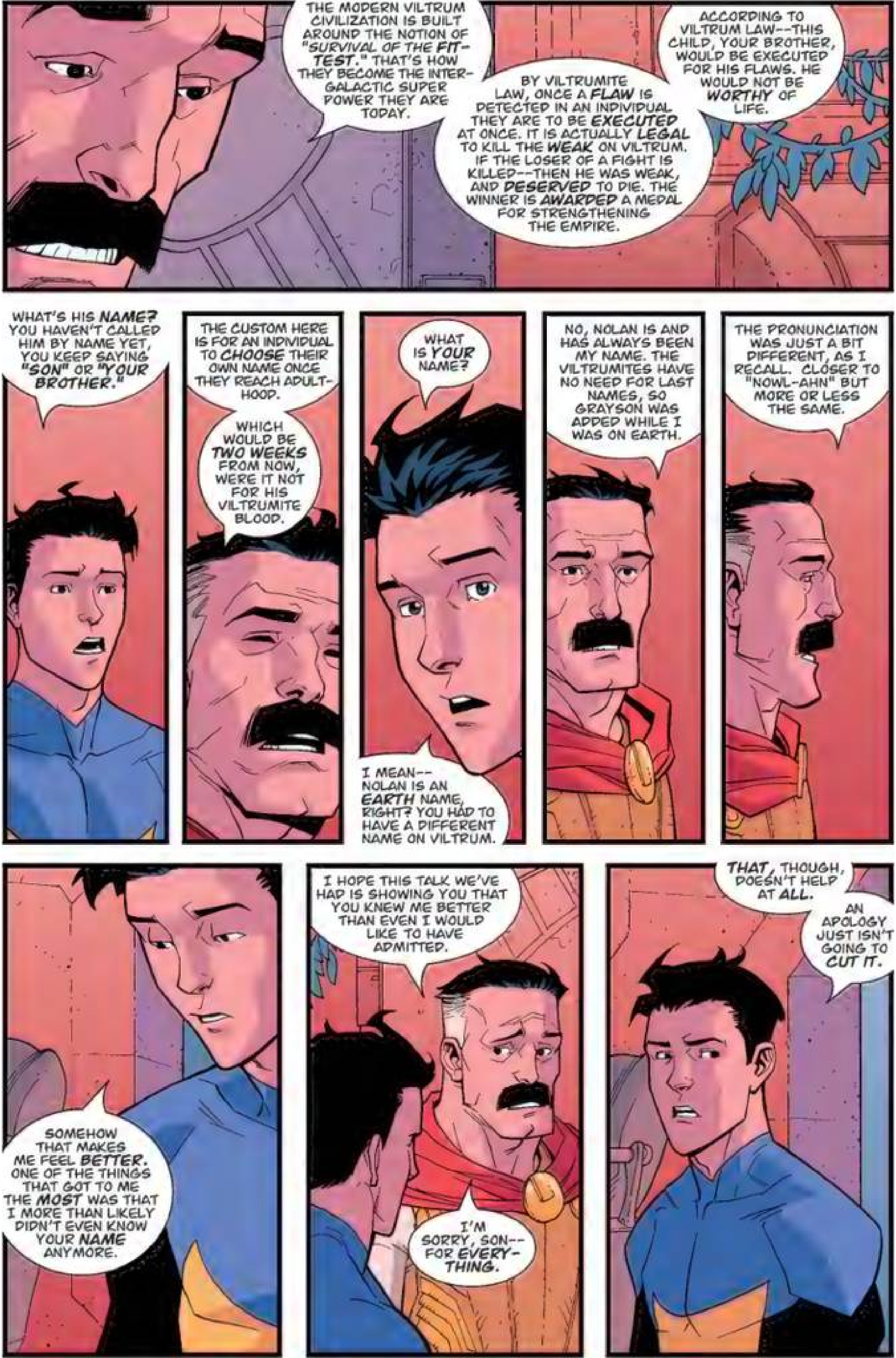

ZRACK!!
SORRY ABOUT CUTTING YOU OFF LIKE THAT--I'M STILL A LITTLE NEW TO ALL THIS. I PROMISE.
DON'T SWEAT IT, TECH JACKET--JUST COVER ME WHILE I TAKE OUT ANOTHER ONE!
OOM!!!
EAT THIS, OMNIPTO-PUSS!
MORE TICKLE-RAYS FROM THE GNATS.
I ALWAYS MISS THIS PART THE MOST WHEN IT'S OVER.
TICKLE RAYS?! SCREW THIS!!
TECH JACKET! WE NEED TO DO THIS NOW! THE DISTRACTION IS NOT WORKING.
IT'S NOW OR NEVER--COME GET ME!
YOU'VE GOT THE WARP-KEY?
IT'S RIGHT HERE. BUILT BASED ON THE DESIGN YOU HELPED STEAL FROM HIS WARP-VESSEL. IT JUST NEEDS A POWER SUPPLY.
ARE YOU SURE YOU CAN POWER IT?
I'M OUR ONLY HOPE--I'LL HAVE TO.
VERY TRUE.
HERE GOES NOTHING.
IT MATTERS NOT!
TOO WEAK--POWER DRAINED.
THE PORTAL WILL BE CLOSED IN MOMENTS--AND EVEN WITH ALL YOUR MIGHT COMBINED, YOU LACK THE POWER TO FORCE ME THROUGH.
IT'S OVER!! I HAVE WON!!
EXCUSE ME--

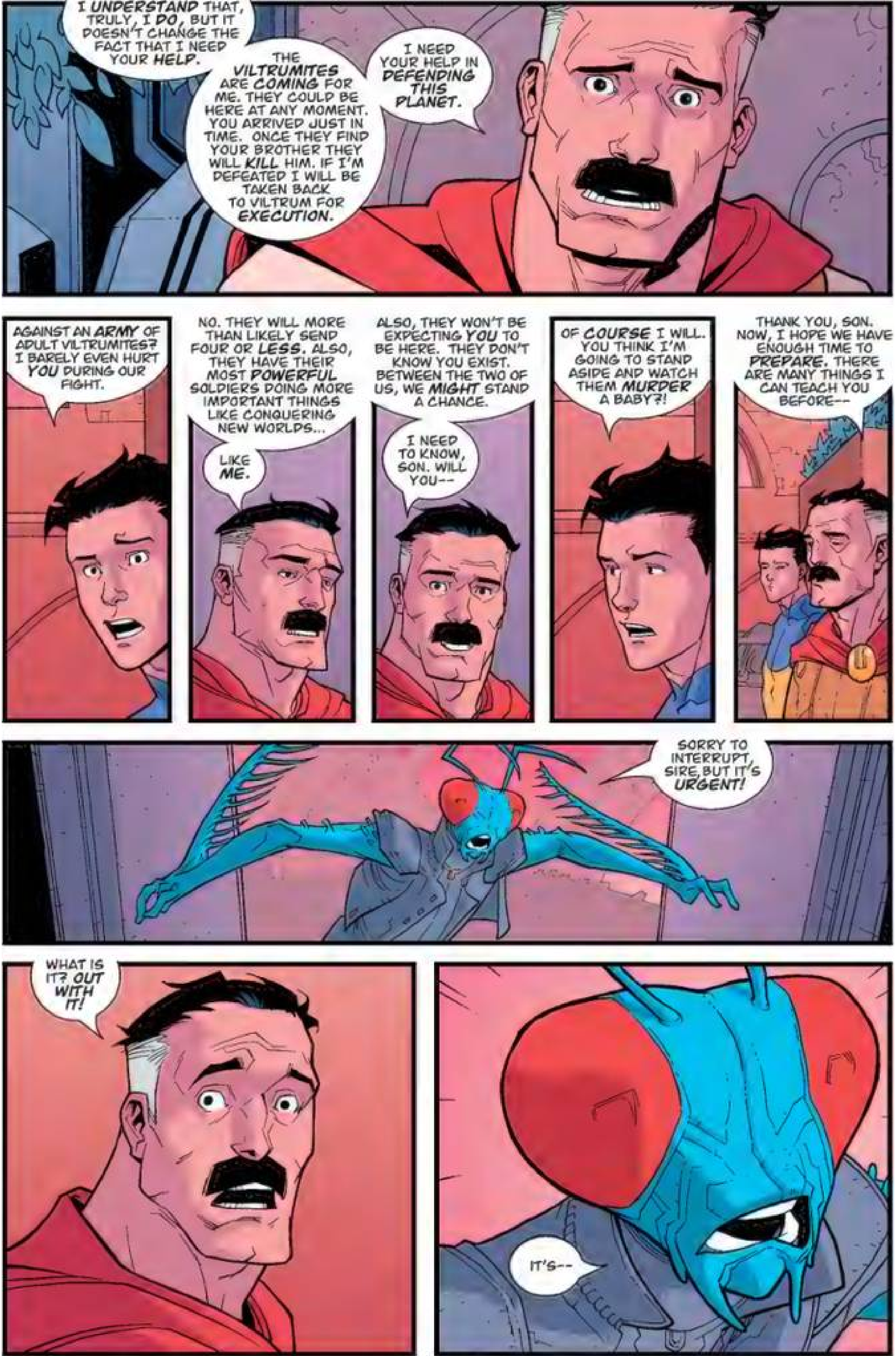

--I WOKE UP TO COVERAGE OF THIS ORDEAL ON THE NEWS. YOU MIND IF I BUTT IN?
IT SEEMS I'VE BEEN OUT OF COMMISSION FOR A WHILE. I'D LIKE TO GET BACK INTO THE SWING OF THINGS.
CECIL TELEPORTED ME RIGHT OVER--I'D HATE TO WASTE ALL THAT TECHNOLOGY THAT BROUGHT ME HERE.
BLACK SAMSON--!
HOW CAN THIS BE--HE WAS--!
BUT HE'S BEEN IN A COMA FOR MONTHS!
THANK--GOD--
COULD IT REALLY BE--?!
KICK ASS!
IT APPEARS THAT DURING MY TIME SPENT IN A COMA--I GOT BETTER.
MUCH BETTER!
NO!!
THOOM!!

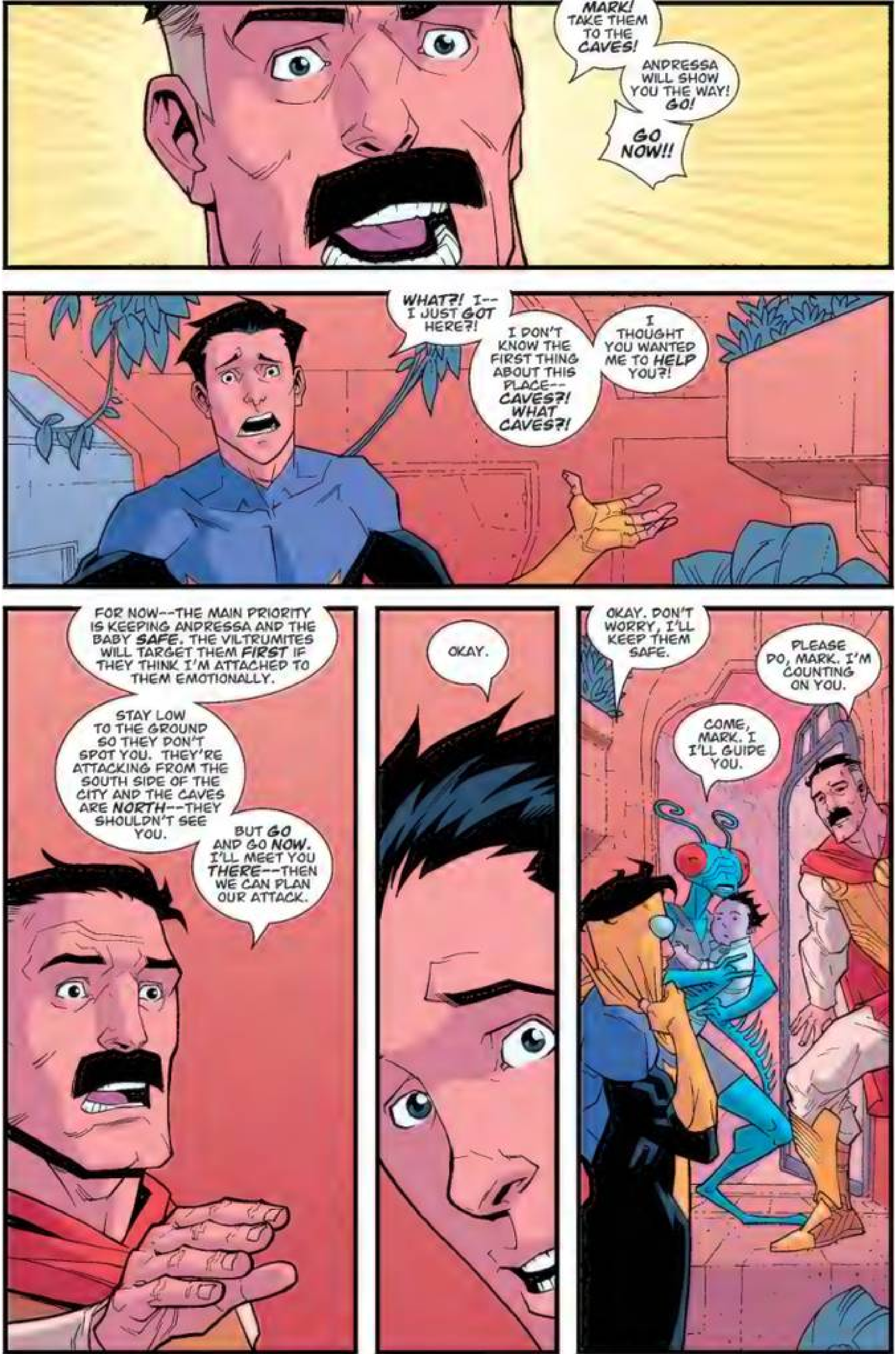

THIS IS NOT OVER! I WILL NOT BE DEFEATED!
OMNIPOTUS WILL RETURN!
NOT WITHOUT THIS YOU WON'T.
SKRAGG!!
NICE JOB, SAMSON-- IT'S GOOD TO HAVE YOU BACK.
I WOULDN'T TELL HIM ABOUT HIS SUIT IF I WERE YOU.
WAY AHEAD OF YOU.
WHAT IS GOING ON? EVERYTHING IS GOING BACK TO NORMAL.
IT'S LIKE IT NEVER HAPPENED.
NOT AGAIN. I HATE IT WHEN THIS HAPPENS.
JUDGING BY THE REACTION OF THE PEOPLE AROUND US-- I SUSPECT THEY HAVE NO MEMORY OF THE EVENTS THAT JUST TOOK PLACE.
HM. SO I GUESS WE SHOULD GET OUT OF HERE THEN.
IT'S FUNNY, I NEVER REALIZE IT UNTIL WE'RE ALL STANDING TOGETHER LIKE THIS.
IT'S MOMENTS LIKE THESE WHEN YOU REALIZE JUST HOW SILLY WE ALL LOOK.

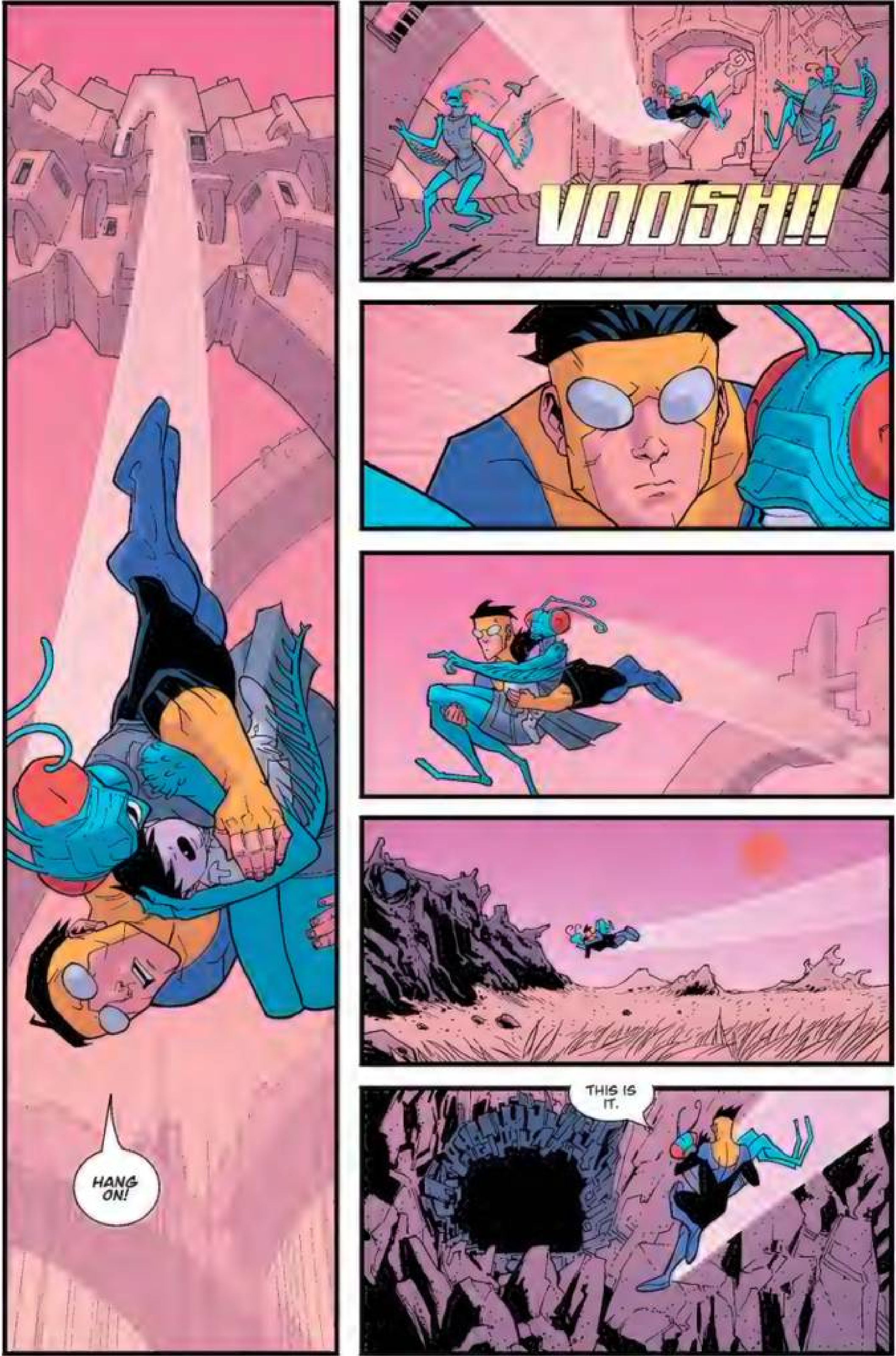

BACK IN SPACE.
MY--MY BROTHER?!
YOU MEAN--?
YES. ANDRESSA AND I HAVE HAD A CHILD TOGETHER. I TOLD YOU, SON--I'M STARTING A NEW LIFE HERE.
I HAVE BEEN VERY HAPPY HERE.
THAT DOESN'T MAKE ANY SENSE! YOU TOLD ME--YOU SAID I WAS A FOOL TO FIGHT FOR EARTH. YOU SAID I'D WATCH EVERYONE AROUND ME DIE! YOU SAID THE PEOPLE OF EARTH WEREN'T WORTH MY TIME!
THESE PEOPLE HAVE EVEN SHORTER LIFE-SPANS! WHAT MAKES THEM SO SPECIAL?!
NOTHING. I--MARK--IT'S COMPLICATED.
I HAVE CHANGED.
I HAVE LEARNED THE ERROR OF THE VILTRUMITE WAYS. I SEE THE FAULTS IN LOGIC I BELIEVED IN FOR CENTURIES.
I AM NOT THE SAME MAN YOU FOUGHT THOSE MONTHS AGO.
JUST LOOK AT YOUR BROTHER, MARK.

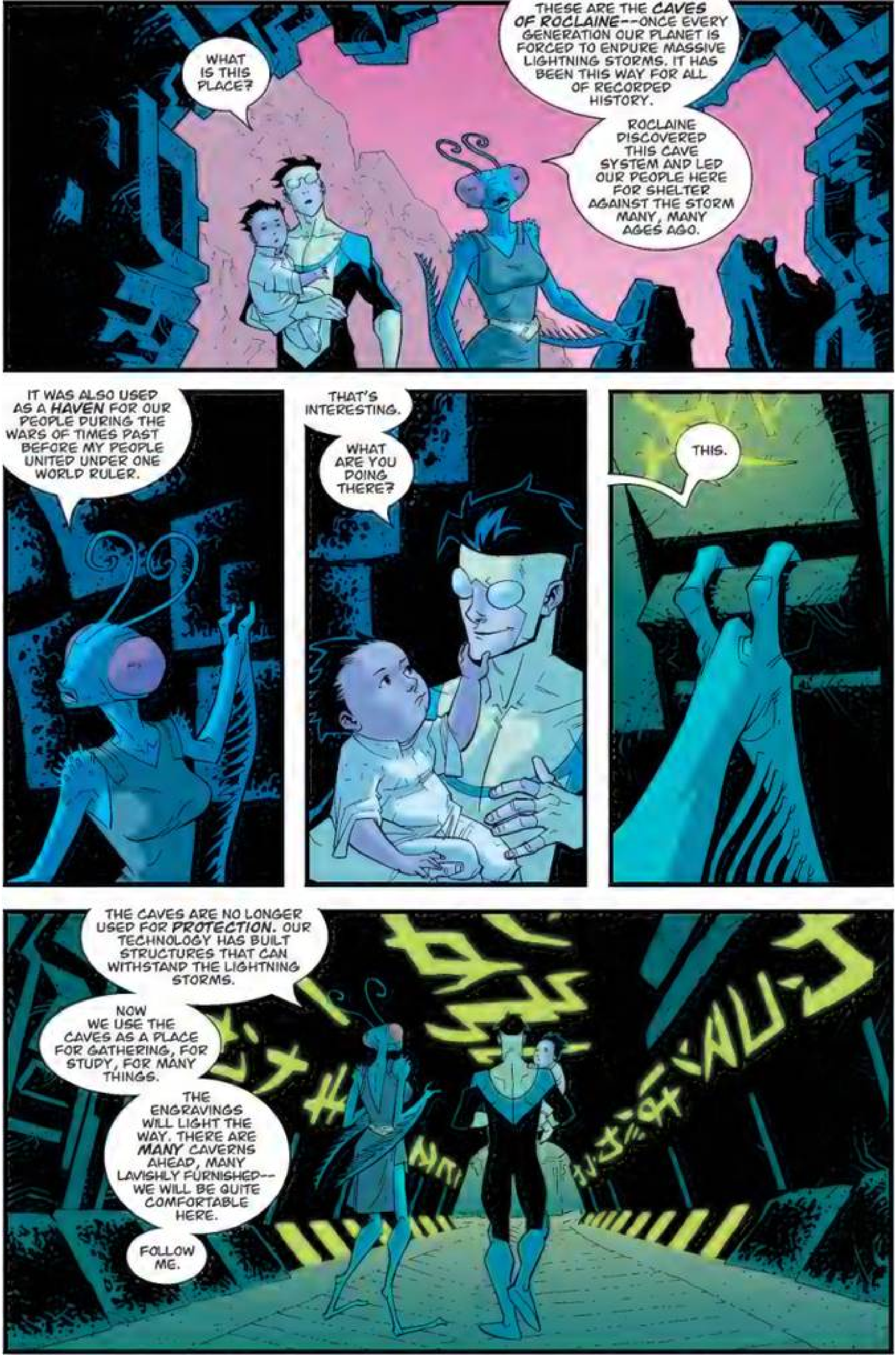

WHAT ABOUT HIM?
YOU SEE THE COLOR OF HIS SKIN, HOW IT'S DIFFERENT FROM OURS? THAT'S BECAUSE ANDRESSA'S PEOPLE ARE NOT AS COMPATIBLE WITH VILTRUMITE DNA AS HUMANS WERE.
YOU THINK?!
I WOULD APPRECIATE YOU GETTING RID OF THE TONE, SON. I'M STILL YOUR FATHER.
UNDER-STAND?
OKAY, GOT IT. PLEASE--GO ON. JUST MAKE THIS ALL MAKE SENSE TO ME, DAD. PLEASE.
YOUR BROTHER'S SKIN TONE ISN'T THE ONLY THING DIFFERENT. HE'S--WELL, HE'S THREE WEEKS OLD, MARK. BY EARTH STANDARDS HE LOOKS TO BE A YEAR OLD.
HE IS AGING TOO FAST. NOW, I SUSPECT THE VILTRUMITE DNA WILL CAUSE HIS AGING TO SLOW JUST AS IT HAS YOURS WHEN HE REACHES PUBERTY--BUT HOW MUCH IT WILL SLOW DOWN IS STILL IN QUESTION.
IS HE GOING TO--? I MEAN, HOW LONG DO YOU THINK HE HAS?
HUNDREDS, IF NOT THOUSANDS OF YEARS. HE'LL BE FINE. HE'LL STILL LIVE A LONG AND HEALTHY LIFE, ESPECIALLY BY HUMAN STANDARDS AND AMONG THESE PEOPLE.
BUT ON VILTRUM... THAT WOULD BE A WHOLE OTHER STORY.

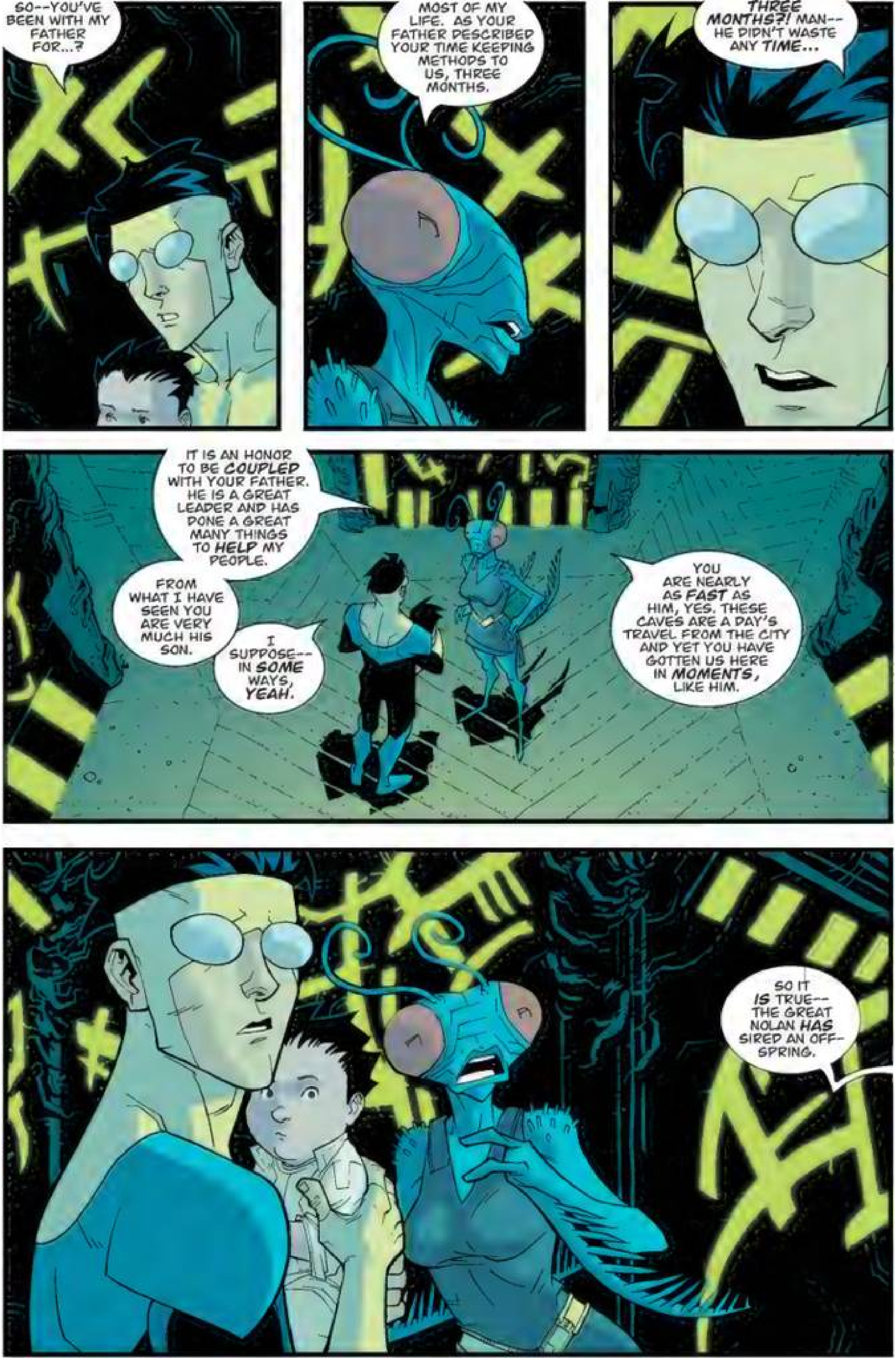

THE MODERN VILTRUM CIVILIZATION IS BUILT AROUND THE NOTION OF "SURVIVAL OF THE *FITTEST*." THAT'S HOW THEY BECOME THE INTERGALACTIC SUPER POWER THEY ARE TODAY.
BY VILTRUMITE LAW, ONCE A *FLAW* IS DETECTED IN AN INDIVIDUAL THEY ARE TO BE *EXECUTED* AT ONCE. IT IS ACTUALLY *LEGAL* TO KILL THE *WEAK* ON VILTRUM. IF THE LOSER OF A FIGHT IS KILLED--THEN HE WAS WEAK, AND *DESERVED* TO DIE. THE WINNER IS *AWARDED* A MEDAL FOR STRENGTHENING THE EMPIRE.
ACCORDING TO VILTRUM LAW--THIS CHILD, YOUR BROTHER, WOULD BE EXECUTED FOR HIS FLAWS. HE WOULD NOT BE *WORTHY* OF LIFE.
WHAT'S HIS *NAME?* YOU HAVEN'T CALLED HIM BY NAME YET, YOU KEEP SAYING *"SON"* OR *"YOUR BROTHER."*
THE CUSTOM HERE IS FOR AN INDIVIDUAL TO *CHOOSE* THEIR OWN NAME ONCE THEY REACH ADULTHOOD.
WHICH WOULD BE *TWO WEEKS* FROM NOW, WERE IT NOT FOR HIS VILTRUMITE BLOOD.
WHAT IS *YOUR* NAME?
I MEAN--NOLAN IS AN *EARTH* NAME, RIGHT? YOU HAD TO HAVE A DIFFERENT NAME ON VILTRUM.
NO, NOLAN IS AND HAS ALWAYS BEEN MY NAME. THE VILTRUMITES HAVE NO NEED FOR LAST NAMES, SO GRAYSON WAS ADDED WHILE I WAS ON EARTH.
THE PRONUNCIATION WAS JUST A BIT DIFFERENT, AS I RECALL. CLOSER TO "NOWL-AHN" BUT MORE OR LESS THE SAME.
SOMEHOW THAT MAKES ME FEEL *BETTER*. ONE OF THE THINGS THAT GOT TO ME THE *MOST* WAS THAT I MORE THAN LIKELY DIDN'T EVEN KNOW YOUR *NAME* ANYMORE.
I HOPE THIS TALK WE'VE HAD IS SHOWING YOU THAT YOU KNEW ME BETTER THAN EVEN I WOULD LIKE TO HAVE ADMITTED.
I'M SORRY, SON--FOR *EVERYTHING*.
THAT, THOUGH, DOESN'T HELP AT *ALL*.
AN APOLOGY JUST ISN'T GOING TO *CUT IT*.

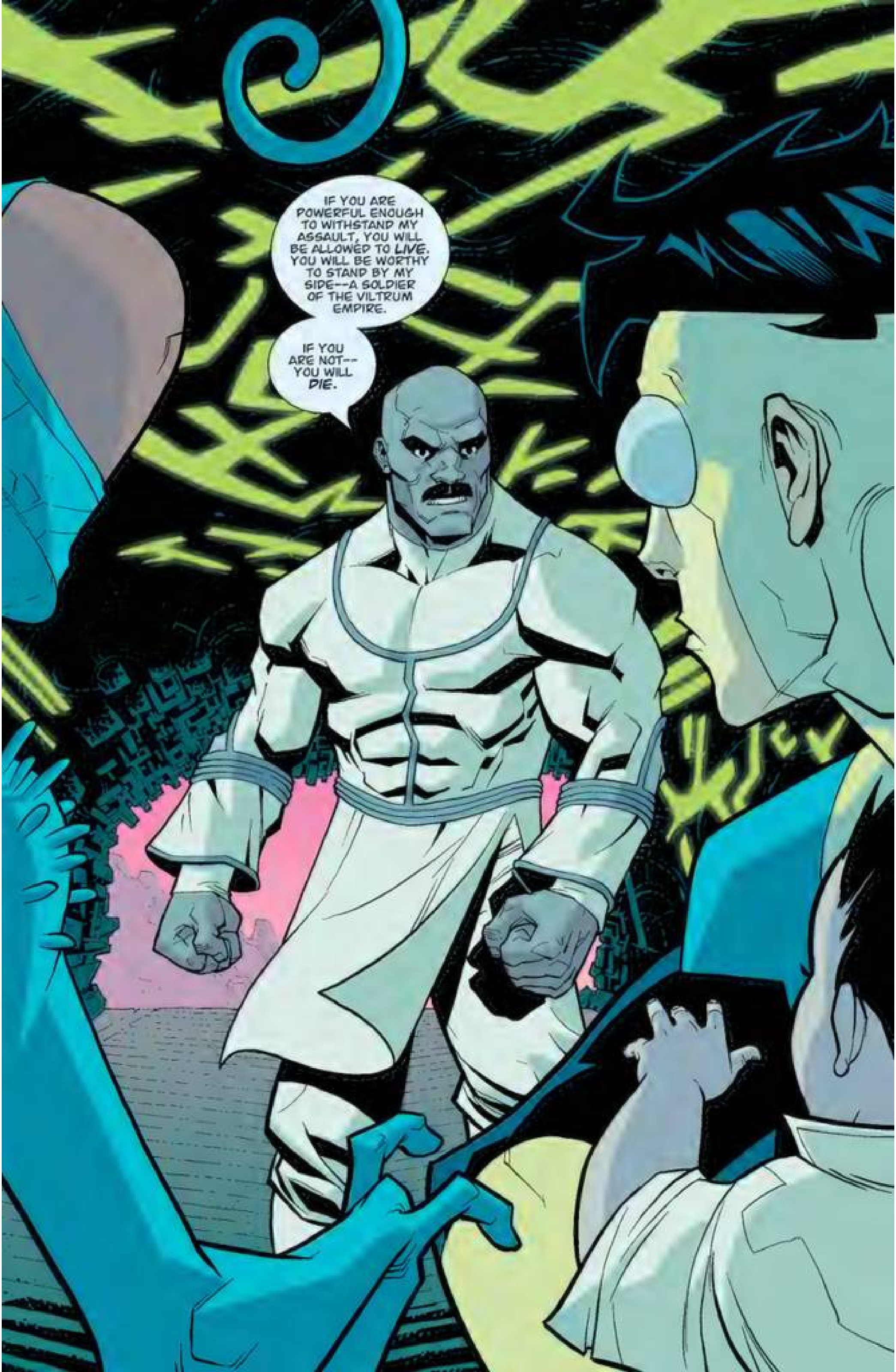

I UNDERSTAND THAT, TRULY, I DO, BUT IT DOESN'T CHANGE THE FACT THAT I NEED YOUR HELP.
THE VILTRUMITES ARE COMING FOR ME. THEY COULD BE HERE AT ANY MOMENT. YOU ARRIVED JUST IN TIME. ONCE THEY FIND YOUR BROTHER THEY WILL KILL HIM. IF I'M DEFEATED I WILL BE TAKEN BACK TO VILTRUM FOR EXECUTION.
I NEED YOUR HELP IN DEFENDING THIS PLANET.
AGAINST AN ARMY OF ADULT VILTRUMITES? I BARELY EVEN HURT YOU DURING OUR FIGHT.
NO. THEY WILL MORE THAN LIKELY SEND FOUR OR LESS. ALSO, THEY HAVE THEIR MOST POWERFUL SOLDIERS DOING MORE IMPORTANT THINGS LIKE CONQUERING NEW WORLDS...
LIKE ME.
ALSO, THEY WON'T BE EXPECTING YOU TO BE HERE. THEY DON'T KNOW YOU EXIST. BETWEEN THE TWO OF US, WE MIGHT STAND A CHANCE.
I NEED TO KNOW, SON. WILL YOU--
OF COURSE I WILL. YOU THINK I'M GOING TO STAND ASIDE AND WATCH THEM MURDER A BABY?!
THANK YOU, SON. NOW, I HOPE WE HAVE ENOUGH TIME TO PREPARE. THERE ARE MANY THINGS I CAN TEACH YOU BEFORE--
SORRY TO INTERRUPT, SIRE, BUT IT'S URGENT!
WHAT IS IT? OUT WITH IT!
IT'S--


MARK! TAKE THEM TO THE CAVES!
ANDRESSA WILL SHOW YOU THE WAY! GO!
GO NOW!!
WHAT?! I-- I JUST GOT HERE?!
I DON'T KNOW THE FIRST THING ABOUT THIS PLACE-- CAVES?! WHAT CAVES?!
I THOUGHT YOU WANTED ME TO HELP YOU?!
FOR NOW--THE MAIN PRIORITY IS KEEPING ANDRESSA AND THE BABY SAFE. THE VILTRUMITES WILL TARGET THEM FIRST IF THEY THINK I'M ATTACHED TO THEM EMOTIONALLY.
STAY LOW TO THE GROUND SO THEY DON'T SPOT YOU. THEY'RE ATTACKING FROM THE SOUTH SIDE OF THE CITY AND THE CAVES ARE NORTH--THEY SHOULDN'T SEE YOU.
BUT GO AND GO NOW. I'LL MEET YOU THERE--THEN WE CAN PLAN OUR ATTACK.
OKAY.
OKAY. DON'T WORRY, I'LL KEEP THEM SAFE.
PLEASE DO, MARK. I'M COUNTING ON YOU.
COME, MARK. I I'LL GUIDE YOU.

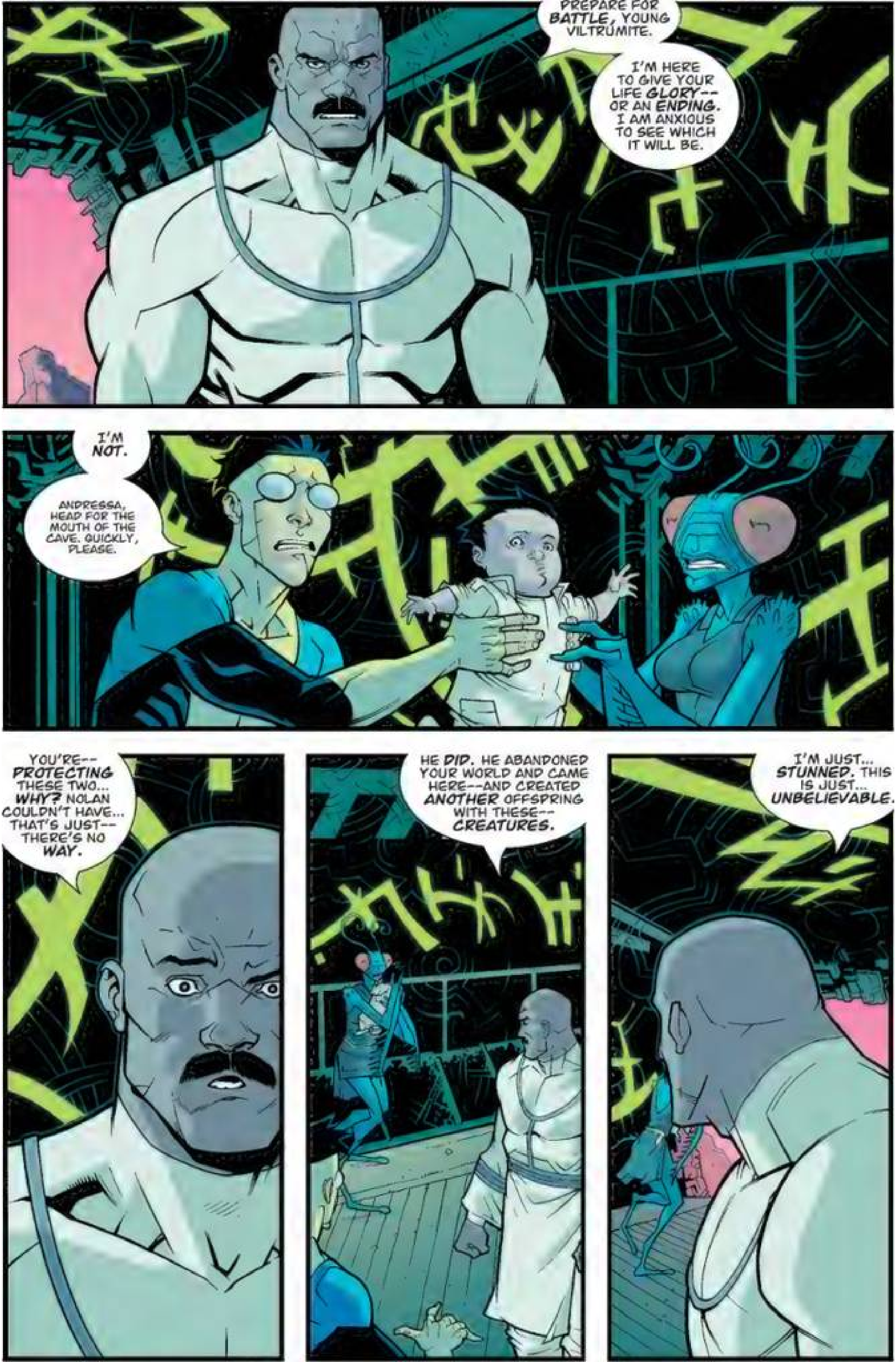

HANG ON!
VOOSH!!
THIS IS IT.

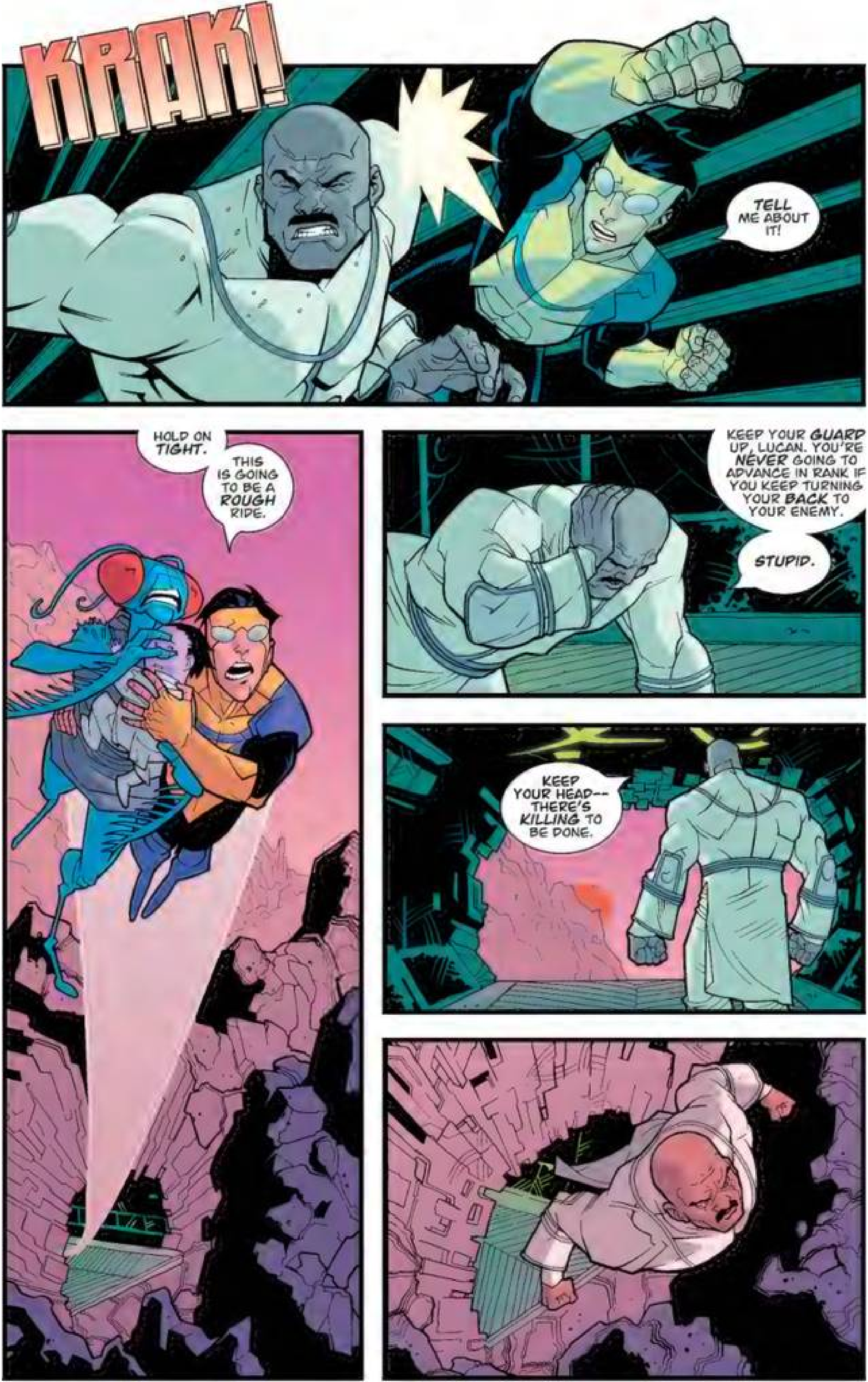

WHAT IS THIS PLACE?
THESE ARE THE CAVES OF ROCLAINE--ONCE EVERY GENERATION OUR PLANET IS FORCED TO ENDURE MASSIVE LIGHTNING STORMS. IT HAS BEEN THIS WAY FOR ALL OF RECORDED HISTORY.
ROCLAINE DISCOVERED THIS CAVE SYSTEM AND LED OUR PEOPLE HERE FOR SHELTER AGAINST THE STORM MANY, MANY AGES AGO.
IT WAS ALSO USED AS A HAVEN FOR OUR PEOPLE DURING THE WARS OF TIMES PAST BEFORE MY PEOPLE UNITED UNDER ONE WORLD RULER.
THAT'S INTERESTING.
WHAT ARE YOU DOING THERE?
THIS.
THE CAVES ARE NO LONGER USED FOR PROTECTION. OUR TECHNOLOGY HAS BUILT STRUCTURES THAT CAN WITHSTAND THE LIGHTNING STORMS.
NOW WE USE THE CAVES AS A PLACE FOR GATHERING, FOR STUDY, FOR MANY THINGS.
THE ENGRAVINGS WILL LIGHT THE WAY. THERE ARE MANY CAVERNS AHEAD, MANY LAVISHLY FURNISHED-- WE WILL BE QUITE COMFORTABLE HERE.
FOLLOW ME.

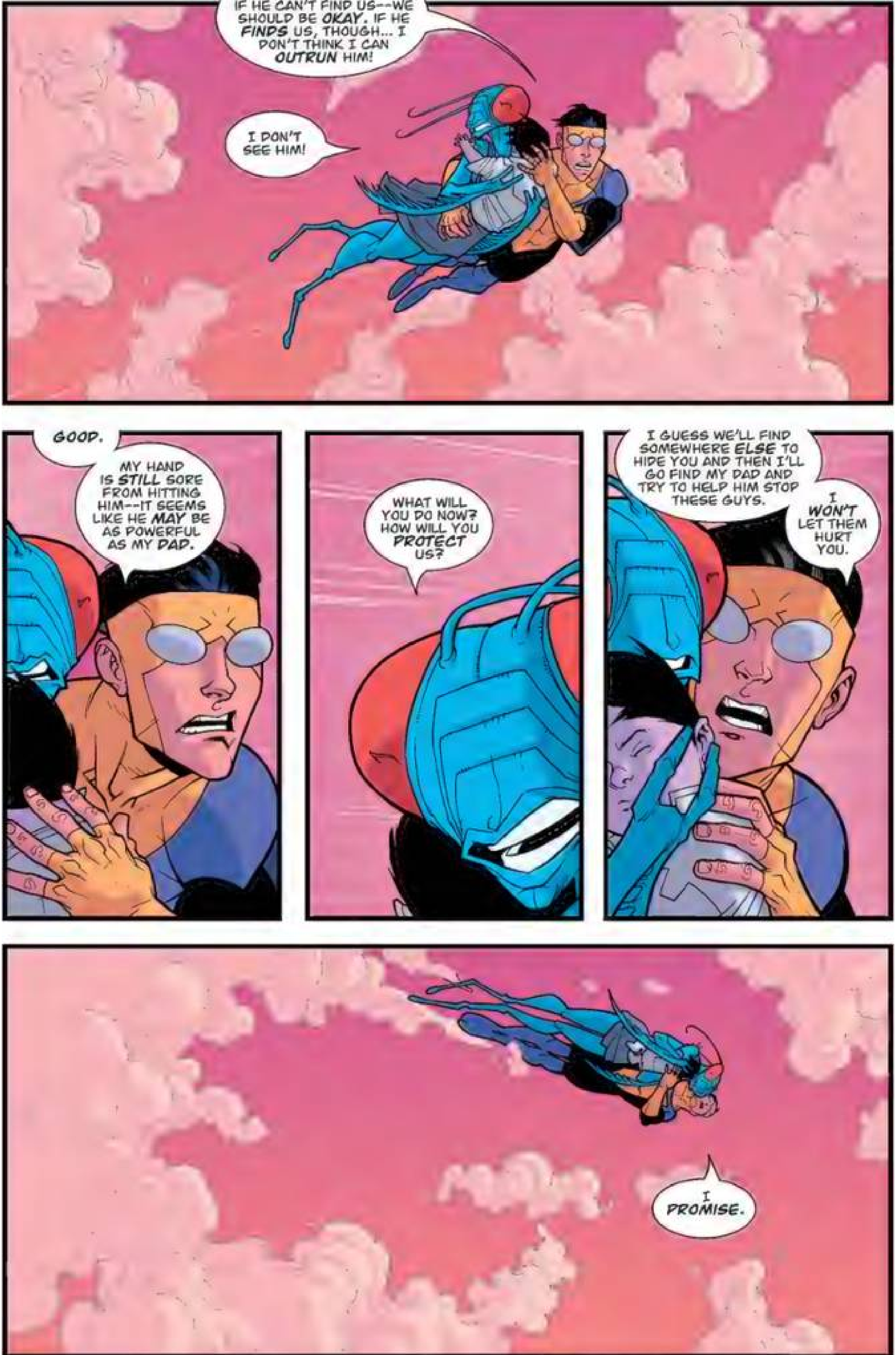

SO--YOU'VE BEEN WITH MY FATHER FOR...?
MOST OF MY LIFE. AS YOUR FATHER DESCRIBED YOUR TIME KEEPING METHODS TO US, THREE MONTHS.
THREE MONTHS?! MAN-- HE DIDN'T WASTE ANY TIME...
IT IS AN HONOR TO BE COUPLED WITH YOUR FATHER. HE IS A GREAT LEADER AND HAS DONE A GREAT MANY THINGS TO HELP MY PEOPLE.
FROM WHAT I HAVE SEEN YOU ARE VERY MUCH HIS SON.
I SUPPOSE-- IN SOME WAYS, YEAH.
YOU ARE NEARLY AS FAST AS HIM, YES. THESE CAVES ARE A DAY'S TRAVEL FROM THE CITY AND YET YOU HAVE GOTTEN US HERE IN MOMENTS, LIKE HIM.
SO IT IS TRUE-- THE GREAT NOLAN HAS SIRED AN OFF-SPRING.

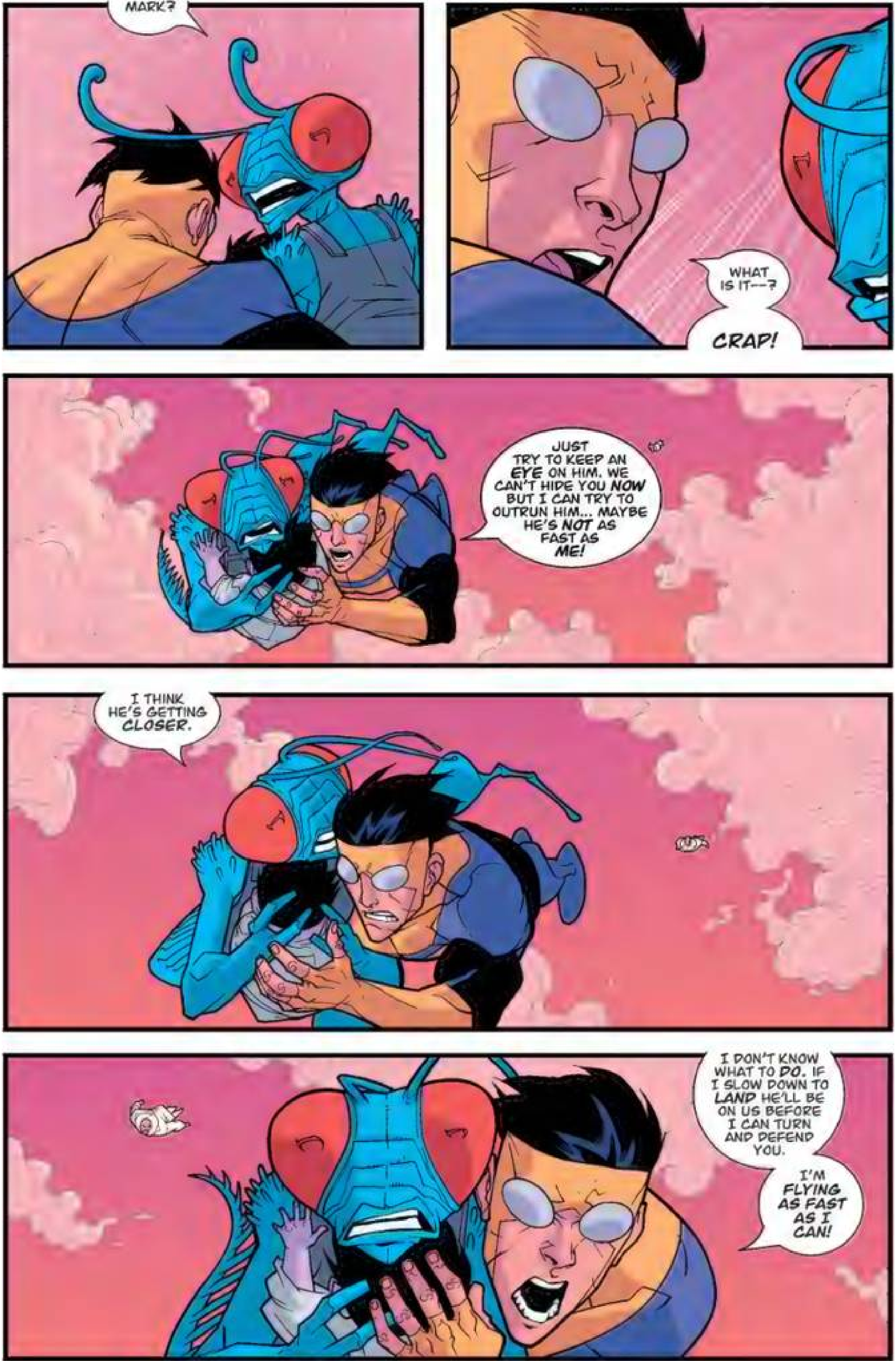

IF YOU ARE POWERFUL ENOUGH TO WITHSTAND MY ASSAULT, YOU WILL BE ALLOWED TO *LIVE*. YOU WILL BE WORTHY TO STAND BY MY SIDE--A SOLDIER OF THE VILTRUM EMPIRE.
IF YOU ARE NOT-- YOU WILL *DIE*.

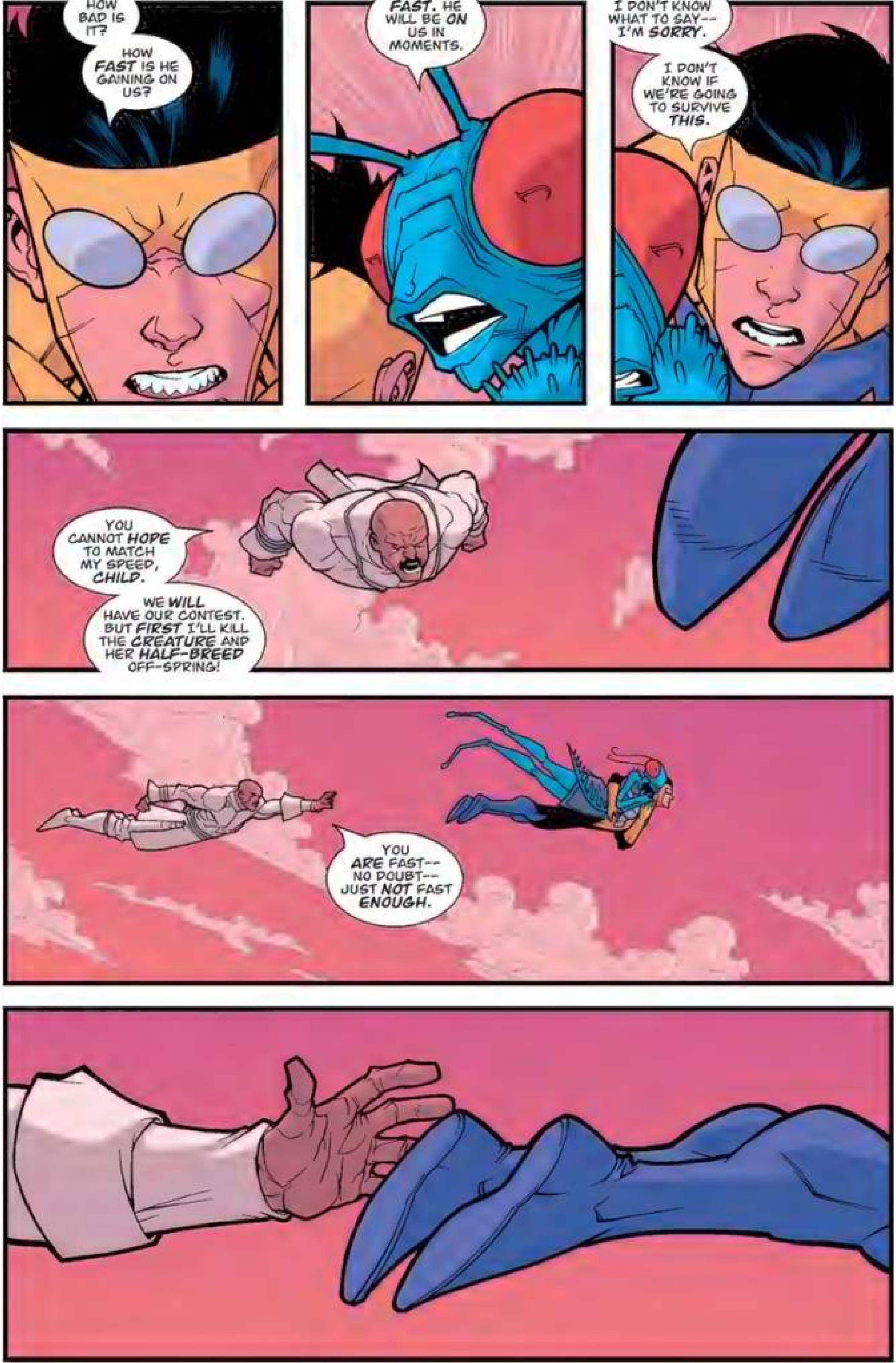
ISSUE TWENTY-EIGHT

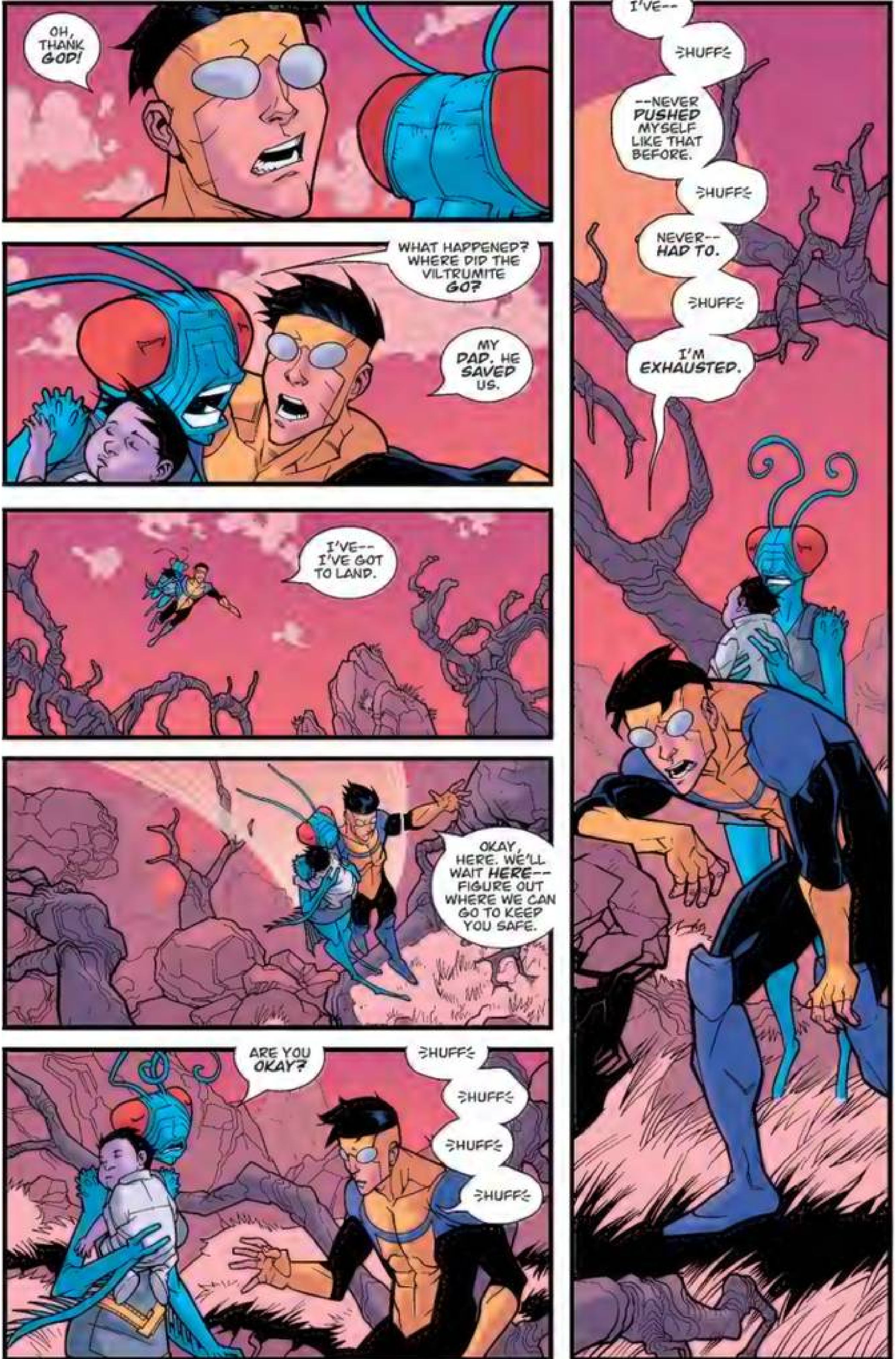

PREPARE FOR BATTLE, YOUNG VILTRUMITE.
I'M HERE TO GIVE YOUR LIFE GLORY-- OR AN ENDING. I AM ANXIOUS TO SEE WHICH IT WILL BE.
I'M NOT.
ANDRESSA, HEAD FOR THE MOUTH OF THE CAVE. QUICKLY, PLEASE.
YOU'RE-- PROTECTING THESE TWO... WHY? NOLAN COULDN'T HAVE... THAT'S JUST-- THERE'S NO WAY.
HE DID. HE ABANDONED YOUR WORLD AND CAME HERE--AND CREATED ANOTHER OFFSPRING WITH THESE-- CREATURES.
I'M JUST... STUNNED. THIS IS JUST... UNBELIEVABLE.

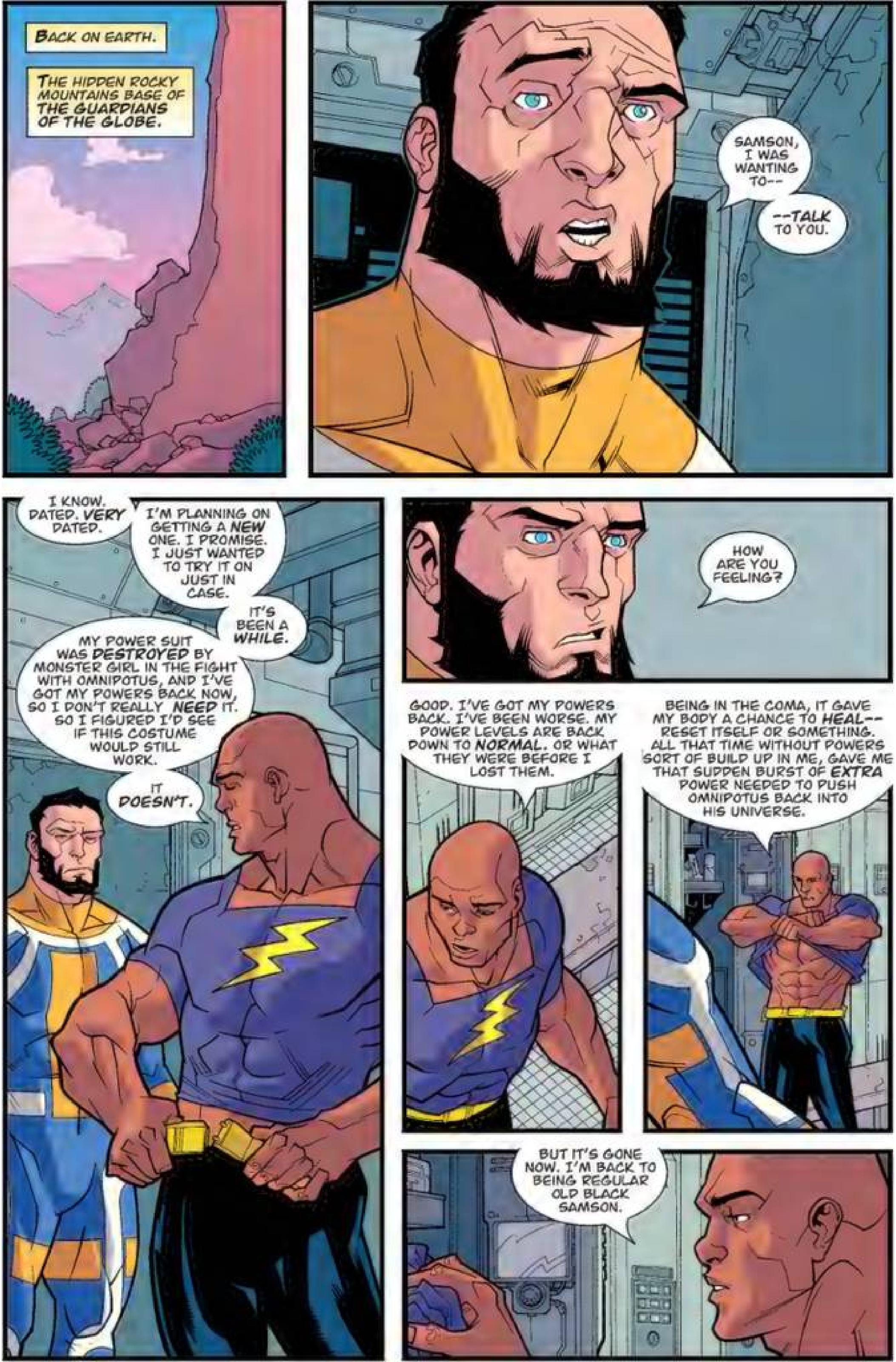

KRAK!
TELL ME ABOUT IT!
HOLD ON TIGHT.
THIS IS GOING TO BE A ROUGH RIDE.
KEEP YOUR GUARD UP, LUCAN. YOU'RE NEVER GOING TO ADVANCE IN RANK IF YOU KEEP TURNING YOUR BACK TO YOUR ENEMY.
STUPID.
KEEP YOUR HEAD-- THERE'S KILLING TO BE DONE.

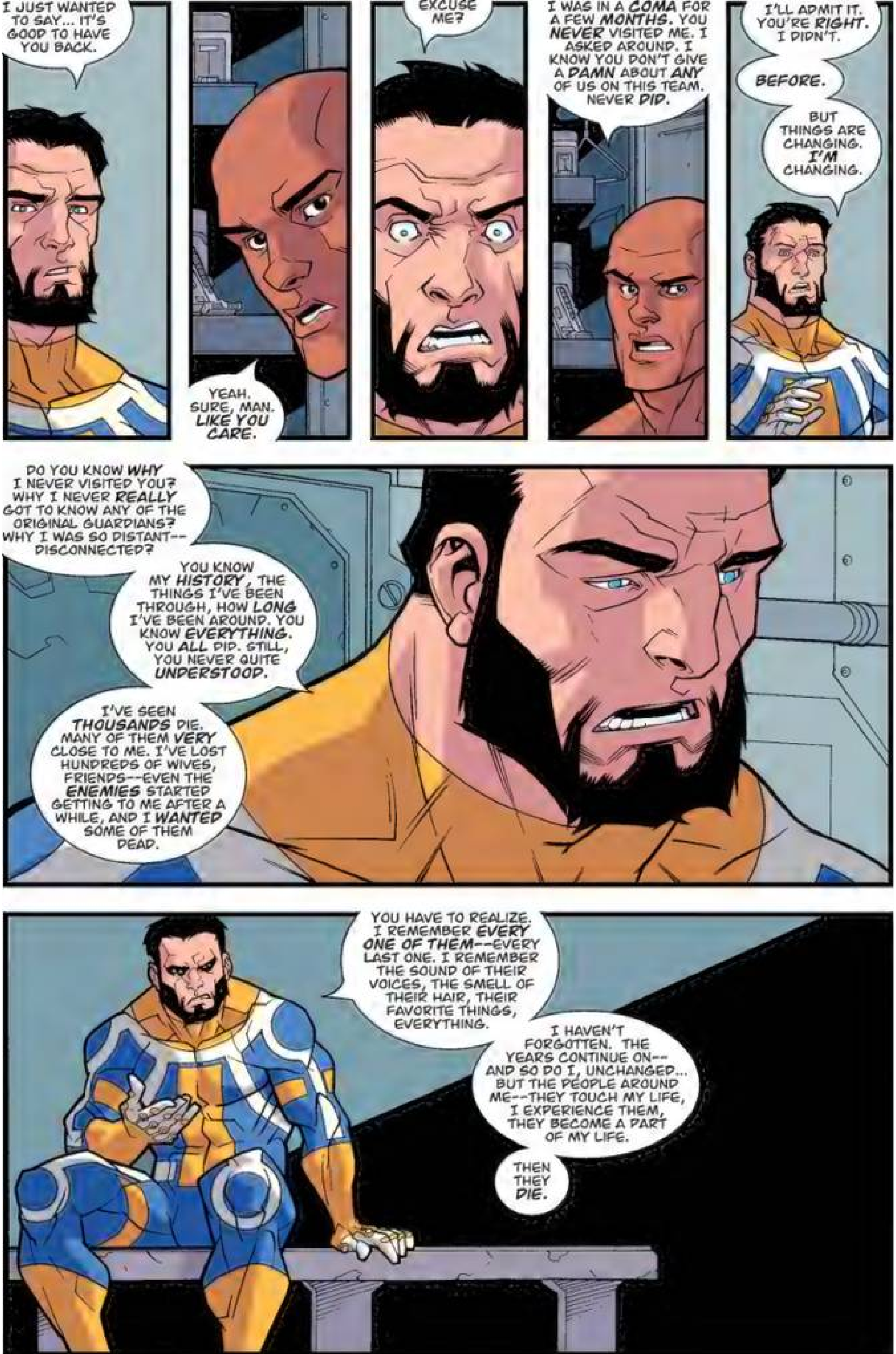

IF HE CAN'T FIND US--WE SHOULD BE OKAY. IF HE FINDS US, THOUGH... I DON'T THINK I CAN OUTRUN HIM!
I DON'T SEE HIM!
GOOD.
MY HAND IS STILL SORE FROM HITTING HIM--IT SEEMS LIKE HE MAY BE AS POWERFUL AS MY DAD.
WHAT WILL YOU DO NOW? HOW WILL YOU PROTECT US?
I GUESS WE'LL FIND SOMEWHERE ELSE TO HIDE YOU AND THEN I'LL GO FIND MY DAD AND TRY TO HELP HIM STOP THESE GUYS.
I WON'T LET THEM HURT YOU.
I PROMISE.

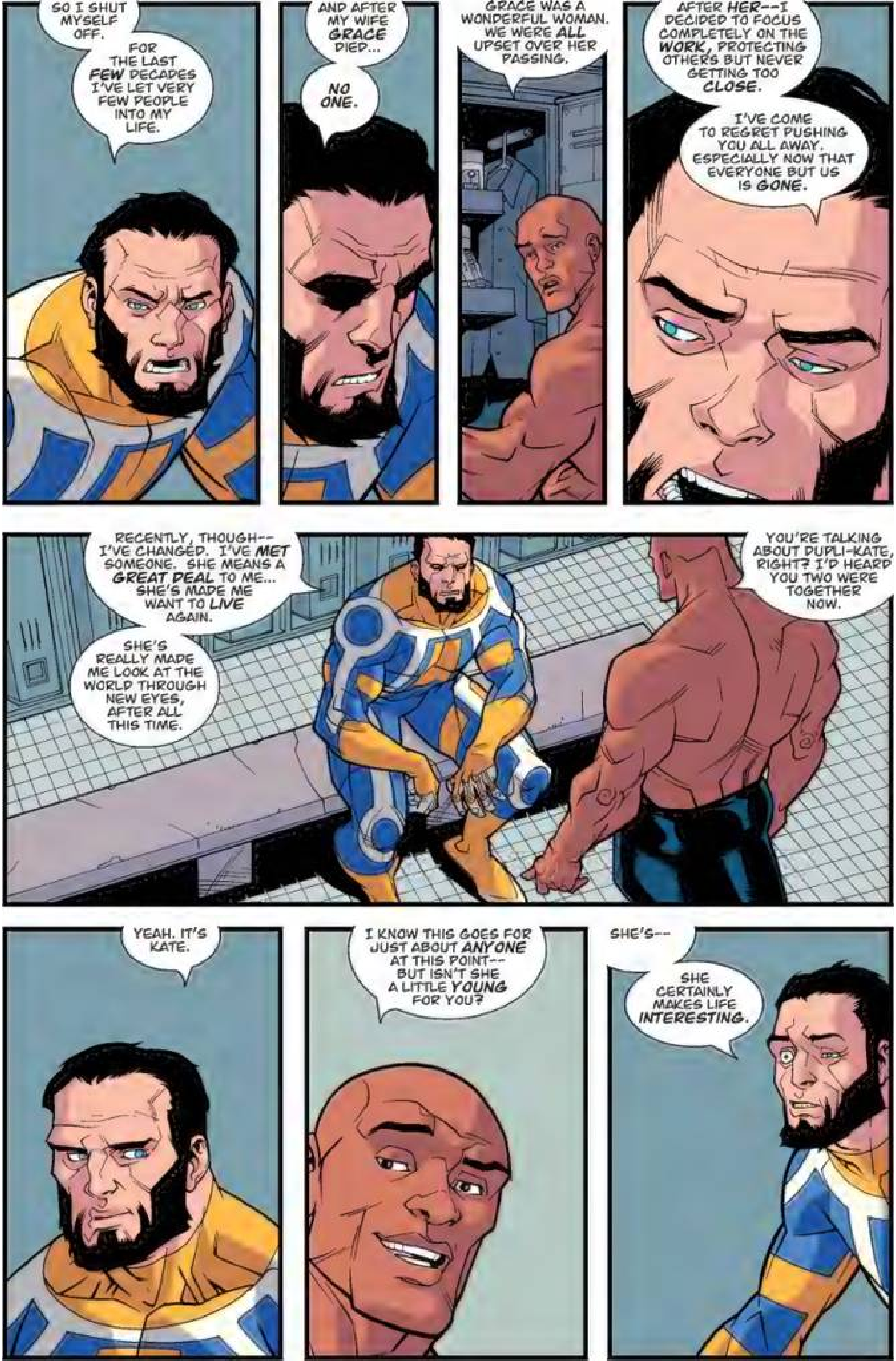

MARK?
WHAT IS IT--?
CRAP!
JUST TRY TO KEEP AN *EYE* ON HIM. WE CAN'T HIDE YOU *NOW* BUT I CAN TRY TO OUTRUN HIM... MAYBE HE'S *NOT* AS FAST AS *ME!*
I THINK HE'S GETTING *CLOSER.*
I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO *DO.* IF I SLOW DOWN TO *LAND* HE'LL BE ON US BEFORE I CAN TURN AND DEFEND YOU.
I'M *FLYING AS FAST AS I CAN!*

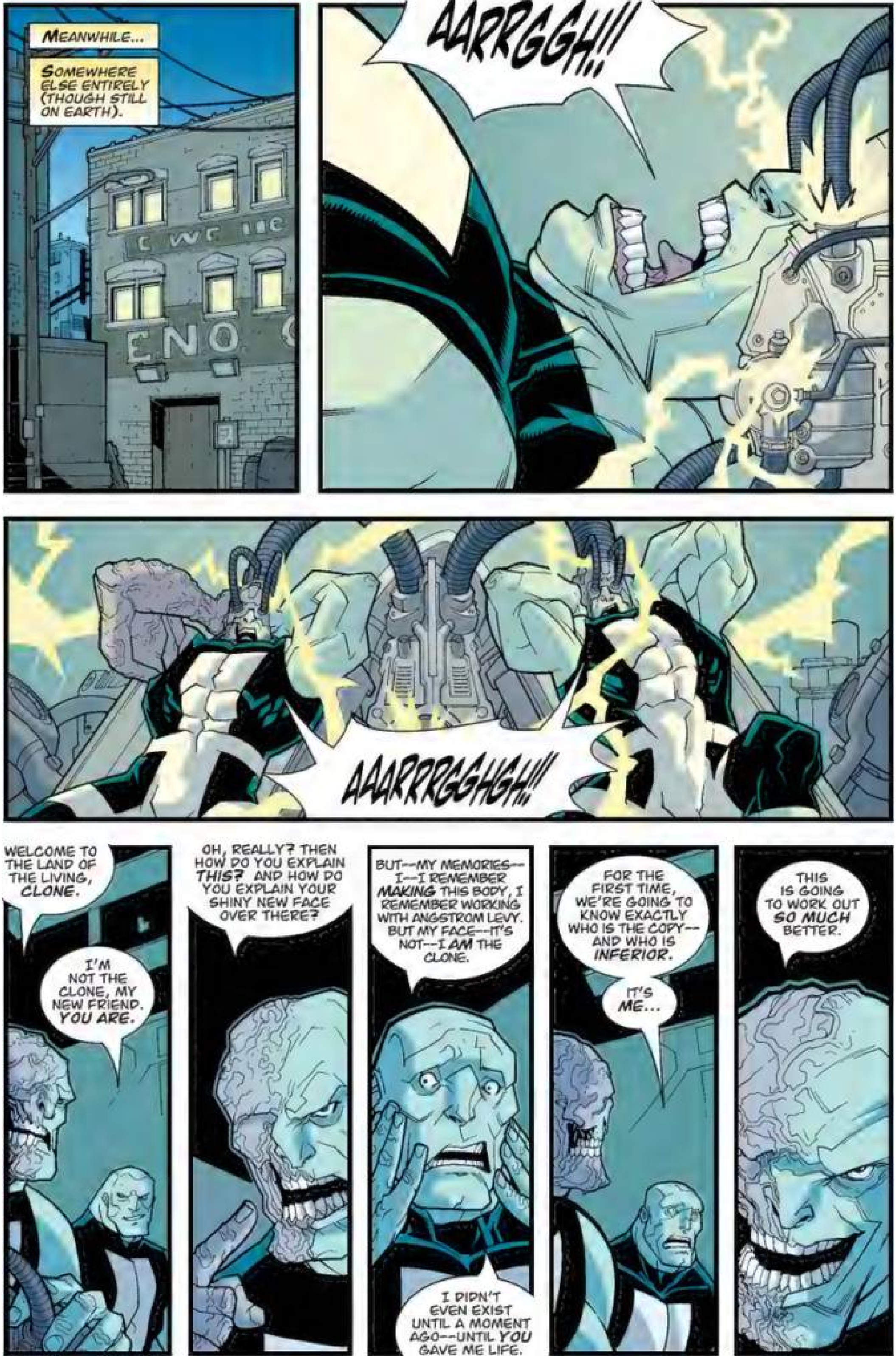

HOW BAD IS IT?
HOW FAST IS HE GAINING ON US?
FAST. HE WILL BE ON US IN MOMENTS.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY-- I'M SORRY.
I DON'T KNOW IF WE'RE GOING TO SURVIVE THIS.
YOU CANNOT HOPE TO MATCH MY SPEED, CHILD.
WE WILL HAVE OUR CONTEST. BUT FIRST I'LL KILL THE CREATURE AND HER HALF-BREED OFF-SPRING!
YOU ARE FAST-- NO DOUBT-- JUST NOT FAST ENOUGH.

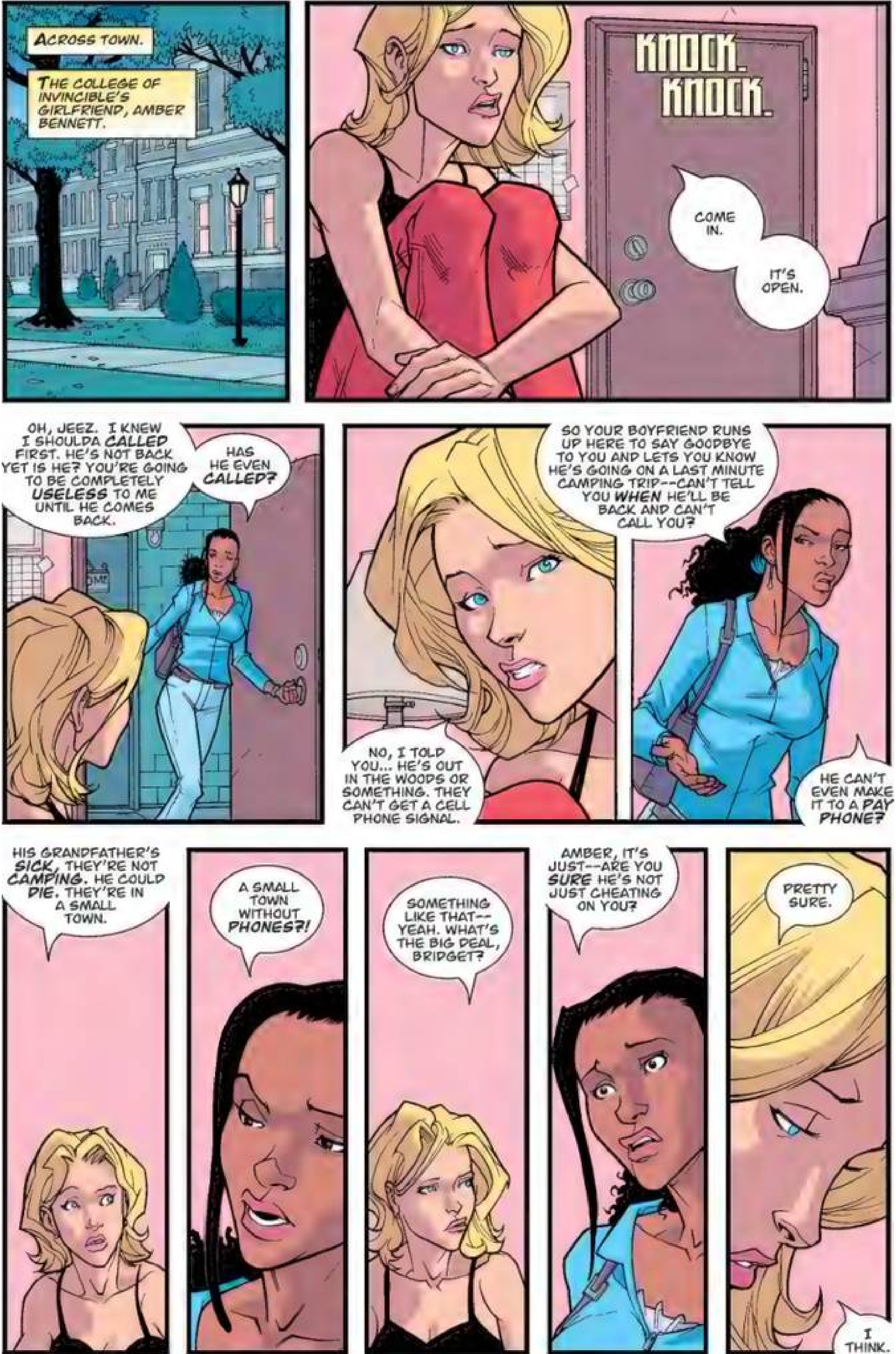

OH, THANK GOD!
WHAT HAPPENED? WHERE DID THE VILTRUMITE GO?
MY DAD. HE SAVED US.
I'VE-- I'VE GOT TO LAND.
OKAY, HERE. WE'LL WAIT HERE-- FIGURE OUT WHERE WE CAN GO TO KEEP YOU SAFE.
ARE YOU OKAY?
HUFF
HUFF
HUFF
HUFF
I'VE--
HUFF
--NEVER PUSHED MYSELF LIKE THAT BEFORE.
HUFF
NEVER-- HAD TO.
HUFF
I'M EXHAUSTED.

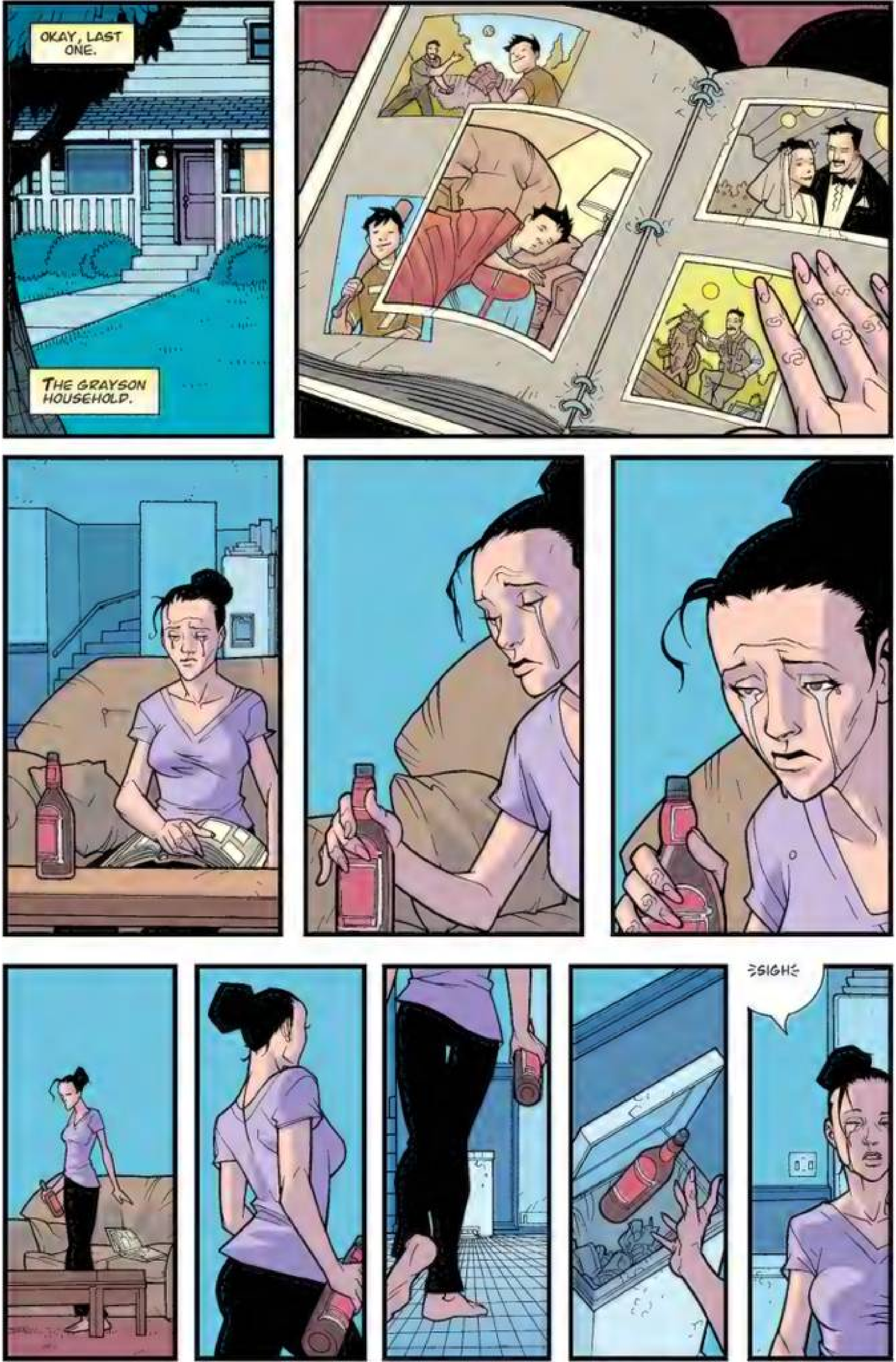

BACK ON EARTH.
THE HIDDEN ROCKY MOUNTAINS BASE OF THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE.
SAMSON, I WAS WANTING TO--
--TALK TO YOU.
I KNOW. DATED. VERY DATED.
I'M PLANNING ON GETTING A NEW ONE. I PROMISE. I JUST WANTED TO TRY IT ON JUST IN CASE.
IT'S BEEN A WHILE.
MY POWER SUIT WAS DESTROYED BY MONSTER GIRL IN THE FIGHT WITH OMNIPOTUS, AND I'VE GOT MY POWERS BACK NOW, SO I DON'T REALLY NEED IT. SO I FIGURED I'D SEE IF THIS COSTUME WOULD STILL WORK.
IT DOESN'T.
HOW ARE YOU FEELING?
GOOD. I'VE GOT MY POWERS BACK. I'VE BEEN WORSE. MY POWER LEVELS ARE BACK DOWN TO NORMAL. OR WHAT THEY WERE BEFORE I LOST THEM.
BEING IN THE COMA, IT GAVE MY BODY A CHANCE TO HEAL-- RESET ITSELF OR SOMETHING. ALL THAT TIME WITHOUT POWERS SORT OF BUILD UP IN ME, GAVE ME THAT SUDDEN BURST OF EXTRA POWER NEEDED TO PUSH OMNIPOTUS BACK INTO HIS UNIVERSE.
BUT IT'S GONE NOW. I'M BACK TO BEING REGULAR OLD BLACK SAMSON.

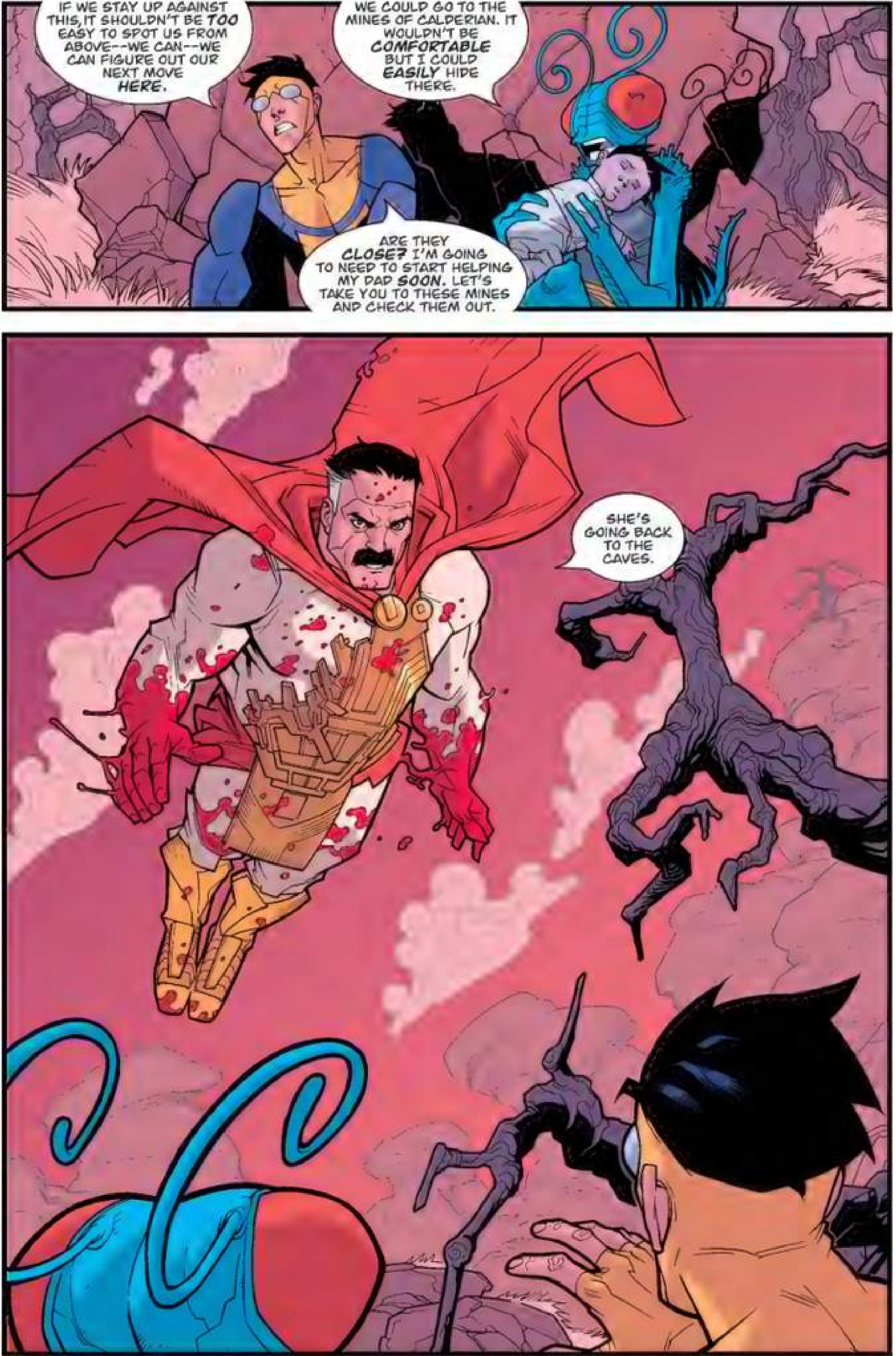

I JUST WANTED TO SAY... IT'S GOOD TO HAVE YOU BACK.
YEAH. SURE, MAN. LIKE YOU CARE.
EXCUSE ME?
I WAS IN A COMA FOR A FEW MONTHS. YOU NEVER VISITED ME. I ASKED AROUND. I KNOW YOU DON'T GIVE A DAMN ABOUT ANY OF US ON THIS TEAM. NEVER DID.
I'LL ADMIT IT. YOU'RE RIGHT. I DIDN'T.
BEFORE.
BUT THINGS ARE CHANGING. I'M CHANGING.
DO YOU KNOW WHY I NEVER VISITED YOU? WHY I NEVER REALLY GOT TO KNOW ANY OF THE ORIGINAL GUARDIANS? WHY I WAS SO DISTANT-- DISCONNECTED?
YOU KNOW MY HISTORY, THE THINGS I'VE BEEN THROUGH, HOW LONG I'VE BEEN AROUND. YOU KNOW EVERYTHING. YOU ALL DID. STILL, YOU NEVER QUITE UNDERSTOOD.
I'VE SEEN THOUSANDS DIE. MANY OF THEM VERY CLOSE TO ME. I'VE LOST HUNDREDS OF WIVES, FRIENDS--EVEN THE ENEMIES STARTED GETTING TO ME AFTER A WHILE, AND I WANTED SOME OF THEM DEAD.
YOU HAVE TO REALIZE. I REMEMBER EVERY ONE OF THEM--EVERY LAST ONE. I REMEMBER THE SOUND OF THEIR VOICES, THE SMELL OF THEIR HAIR, THEIR FAVORITE THINGS, EVERYTHING.
I HAVEN'T FORGOTTEN. THE YEARS CONTINUE ON-- AND SO DO I, UNCHANGED... BUT THE PEOPLE AROUND ME--THEY TOUCH MY LIFE, I EXPERIENCE THEM, THEY BECOME A PART OF MY LIFE.
THEN THEY DIE.

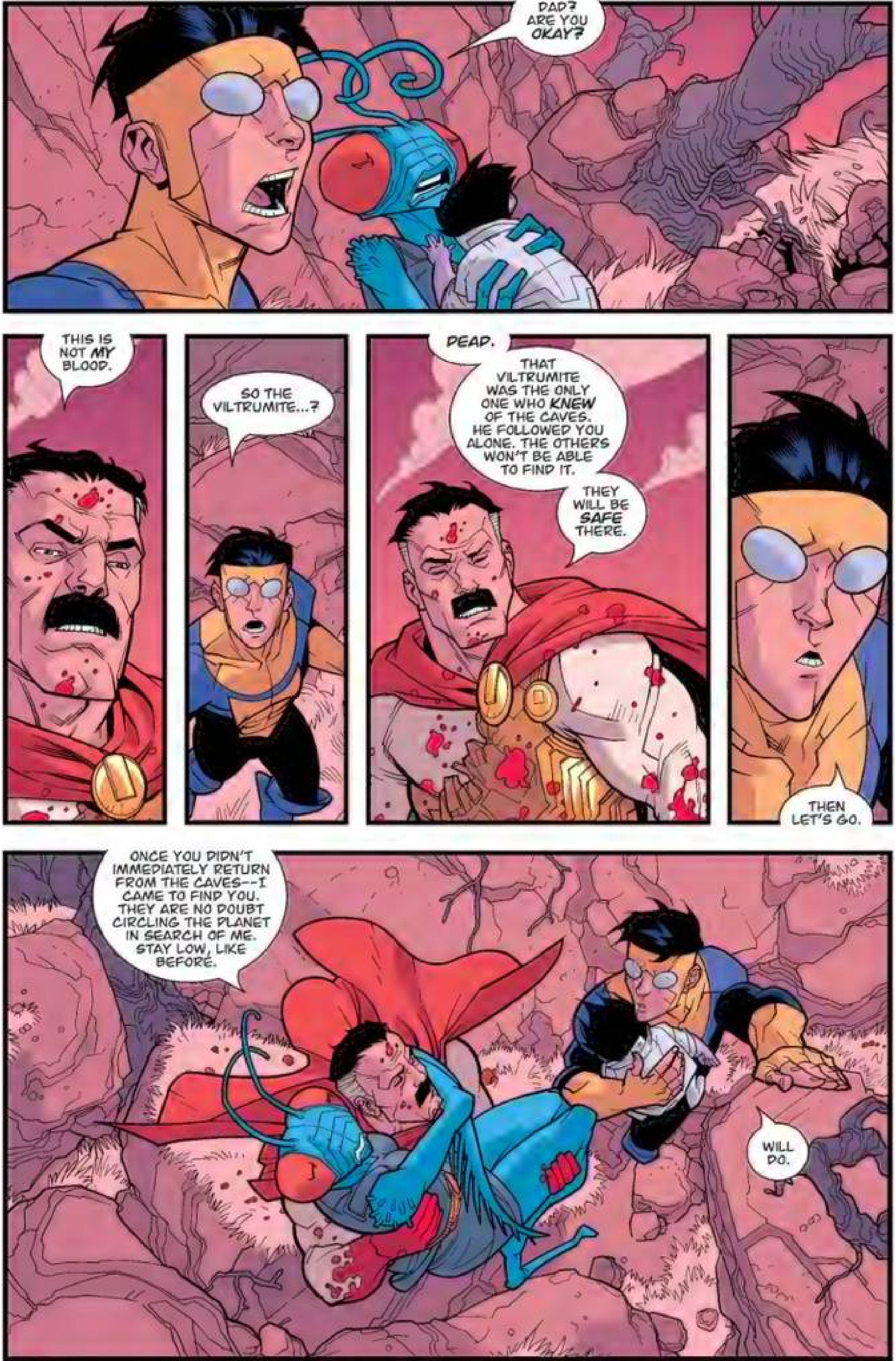

SO I SHUT MYSELF OFF.
FOR THE LAST FEW DECADES I'VE LET VERY FEW PEOPLE INTO MY LIFE.
AND AFTER MY WIFE GRACE DIED...
NO ONE.
GRACE WAS A WONDERFUL WOMAN. WE WERE ALL UPSET OVER HER PASSING.
AFTER HER--I DECIDED TO FOCUS COMPLETELY ON THE WORK, PROTECTING OTHERS BUT NEVER GETTING TOO CLOSE.
I'VE COME TO REGRET PUSHING YOU ALL AWAY. ESPECIALLY NOW THAT EVERYONE BUT US IS GONE.
RECENTLY, THOUGH--I'VE CHANGED. I'VE MET SOMEONE. SHE MEANS A GREAT DEAL TO ME... SHE'S MADE ME WANT TO LIVE AGAIN.
SHE'S REALLY MADE ME LOOK AT THE WORLD THROUGH NEW EYES, AFTER ALL THIS TIME.
YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT DUPLI-KATE, RIGHT? I'D HEARD YOU TWO WERE TOGETHER NOW.
YEAH. IT'S KATE.
I KNOW THIS GOES FOR JUST ABOUT ANYONE AT THIS POINT--BUT ISN'T SHE A LITTLE YOUNG FOR YOU?
SHE'S--
SHE CERTAINLY MAKES LIFE INTERESTING.

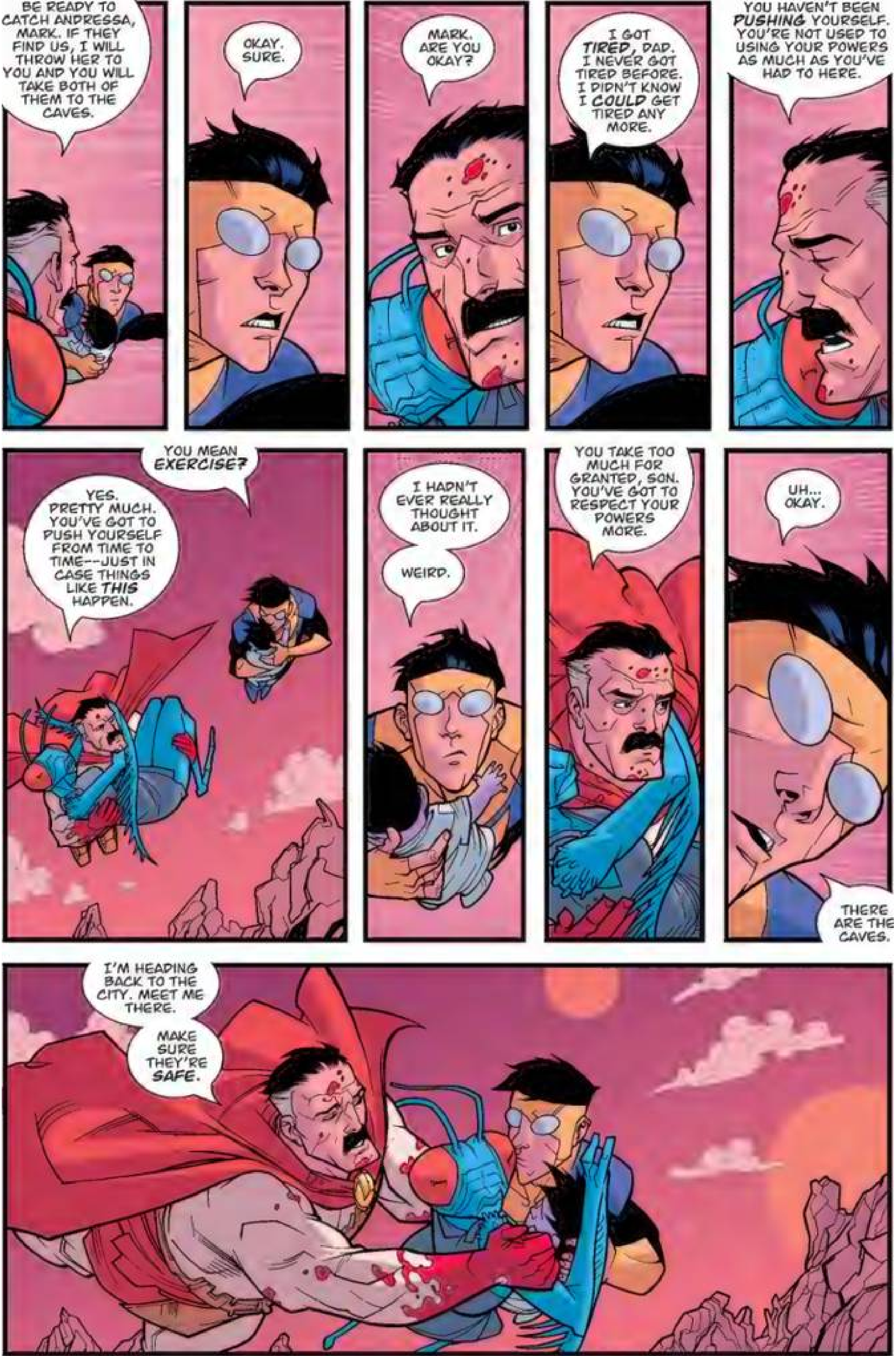

MEANWHILE...
SOMEWHERE ELSE ENTIRELY (THOUGH STILL ON EARTH).
ENO
AARRGGH!!
AAARRRGGHGH!!
WELCOME TO THE LAND OF THE LIVING, CLONE.
I'M NOT THE CLONE, MY NEW FRIEND. YOU ARE.
OH, REALLY? THEN HOW DO YOU EXPLAIN THIS? AND HOW DO YOU EXPLAIN YOUR SHINY NEW FACE OVER THERE?
BUT--MY MEMORIES--I--I REMEMBER MAKING THIS BODY, I REMEMBER WORKING WITH ANGSTROM LEVY. BUT MY FACE--IT'S NOT--I AM THE CLONE.
I DIDN'T EVEN EXIST UNTIL A MOMENT AGO--UNTIL YOU GAVE ME LIFE.
FOR THE FIRST TIME, WE'RE GOING TO KNOW EXACTLY WHO IS THE COPY--AND WHO IS INFERIOR.
IT'S ME...
THIS IS GOING TO WORK OUT SO MUCH BETTER.

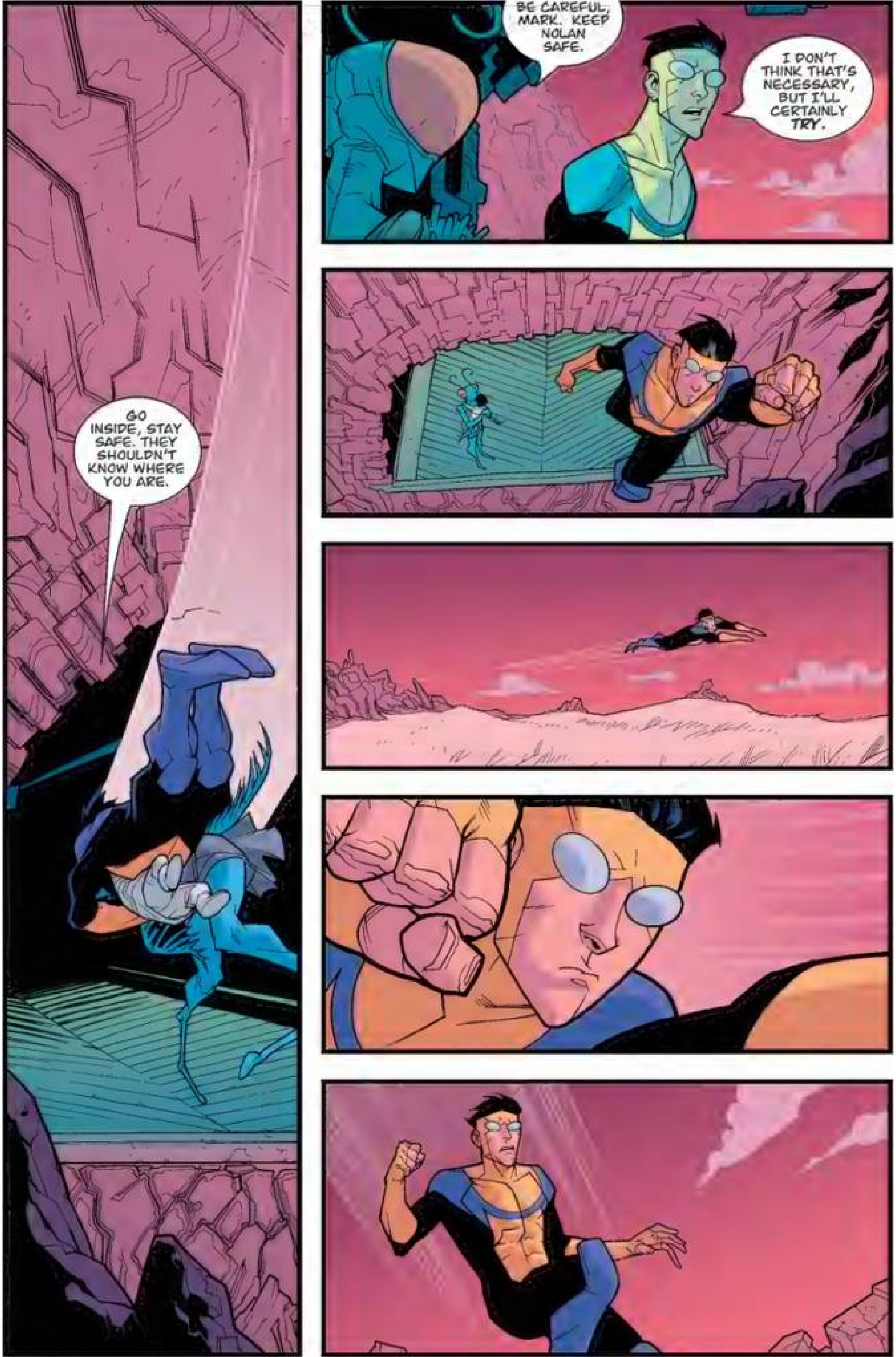

ACROSS TOWN.
THE COLLEGE OF INVINCIBLE'S GIRLFRIEND, AMBER BENNETT.
KNOCK. KNOCK.
COME IN.
IT'S OPEN.
OH, JEEZ. I KNEW I SHOULDA CALLED FIRST. HE'S NOT BACK YET IS HE? YOU'RE GOING TO BE COMPLETELY USELESS TO ME UNTIL HE COMES BACK.
HAS HE EVEN CALLED?
SO YOUR BOYFRIEND RUNS UP HERE TO SAY GOODBYE TO YOU AND LETS YOU KNOW HE'S GOING ON A LAST MINUTE CAMPING TRIP--CAN'T TELL YOU WHEN HE'LL BE BACK AND CAN'T CALL YOU?
NO, I TOLD YOU... HE'S OUT IN THE WOODS OR SOMETHING. THEY CAN'T GET A CELL PHONE SIGNAL.
HE CAN'T EVEN MAKE IT TO A PAY PHONE?
HIS GRANDFATHER'S SICK, THEY'RE NOT CAMPING. HE COULD DIE. THEY'RE IN A SMALL TOWN.
A SMALL TOWN WITHOUT PHONES?!
SOMETHING LIKE THAT--YEAH. WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL, BRIDGET?
AMBER, IT'S JUST--ARE YOU SURE HE'S NOT JUST CHEATING ON YOU?
PRETTY SURE.
I THINK.

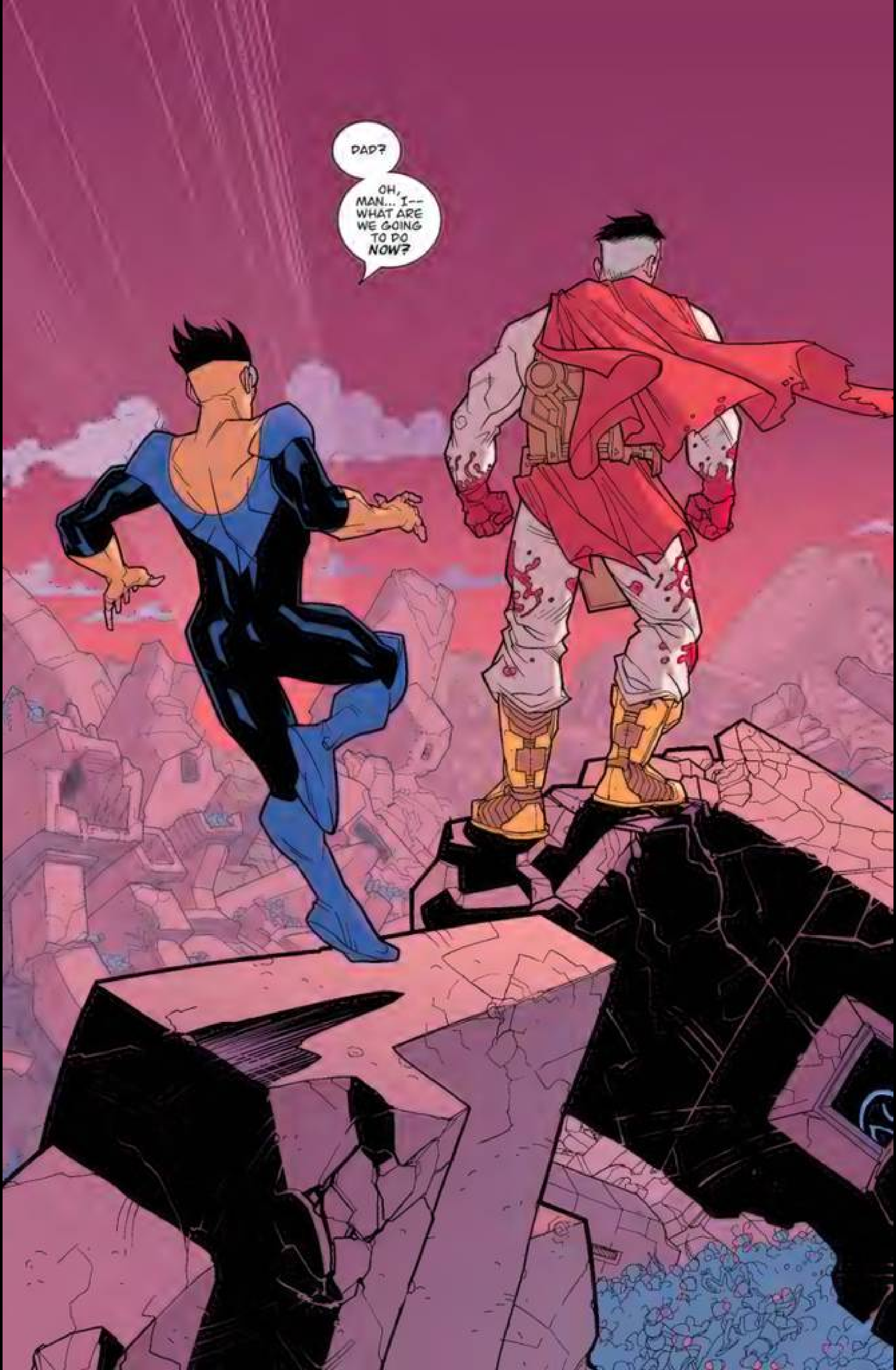

OKAY, LAST ONE.
THE GRAYSON HOUSEHOLD.
SIGH

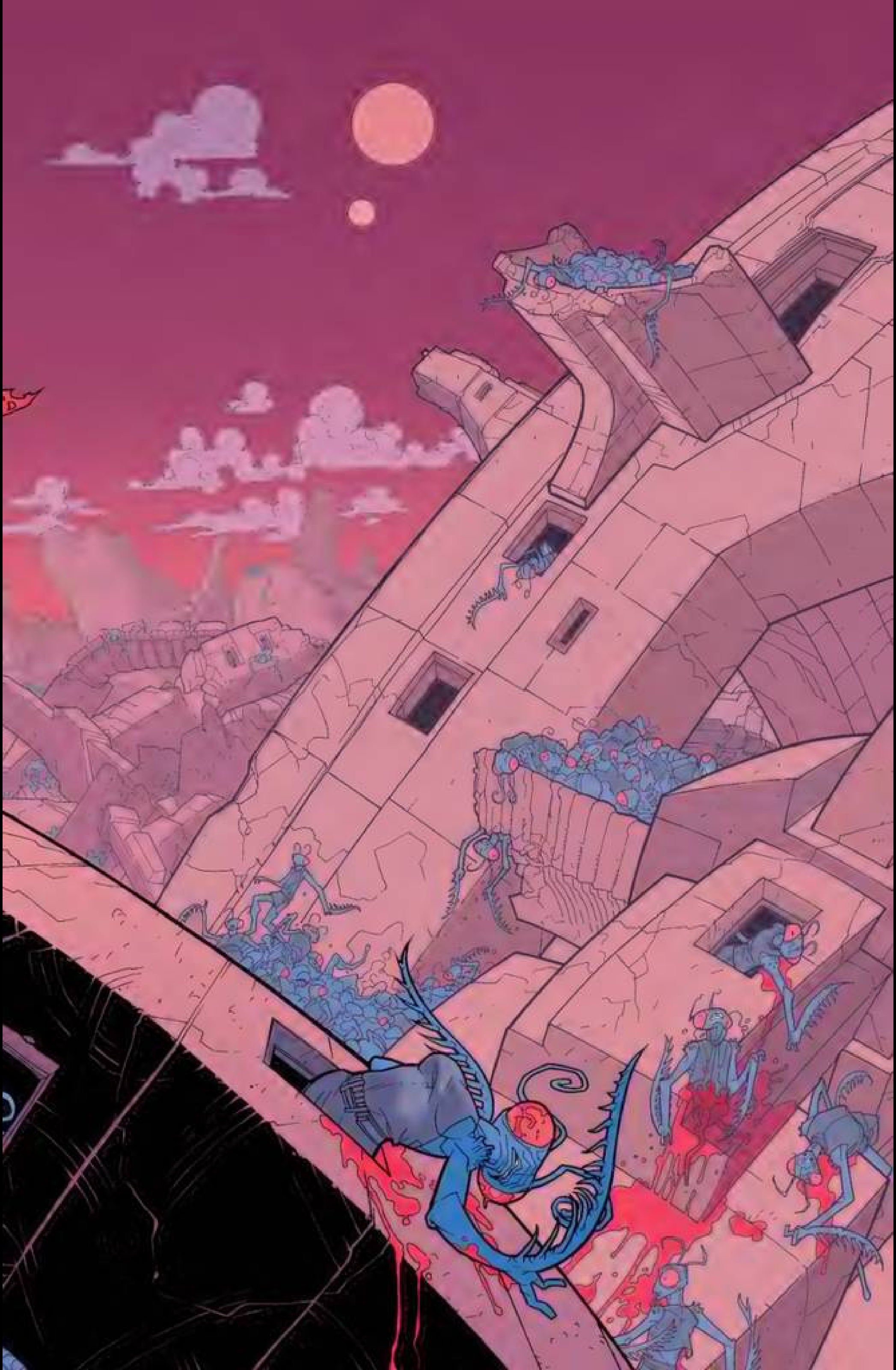

IF WE STAY UP AGAINST THIS, IT SHOULDN'T BE TOO EASY TO SPOT US FROM ABOVE--WE CAN--WE CAN FIGURE OUT OUR NEXT MOVE HERE.
WE COULD GO TO THE MINES OF CALDERIAN. IT WOULDN'T BE COMFORTABLE BUT I COULD EASILY HIDE THERE.
ARE THEY CLOSE? I'M GOING TO NEED TO START HELPING MY DAD SOON. LET'S TAKE YOU TO THESE MINES AND CHECK THEM OUT.
SHE'S GOING BACK TO THE CAVES.

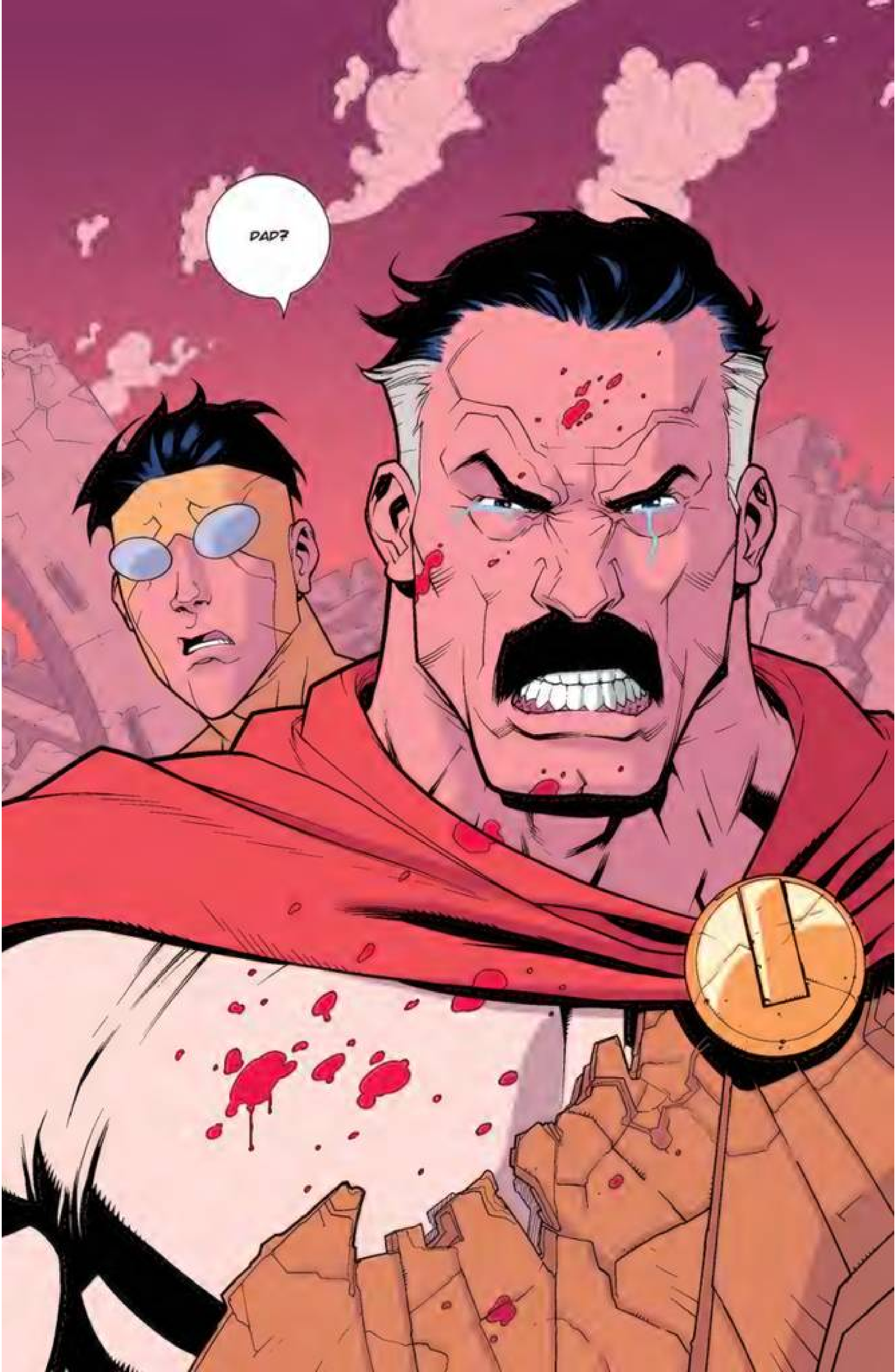

DAD? ARE YOU *OKAY?*
THIS IS NOT *MY* BLOOD.
SO THE VILTRUMITE...?
DEAD.
THAT VILTRUMITE WAS THE ONLY ONE WHO *KNEW* OF THE CAVES. HE FOLLOWED YOU ALONE. THE OTHERS WON'T BE ABLE TO FIND IT.
THEY WILL BE *SAFE* THERE.
THEN LET'S GO.
ONCE YOU DIDN'T IMMEDIATELY RETURN FROM THE CAVES--I CAME TO FIND YOU. THEY ARE NO DOUBT CIRCLING THE PLANET IN SEARCH OF ME. STAY LOW, LIKE BEFORE.
WILL DO.


BE READY TO CATCH ANDRESSA, MARK. IF THEY FIND US, I WILL THROW HER TO YOU AND YOU WILL TAKE BOTH OF THEM TO THE CAVES.
OKAY. SURE.
MARK. ARE YOU OKAY?
I GOT TIRED, DAD. I NEVER GOT TIRED BEFORE. I DIDN'T KNOW I COULD GET TIRED ANY MORE.
YOU HAVEN'T BEEN PUSHING YOURSELF. YOU'RE NOT USED TO USING YOUR POWERS AS MUCH AS YOU'VE HAD TO HERE.
YOU MEAN EXERCISE?
YES. PRETTY MUCH. YOU'VE GOT TO PUSH YOURSELF FROM TIME TO TIME--JUST IN CASE THINGS LIKE THIS HAPPEN.
I HADN'T EVER REALLY THOUGHT ABOUT IT.
WEIRD.
YOU TAKE TOO MUCH FOR GRANTED, SON. YOU'VE GOT TO RESPECT YOUR POWERS MORE.
UH... OKAY.
THERE ARE THE CAVES.
I'M HEADING BACK TO THE CITY. MEET ME THERE.
MAKE SURE THEY'RE SAFE.

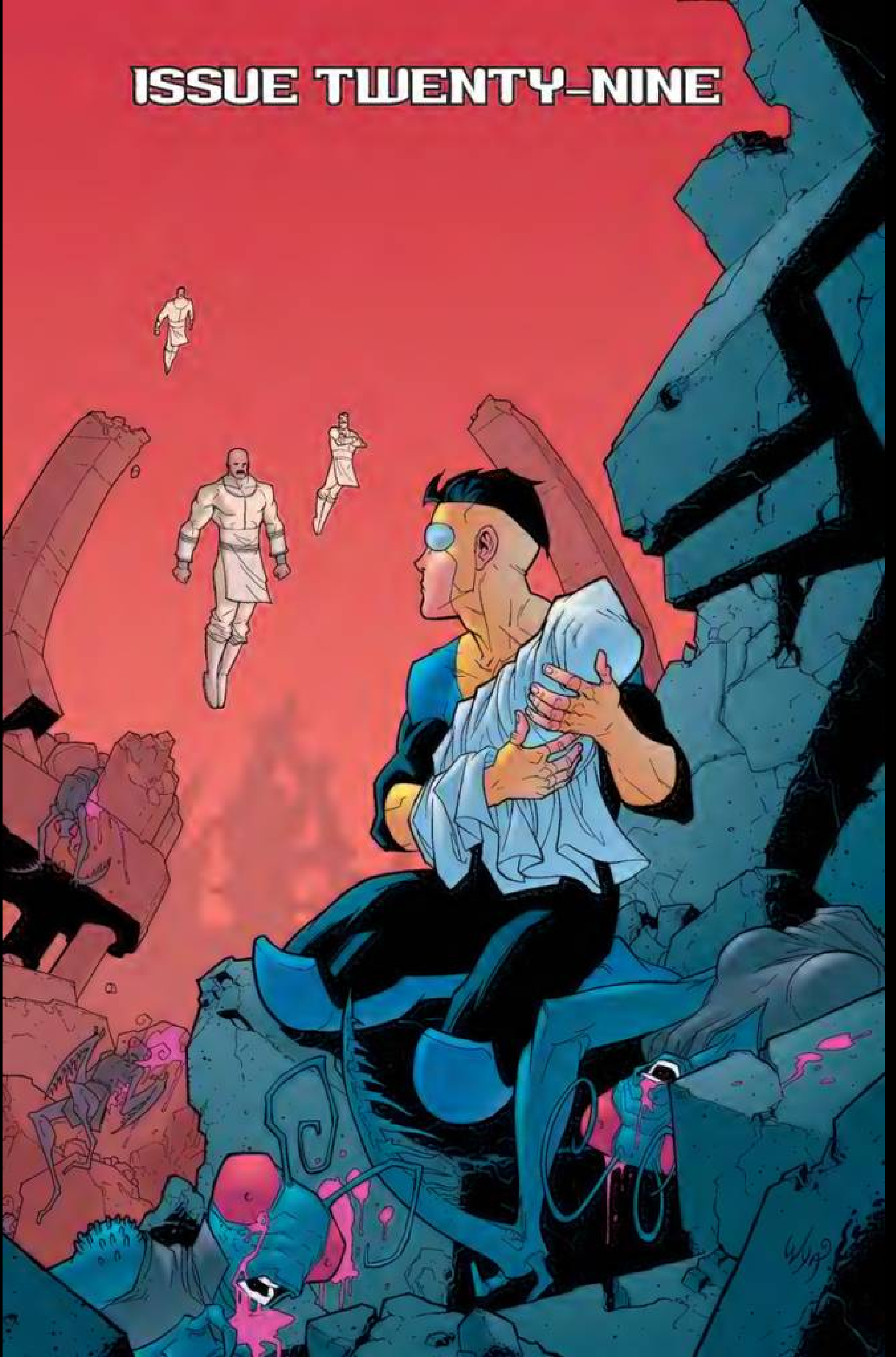

GO INSIDE, STAY SAFE. THEY SHOULDN'T KNOW WHERE YOU ARE.
BE CAREFUL, MARK. KEEP NOLAN SAFE.
I DON'T THINK THAT'S NECESSARY, BUT I'LL CERTAINLY *TRY*.

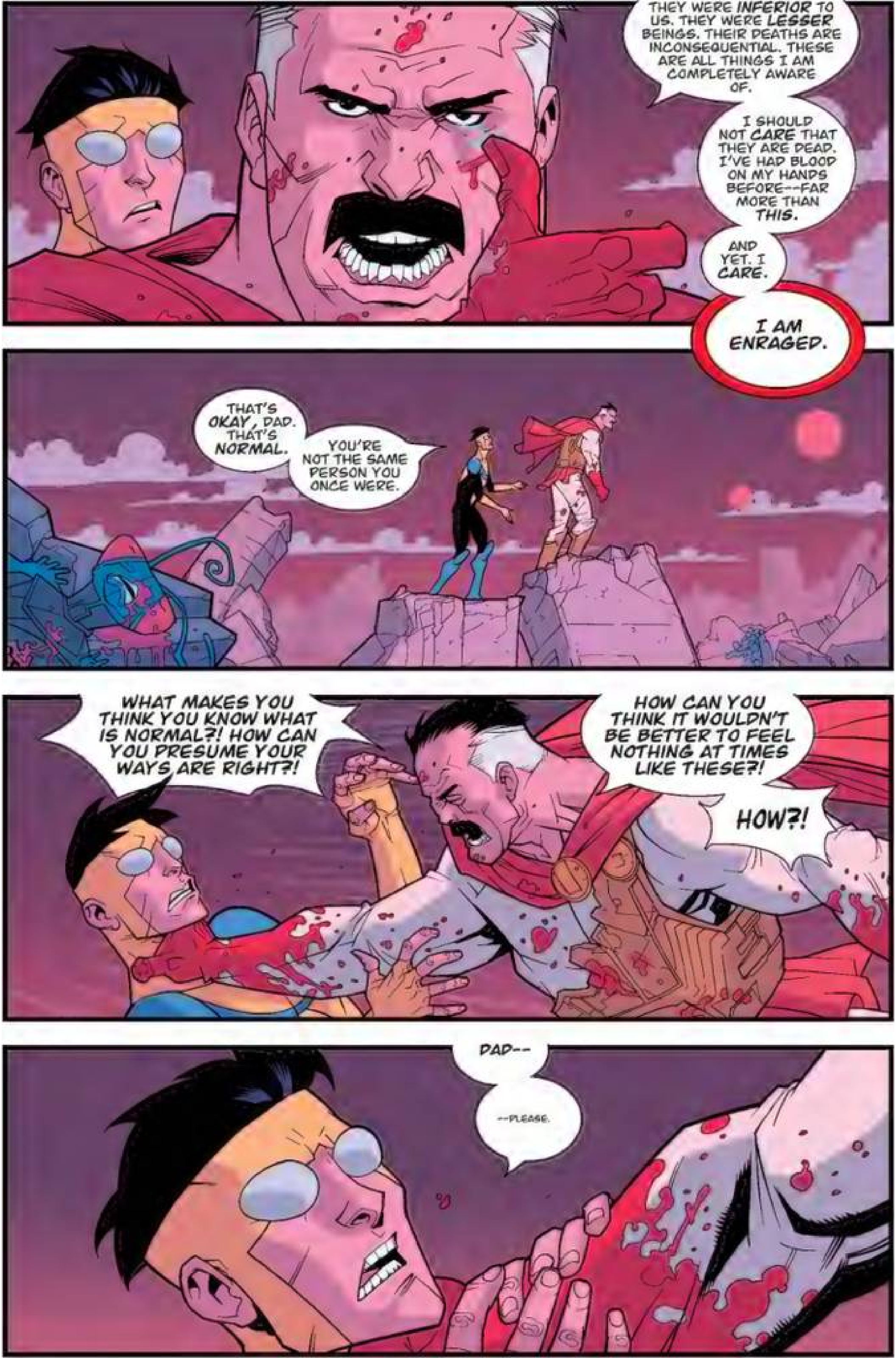

DAD?
OH, MAN... I-- WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO NOW?

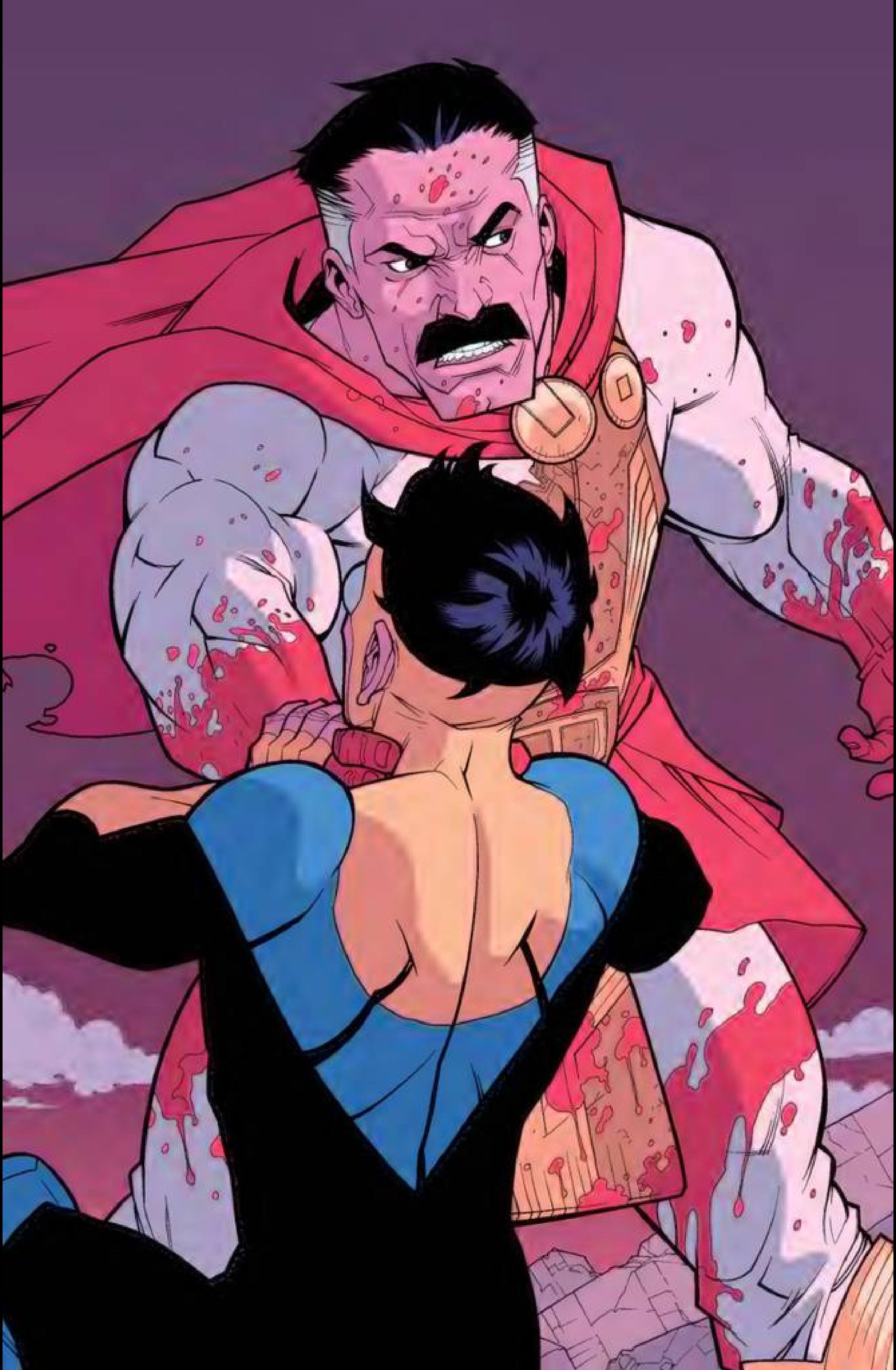


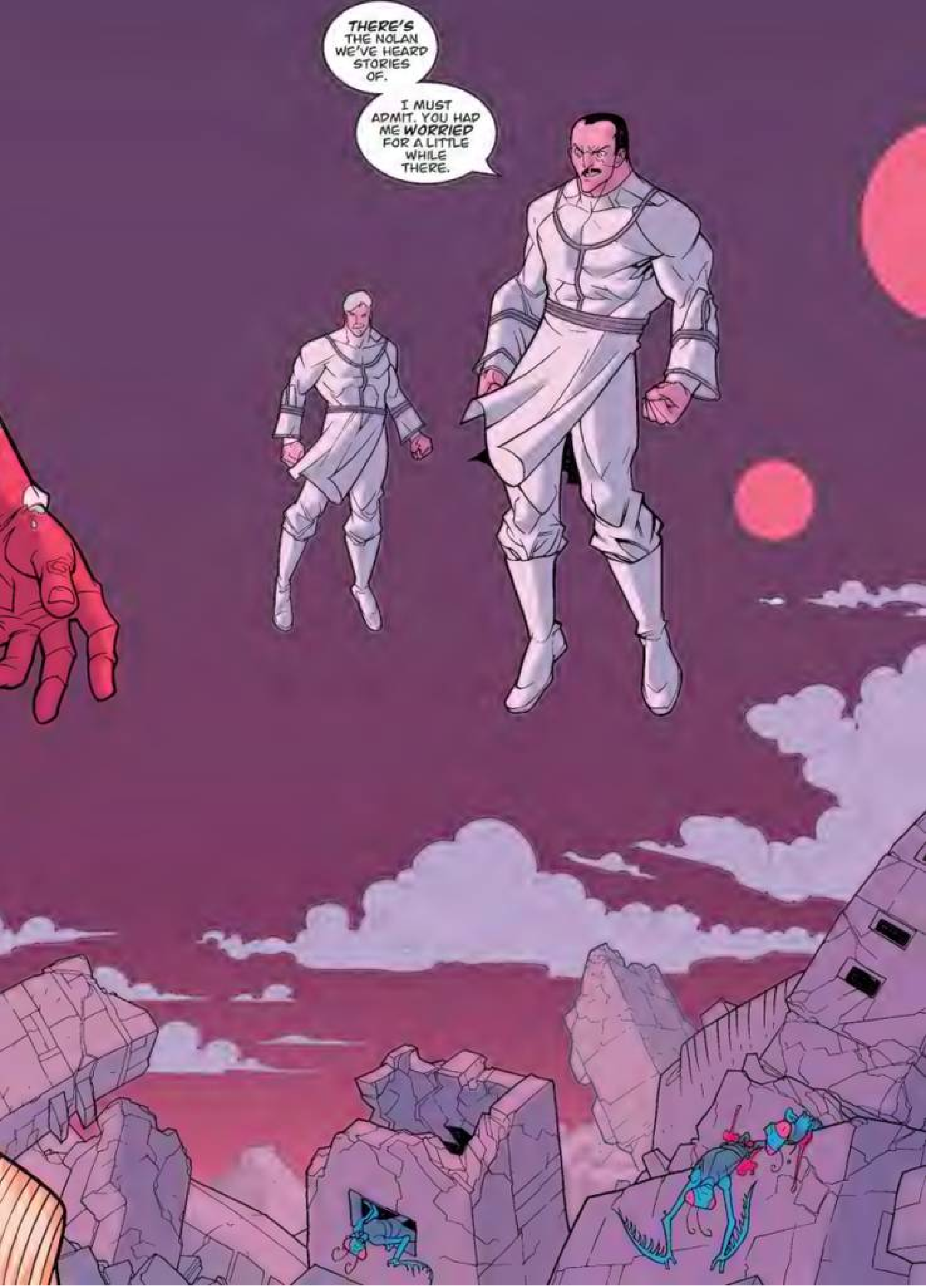

DAD?

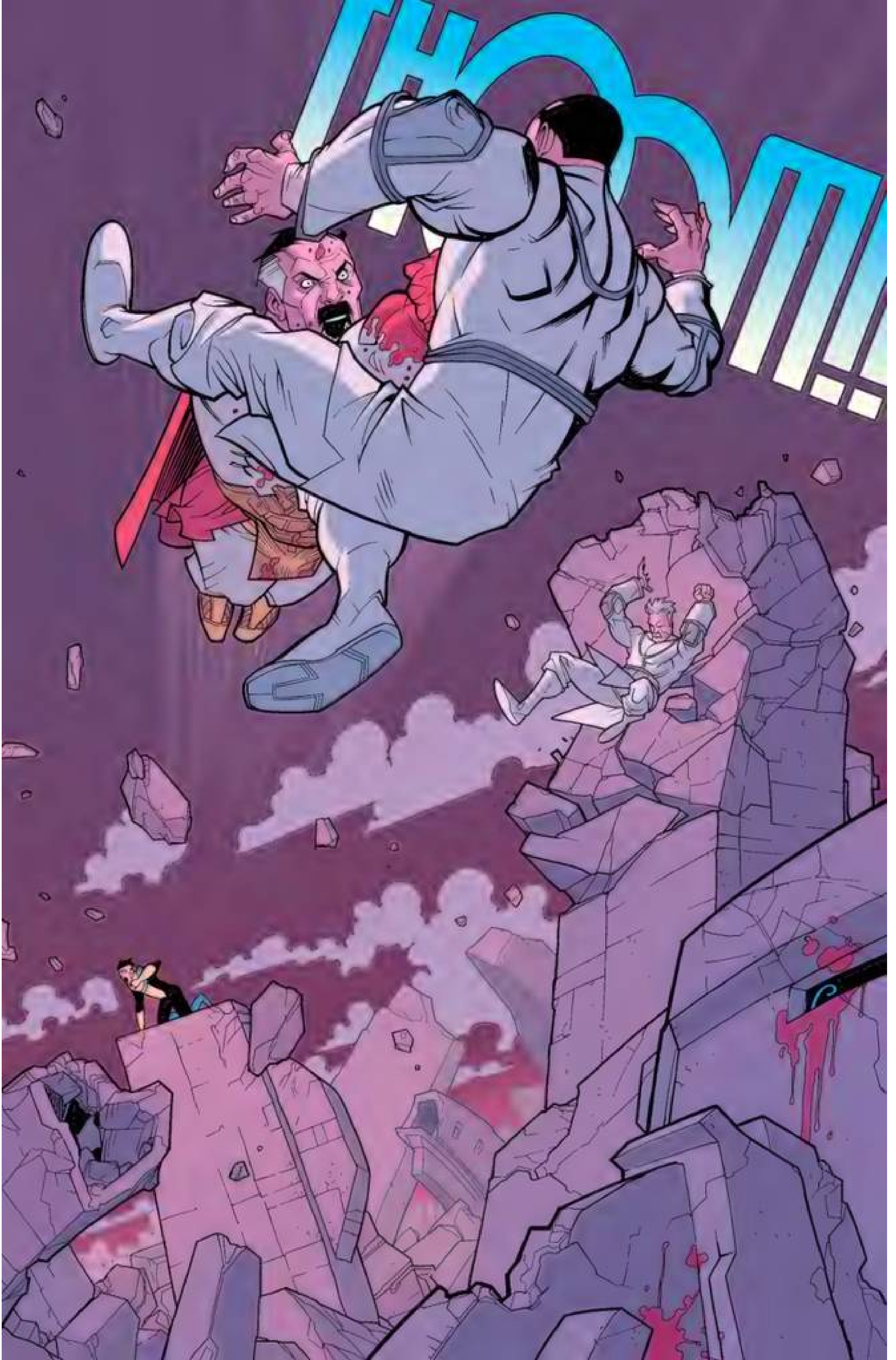
ISSUE TWENTY-NINE

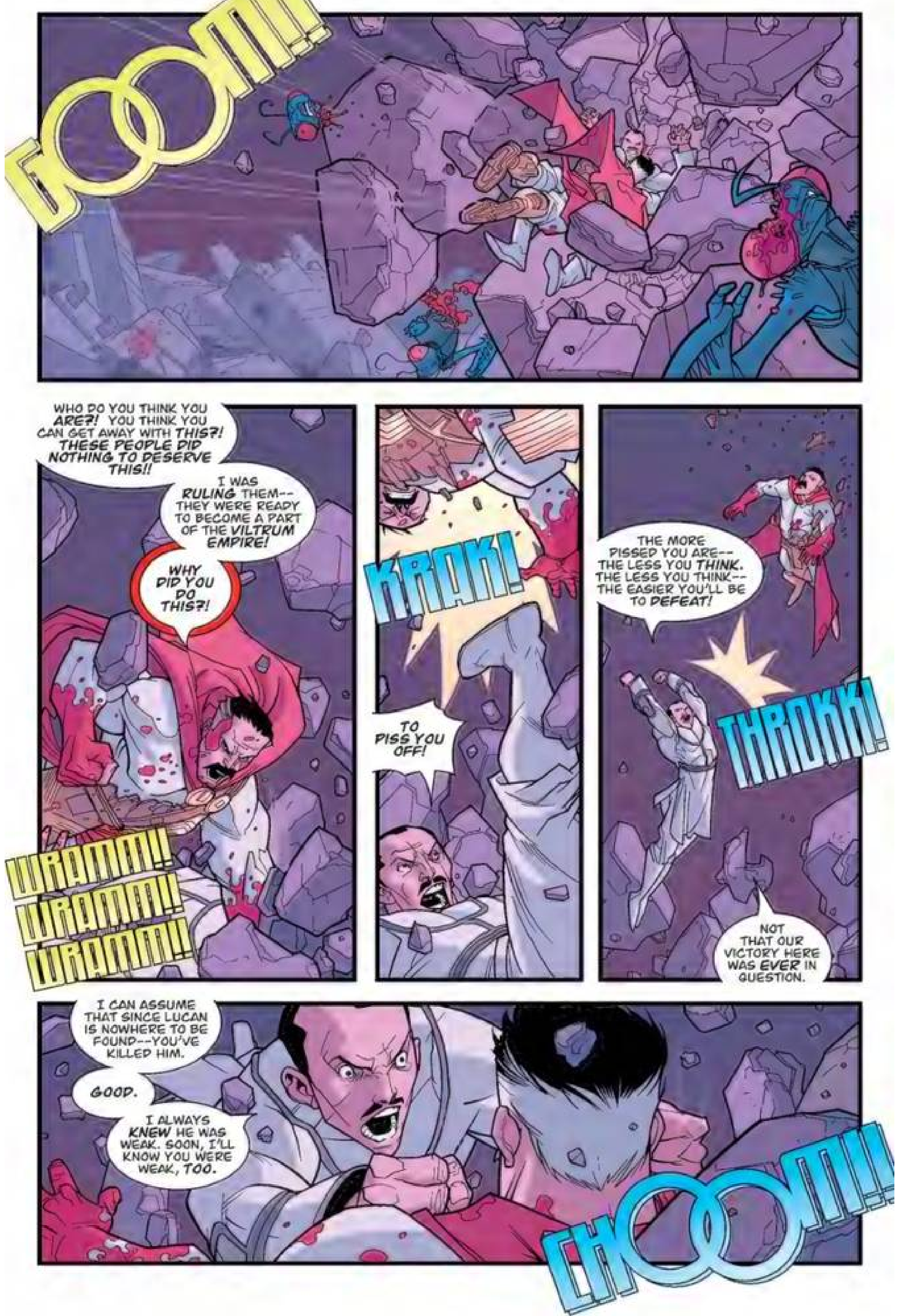


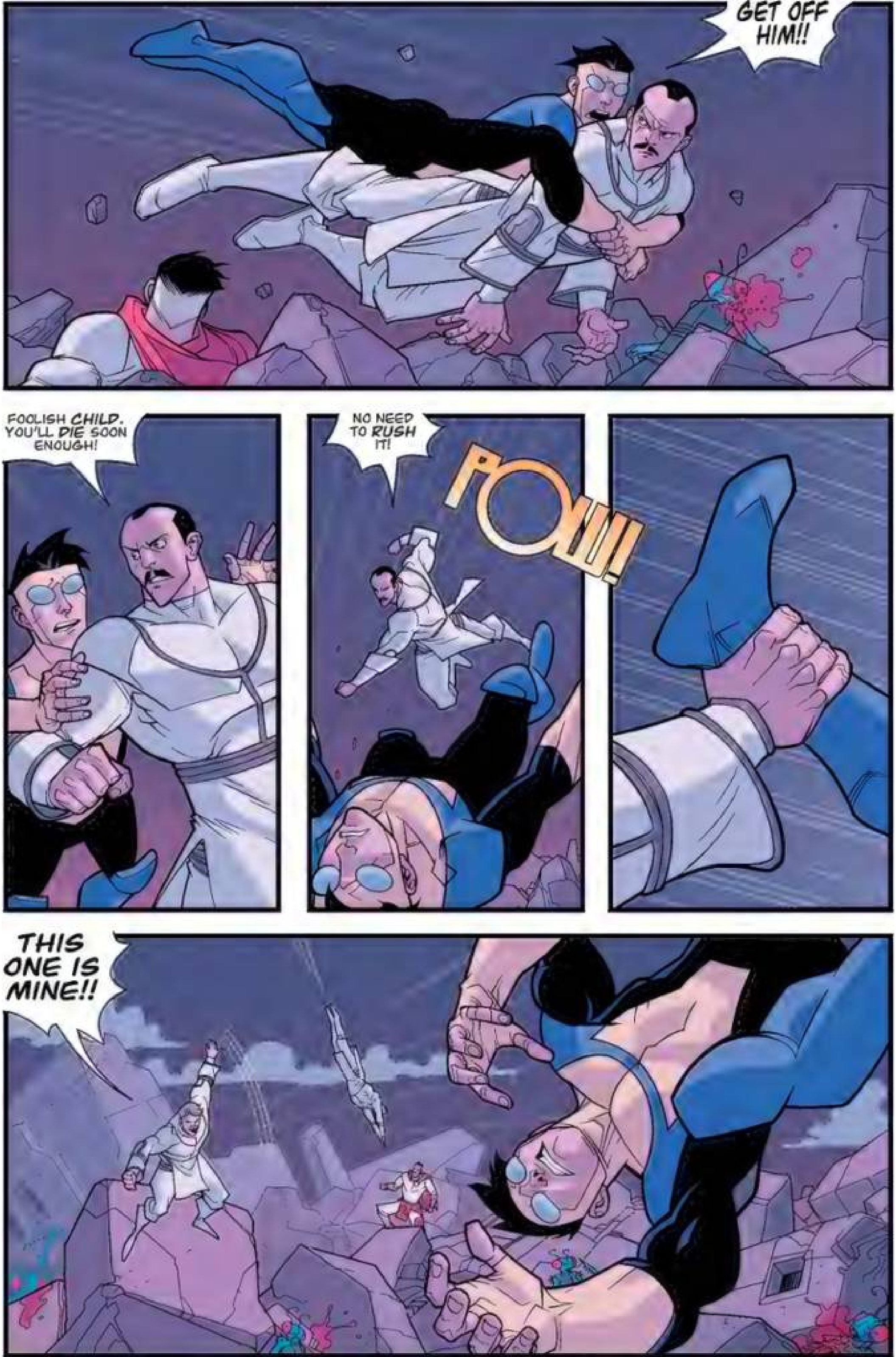

THEY WERE INFERIOR TO US. THEY WERE LESSER BEINGS. THEIR DEATHS ARE INCONSEQUENTIAL. THESE ARE ALL THINGS I AM COMPLETELY AWARE OF.
I SHOULD NOT CARE THAT THEY ARE DEAD. I'VE HAD BLOOD ON MY HANDS BEFORE--FAR MORE THAN THIS.
AND YET. I CARE.
I AM ENRAGED.
THAT'S OKAY, DAD. THAT'S NORMAL.
YOU'RE NOT THE SAME PERSON YOU ONCE WERE.
WHAT MAKES YOU THINK YOU KNOW WHAT IS NORMAL?! HOW CAN YOU PRESUME YOUR WAYS ARE RIGHT?!
HOW CAN YOU THINK IT WOULDN'T BE BETTER TO FEEL NOTHING AT TIMES LIKE THESE?!
HOW?!
DAD--
--PLEASE.

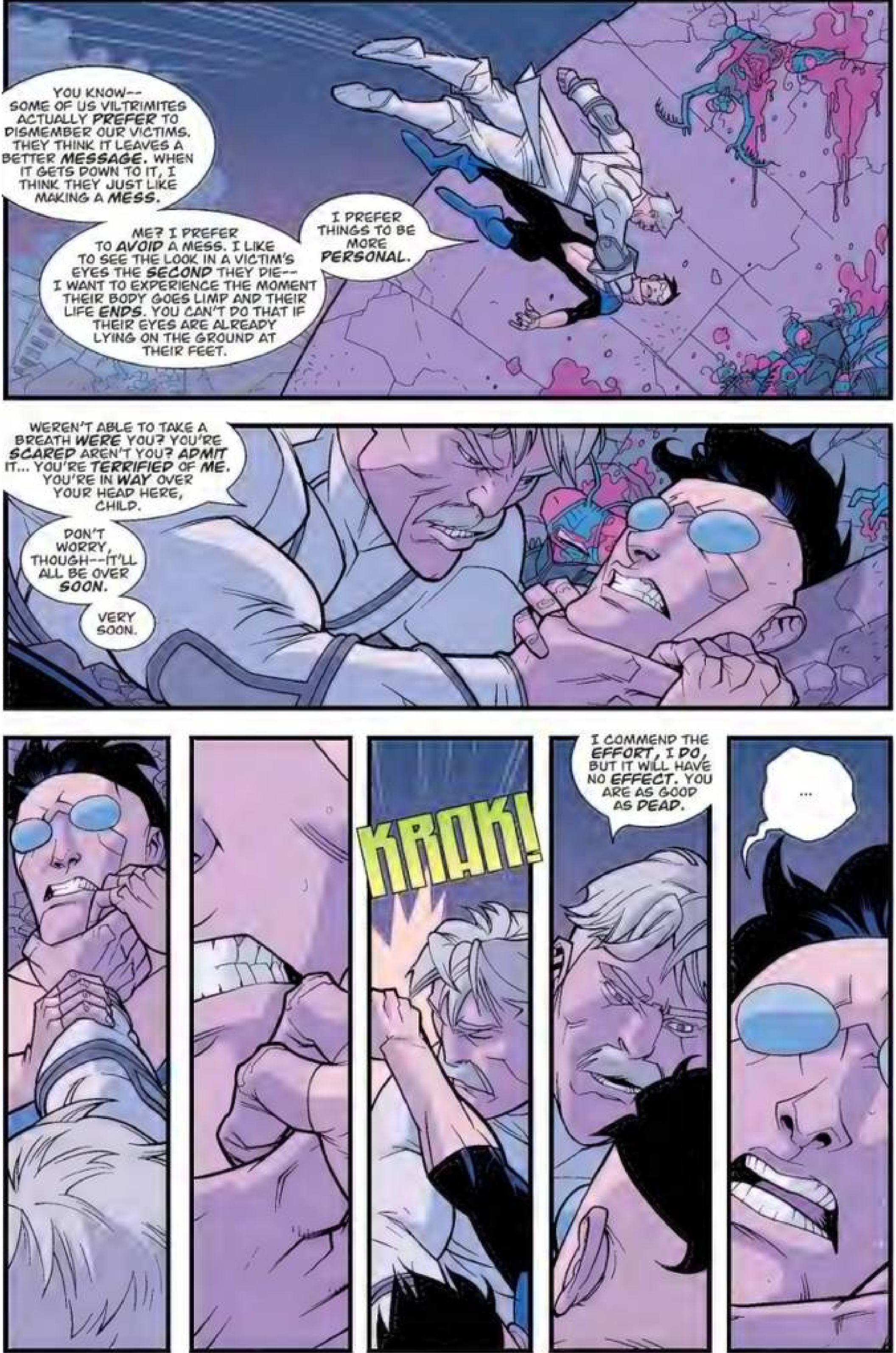


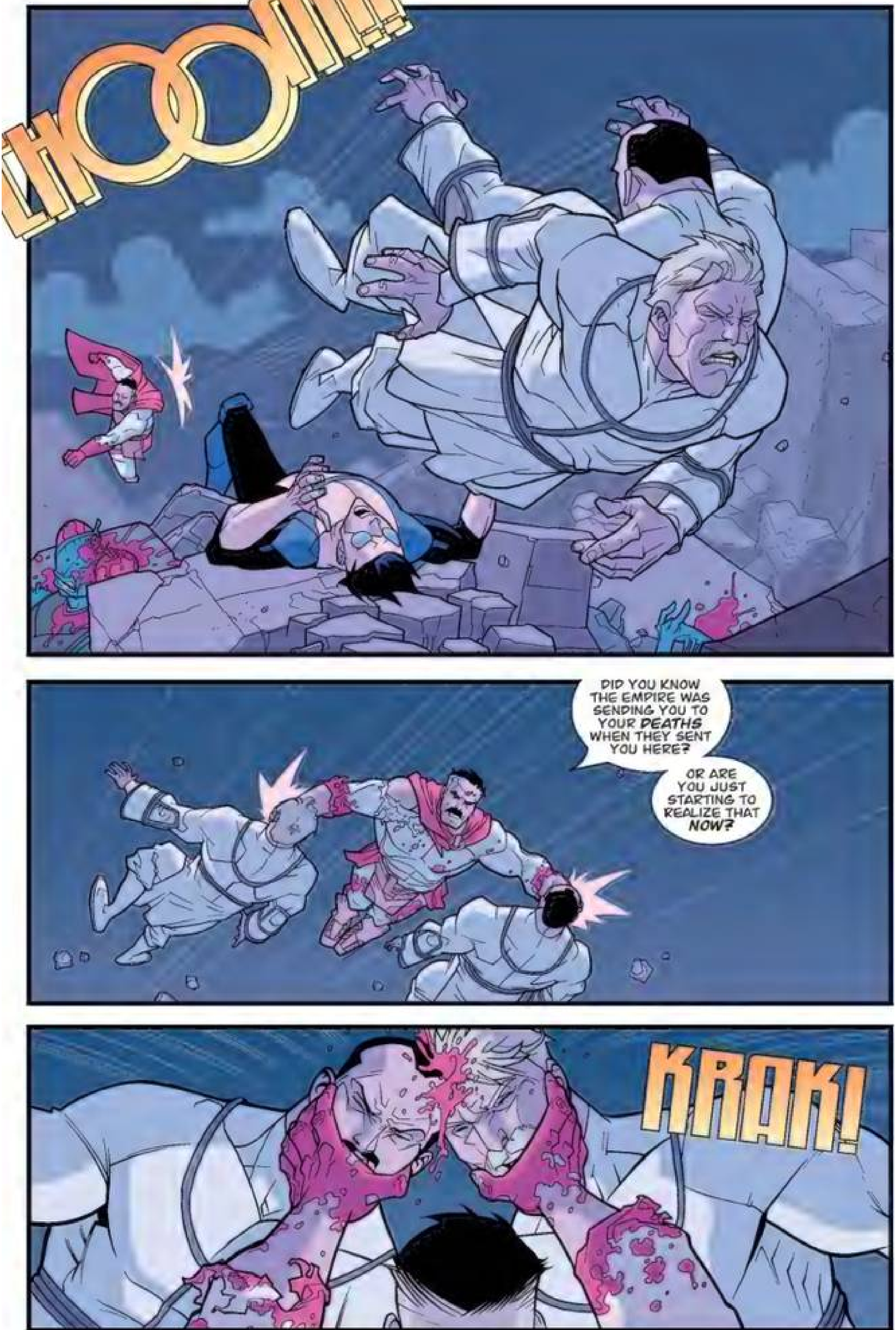

THERE'S THE NOLAN WE'VE HEARD STORIES OF.
I MUST ADMIT. YOU HAD ME WORRIED FOR A LITTLE WHILE THERE.

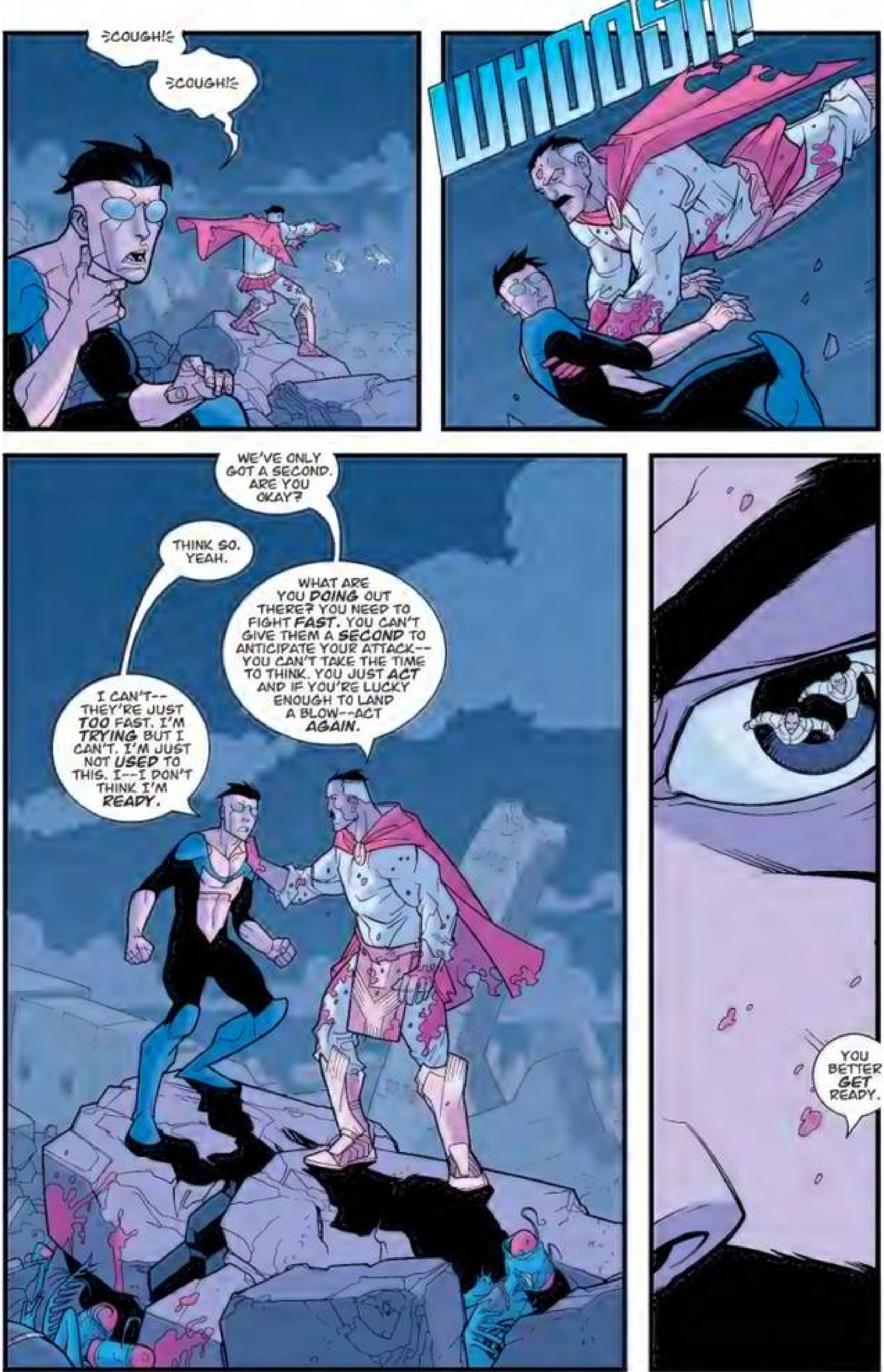

THOM!!

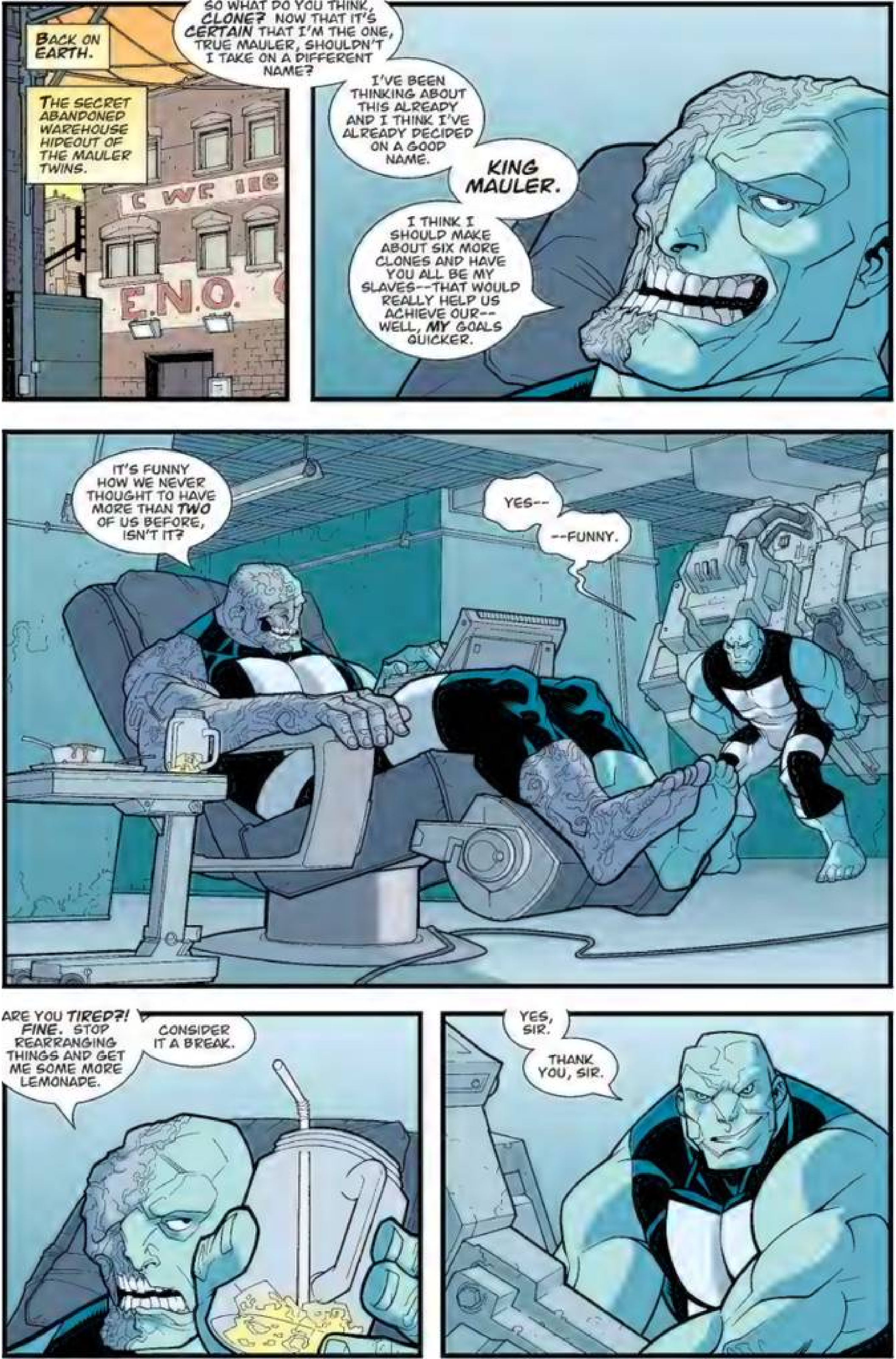

BOOM!!
WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?! YOU THINK YOU CAN GET AWAY WITH THIS?! THESE PEOPLE DID NOTHING TO DESERVE THIS!!
I WAS RULING THEM--THEY WERE READY TO BECOME A PART OF THE VILTRUM EMPIRE!
WHY DID YOU DO THIS?!
WRAMM!! WRAMM!! WRAMM!!
KRAK!
TO PISS YOU OFF!
THE MORE PISSED YOU ARE--THE LESS YOU THINK. THE LESS YOU THINK--THE EASIER YOU'LL BE TO DEFEAT!
THROKK!
NOT THAT OUR VICTORY HERE WAS EVER IN QUESTION.
I CAN ASSUME THAT SINCE LUCAN IS NOWHERE TO BE FOUND--YOU'VE KILLED HIM.
GOOD.
I ALWAYS KNEW HE WAS WEAK. SOON, I'LL KNOW YOU WERE WEAK, TOO.
CHOOM!!

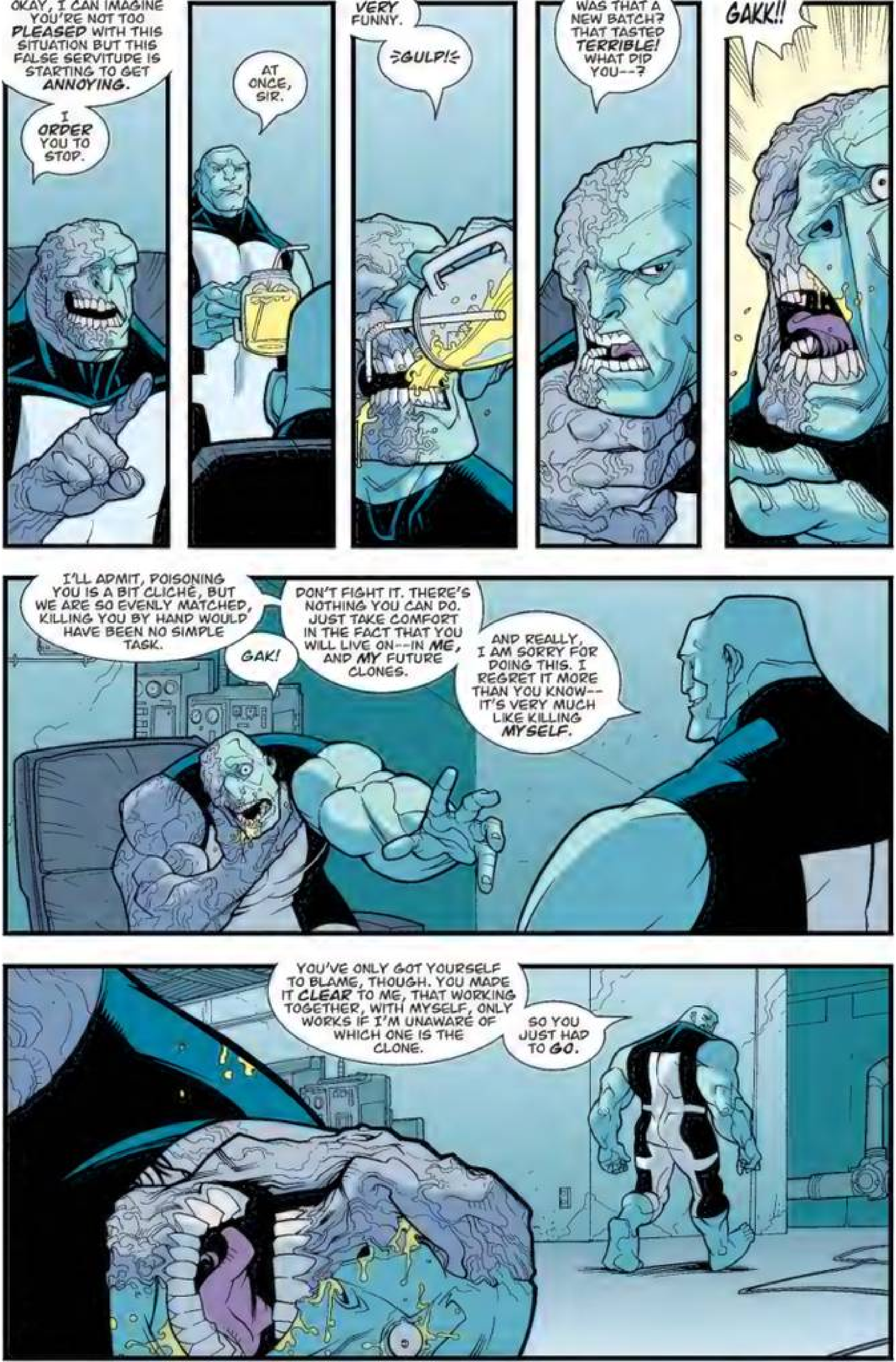

GET OFF HIM!!
FOOLISH CHILD. YOU'LL DIE SOON ENOUGH!
NO NEED TO RUSH IT!
POW!
THIS ONE IS MINE!!

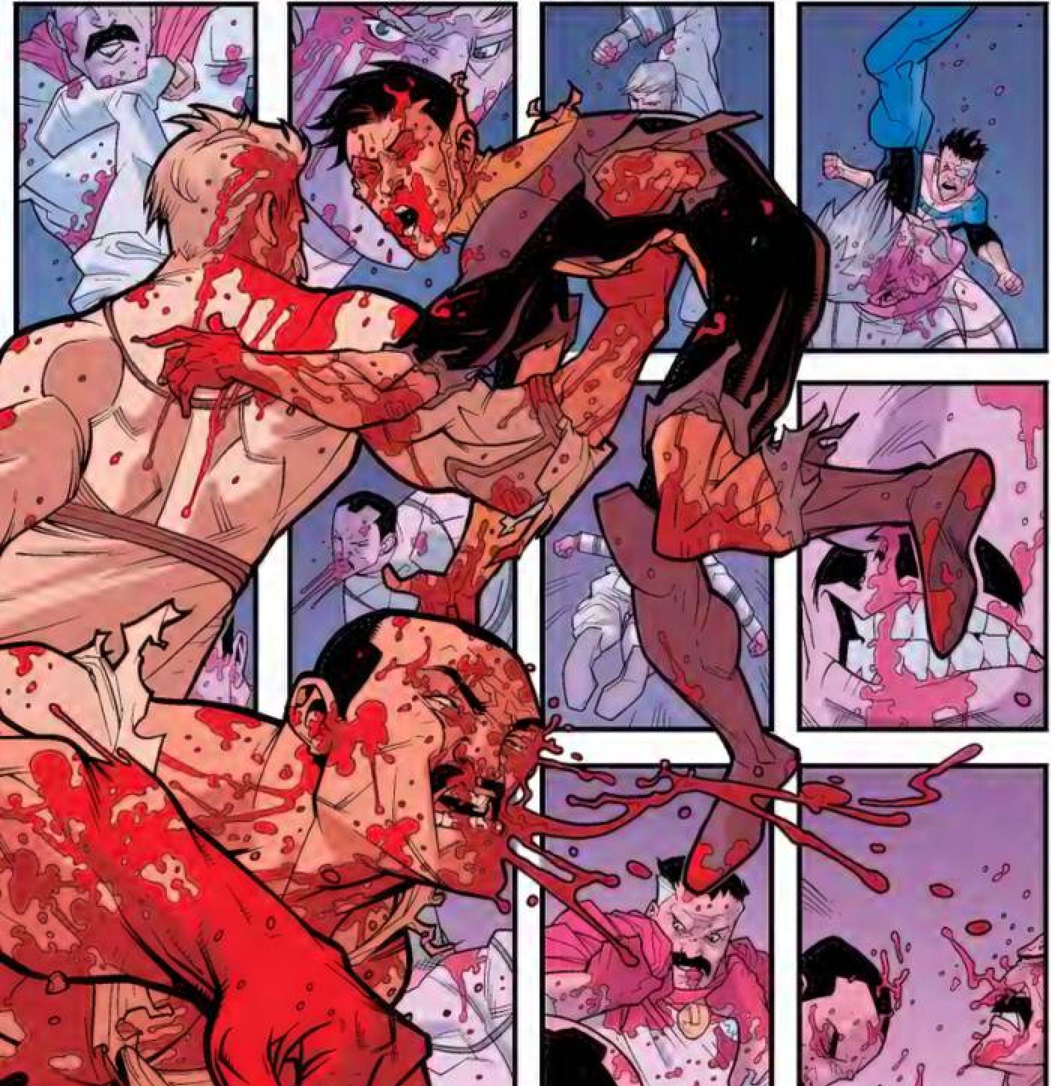

YOU KNOW-- SOME OF US VILTRIMITES ACTUALLY PREFER TO DISMEMBER OUR VICTIMS. THEY THINK IT LEAVES A BETTER MESSAGE. WHEN IT GETS DOWN TO IT, I THINK THEY JUST LIKE MAKING A MESS.
ME? I PREFER TO AVOID A MESS. I LIKE TO SEE THE LOOK IN A VICTIM'S EYES THE SECOND THEY DIE-- I WANT TO EXPERIENCE THE MOMENT THEIR BODY GOES LIMP AND THEIR LIFE ENDS. YOU CAN'T DO THAT IF THEIR EYES ARE ALREADY LYING ON THE GROUND AT THEIR FEET.
I PREFER THINGS TO BE MORE PERSONAL.
WEREN'T ABLE TO TAKE A BREATH WERE YOU? YOU'RE SCARED AREN'T YOU? ADMIT IT... YOU'RE TERRIFIED OF ME. YOU'RE IN WAY OVER YOUR HEAD HERE, CHILD.
DON'T WORRY, THOUGH--IT'LL ALL BE OVER SOON.
VERY SOON.
KRAK!
I COMMEND THE EFFORT, I DO, BUT IT WILL HAVE NO EFFECT. YOU ARE AS GOOD AS DEAD.
...

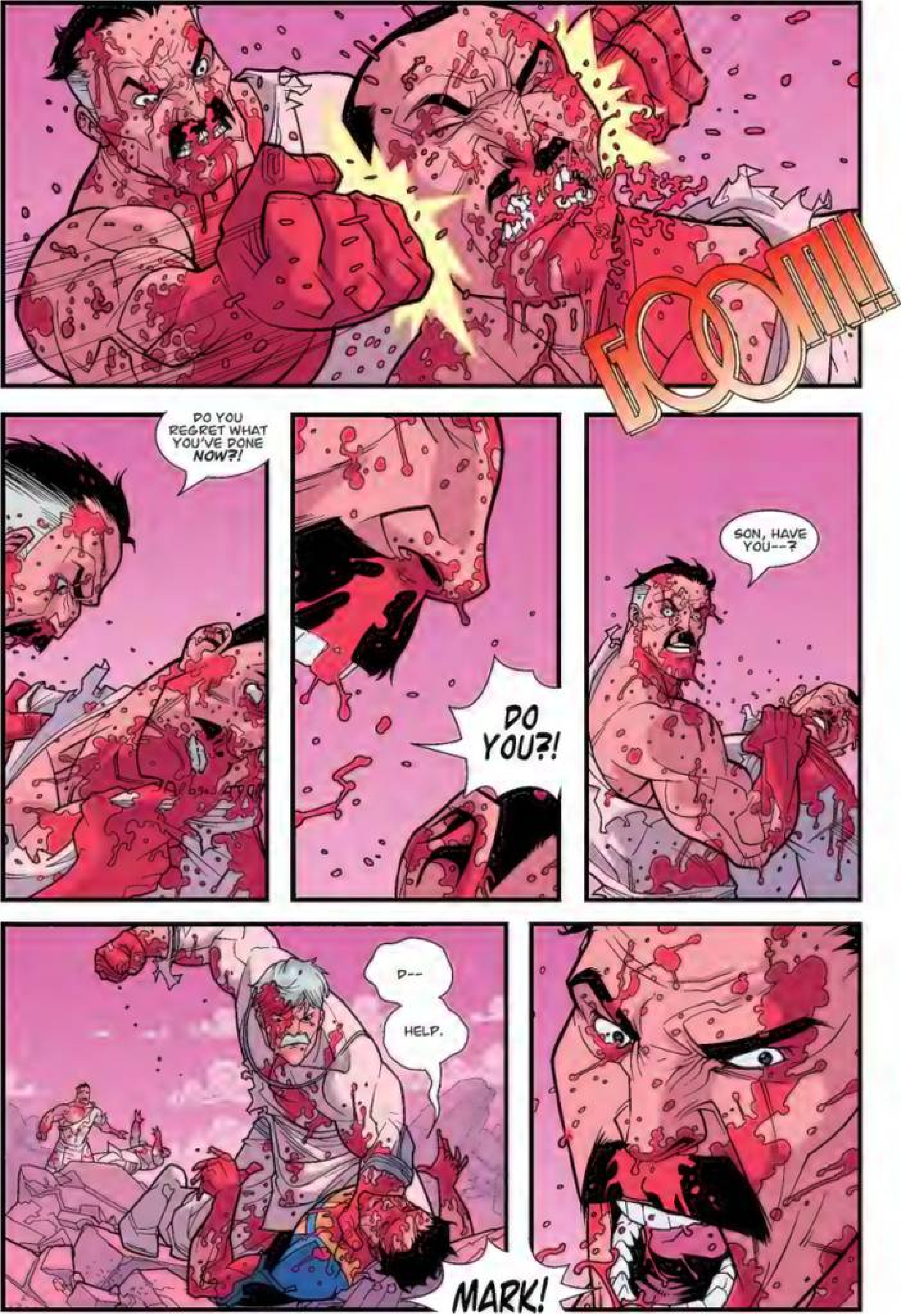

HOOM!!
DID YOU KNOW THE EMPIRE WAS SENDING YOU TO YOUR *DEATHS* WHEN THEY SENT YOU HERE?
OR ARE YOU JUST STARTING TO REALIZE THAT *NOW?*
KRAK!

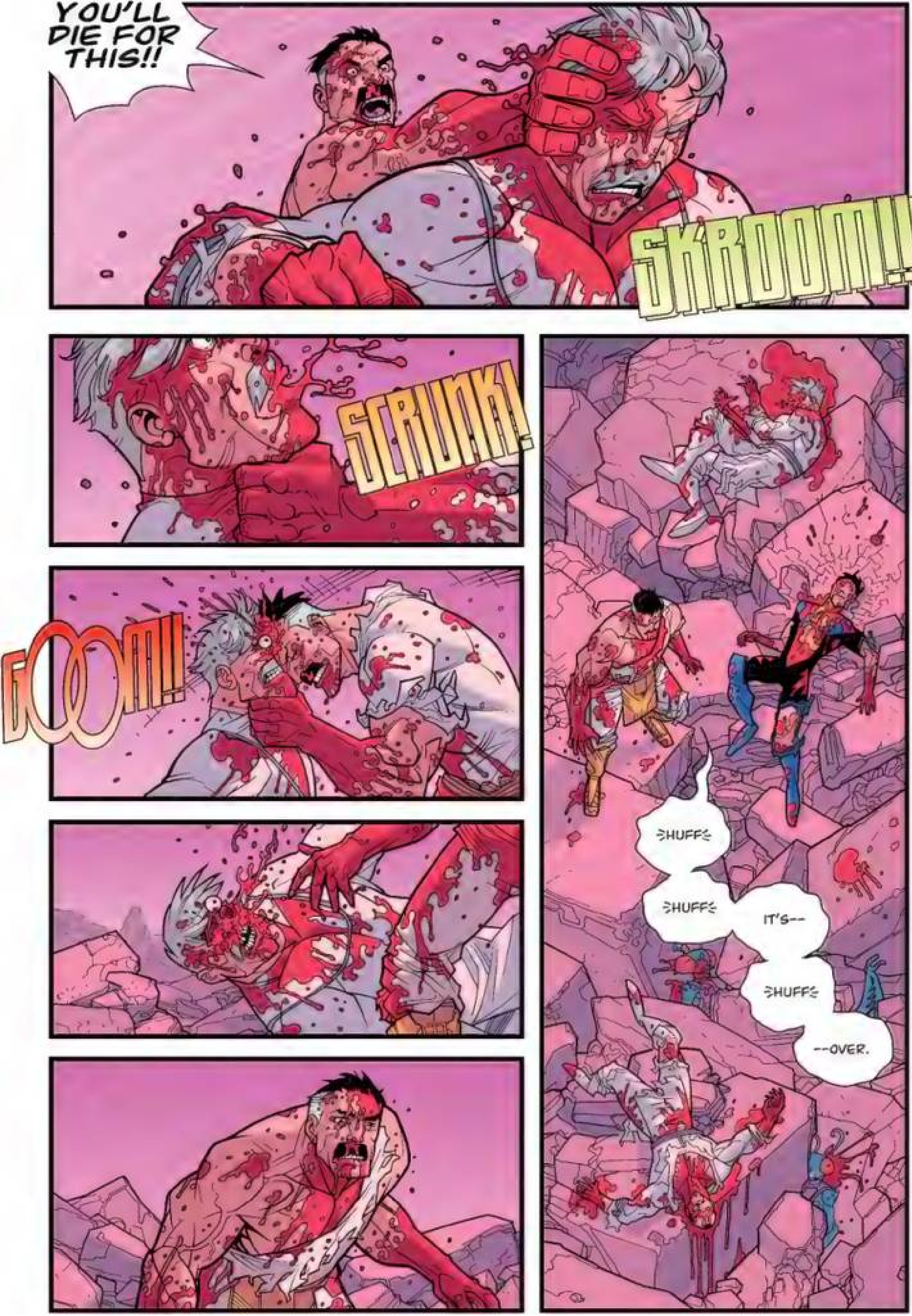

=COUGH!=
=COUGH!=
WHOOSH!
WE'VE ONLY GOT A SECOND. ARE YOU OKAY?
THINK SO. YEAH.
WHAT ARE YOU **DOING** OUT THERE? YOU NEED TO FIGHT **FAST**. YOU CAN'T GIVE THEM A **SECOND** TO ANTICIPATE YOUR ATTACK--YOU CAN'T TAKE THE TIME TO THINK. YOU JUST **ACT** AND IF YOU'RE LUCKY ENOUGH TO LAND A BLOW--ACT **AGAIN**.
I CAN'T--THEY'RE JUST **TOO** FAST. I'M **TRYING** BUT I CAN'T. I'M JUST NOT **USED** TO THIS. I--I DON'T THINK I'M **READY**.
YOU BETTER **GET** READY.

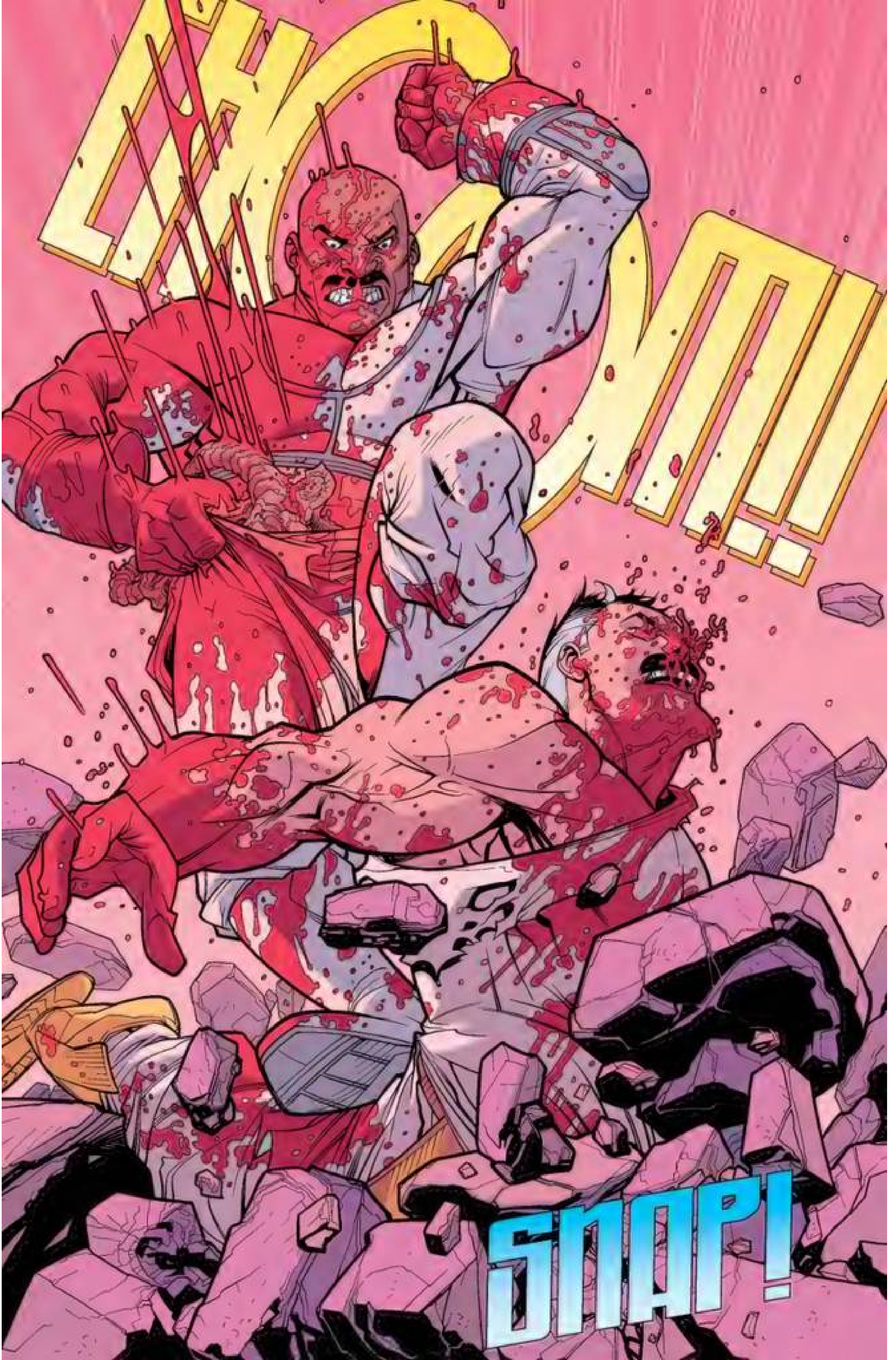

BACK ON EARTH.
THE SECRET ABANDONED WAREHOUSE HIDEOUT OF THE MAULER TWINS.
E.N.O.
SO WHAT DO YOU THINK, CLONE? NOW THAT IT'S CERTAIN THAT I'M THE ONE, TRUE MAULER, SHOULDN'T I TAKE ON A DIFFERENT NAME?
I'VE BEEN THINKING ABOUT THIS ALREADY AND I THINK I'VE ALREADY DECIDED ON A GOOD NAME.
KING MAULER.
I THINK I SHOULD MAKE ABOUT SIX MORE CLONES AND HAVE YOU ALL BE MY SLAVES--THAT WOULD REALLY HELP US ACHIEVE OUR-- WELL, MY GOALS QUICKER.
IT'S FUNNY HOW WE NEVER THOUGHT TO HAVE MORE THAN TWO OF US BEFORE, ISN'T IT?
YES--
--FUNNY.
ARE YOU TIRED?! FINE. STOP REARRANGING THINGS AND GET ME SOME MORE LEMONADE.
CONSIDER IT A BREAK.
YES, SIR.
THANK YOU, SIR.

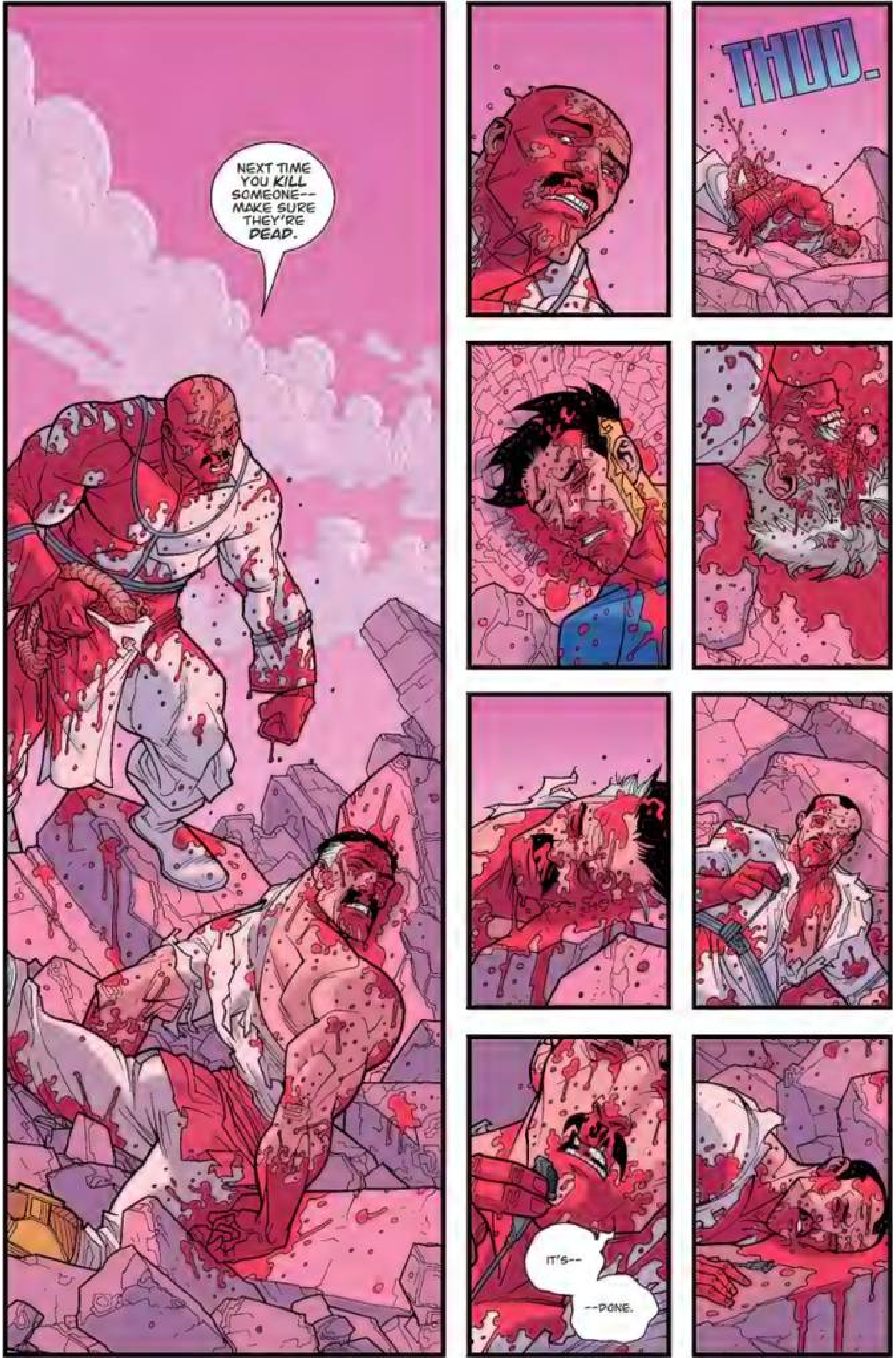

OKAY, I CAN IMAGINE YOU'RE NOT TOO **PLEASED** WITH THIS SITUATION BUT THIS FALSE SERVITUDE IS STARTING TO GET **ANNOYING.**
I **ORDER** YOU TO STOP.
AT ONCE, SIR.
VERY FUNNY.
GULP!
WAS THAT A NEW BATCH? THAT TASTED **TERRIBLE!** WHAT DID YOU--?
GAKK!!
I'LL ADMIT, POISONING YOU IS A BIT CLICHÉ, BUT WE ARE SO EVENLY MATCHED, KILLING YOU BY HAND WOULD HAVE BEEN NO SIMPLE TASK.
GAK!
DON'T FIGHT IT. THERE'S NOTHING YOU CAN DO. JUST TAKE COMFORT IN THE FACT THAT YOU WILL LIVE ON--IN **ME,** AND **MY** FUTURE CLONES.
AND REALLY, I AM SORRY FOR DOING THIS. I REGRET IT MORE THAN YOU KNOW-- IT'S VERY MUCH LIKE KILLING **MYSELF.**
YOU'VE ONLY GOT YOURSELF TO BLAME, THOUGH. YOU MADE IT **CLEAR** TO ME, THAT WORKING TOGETHER, WITH MYSELF, ONLY WORKS IF I'M UNAWARE OF WHICH ONE IS THE CLONE.
SO YOU JUST HAD TO **GO.**

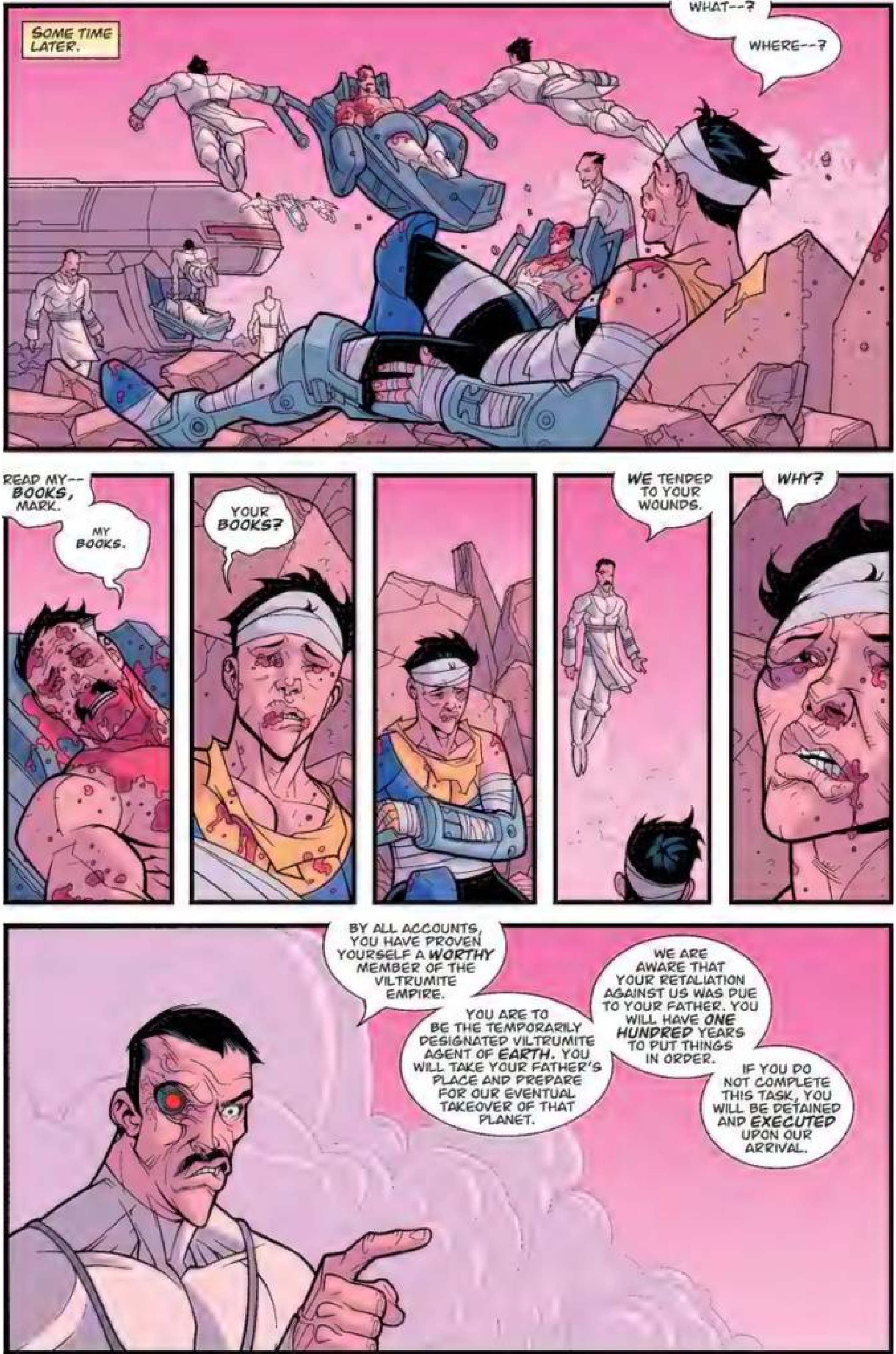


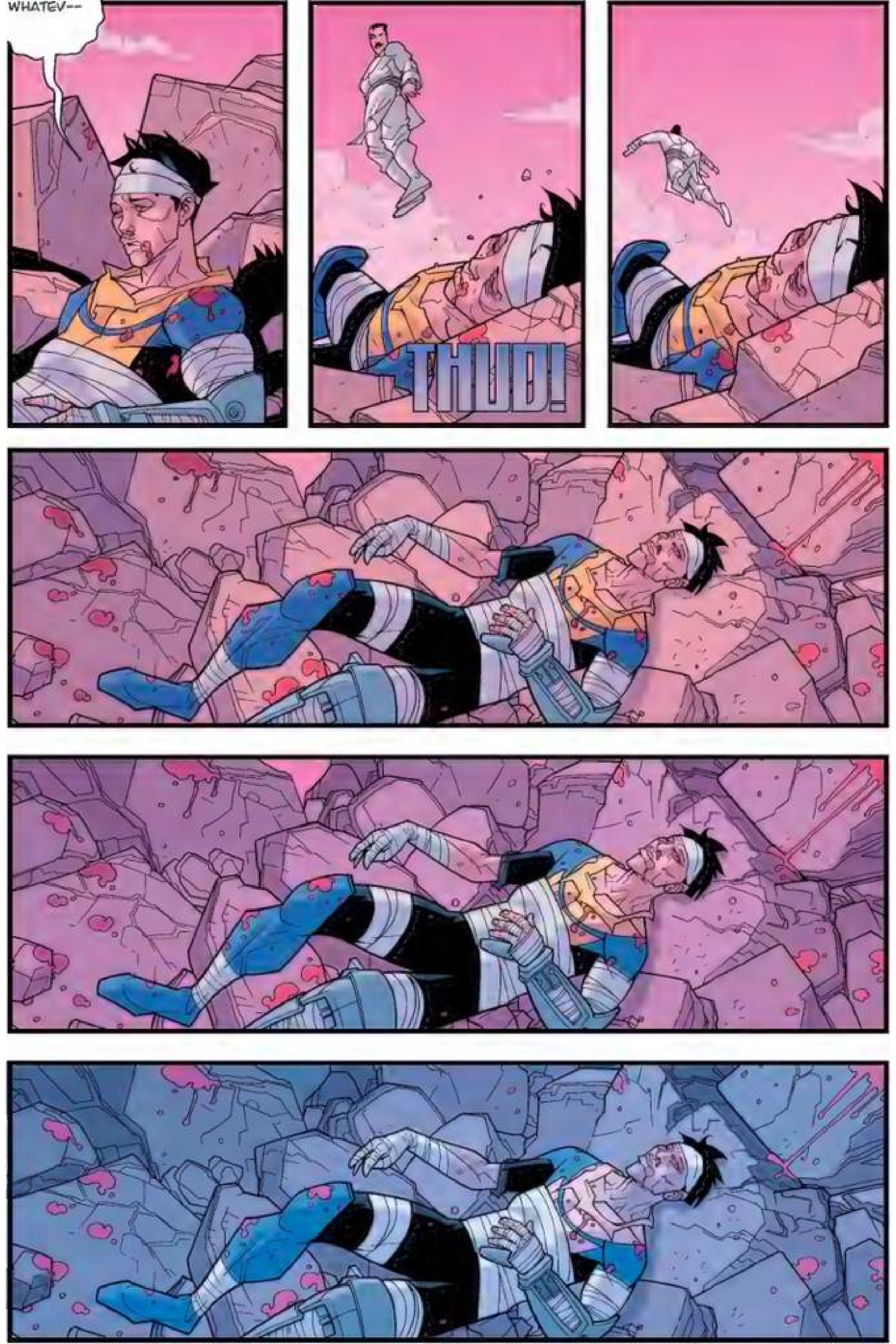

FOOM!!
DO YOU REGRET WHAT YOU'VE DONE NOW?!
DO YOU?!
SON, HAVE YOU--?
D--
HELP.
MARK!

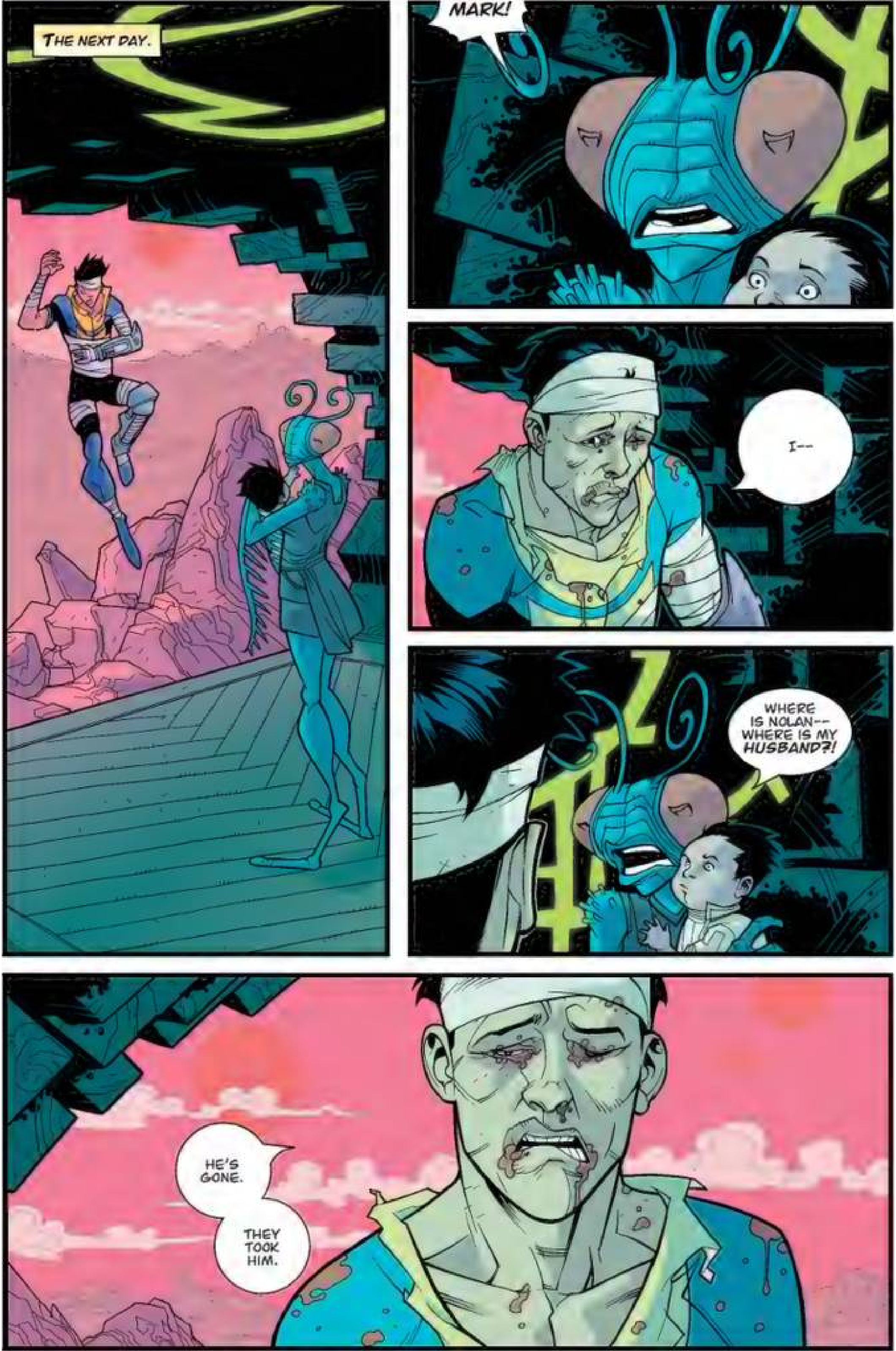

YOU'LL DIE FOR THIS!!
SKROOM!!
SCRUNK!
GOOM!!
HUFF
HUFF
IT'S--
HUFF
--OVER.

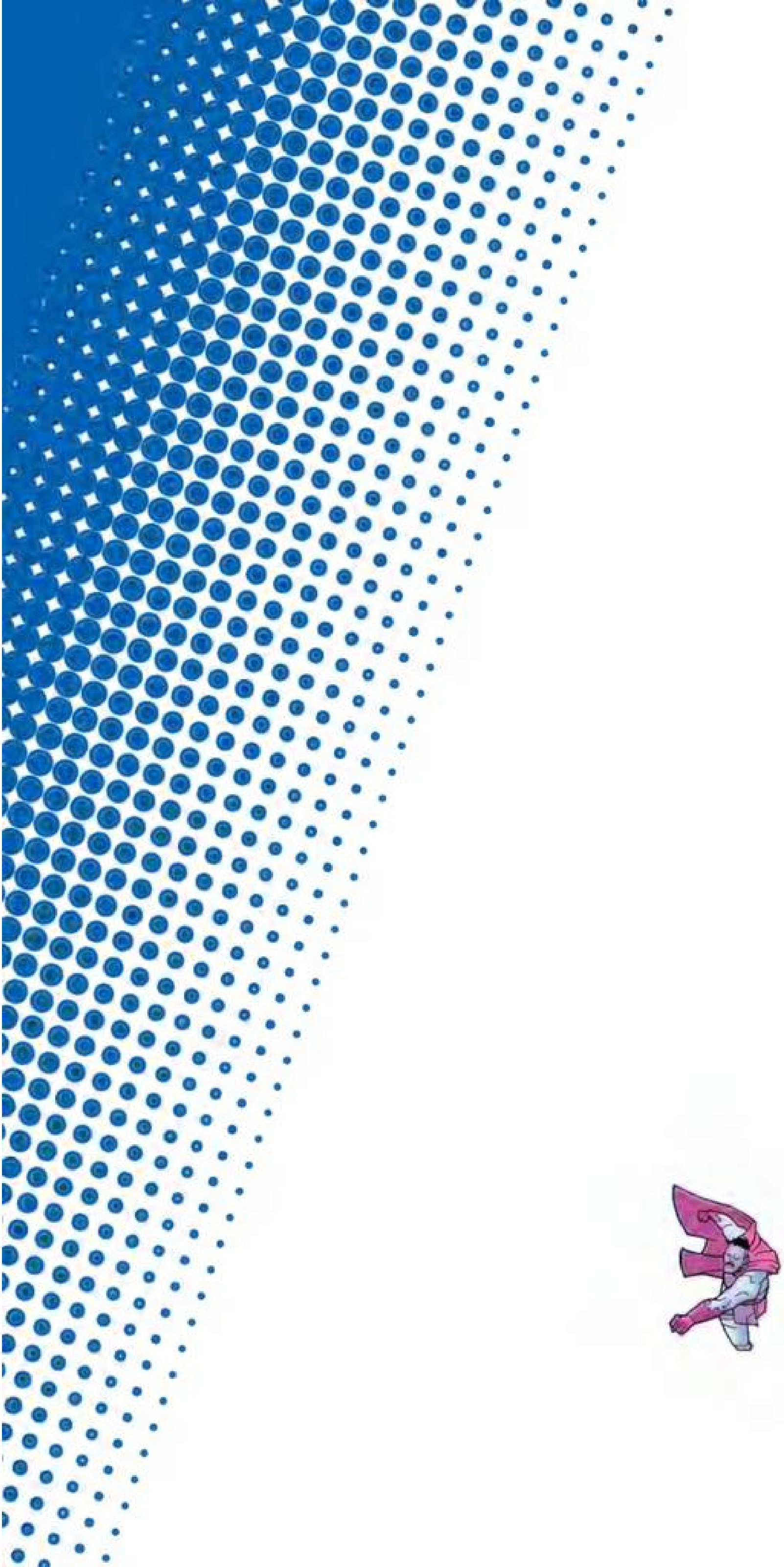

CHOM!!
SNAP!


NEXT TIME YOU KILL SOMEONE-- MAKE SURE THEY'RE DEAD.
THUD.
IT'S--
--DONE.

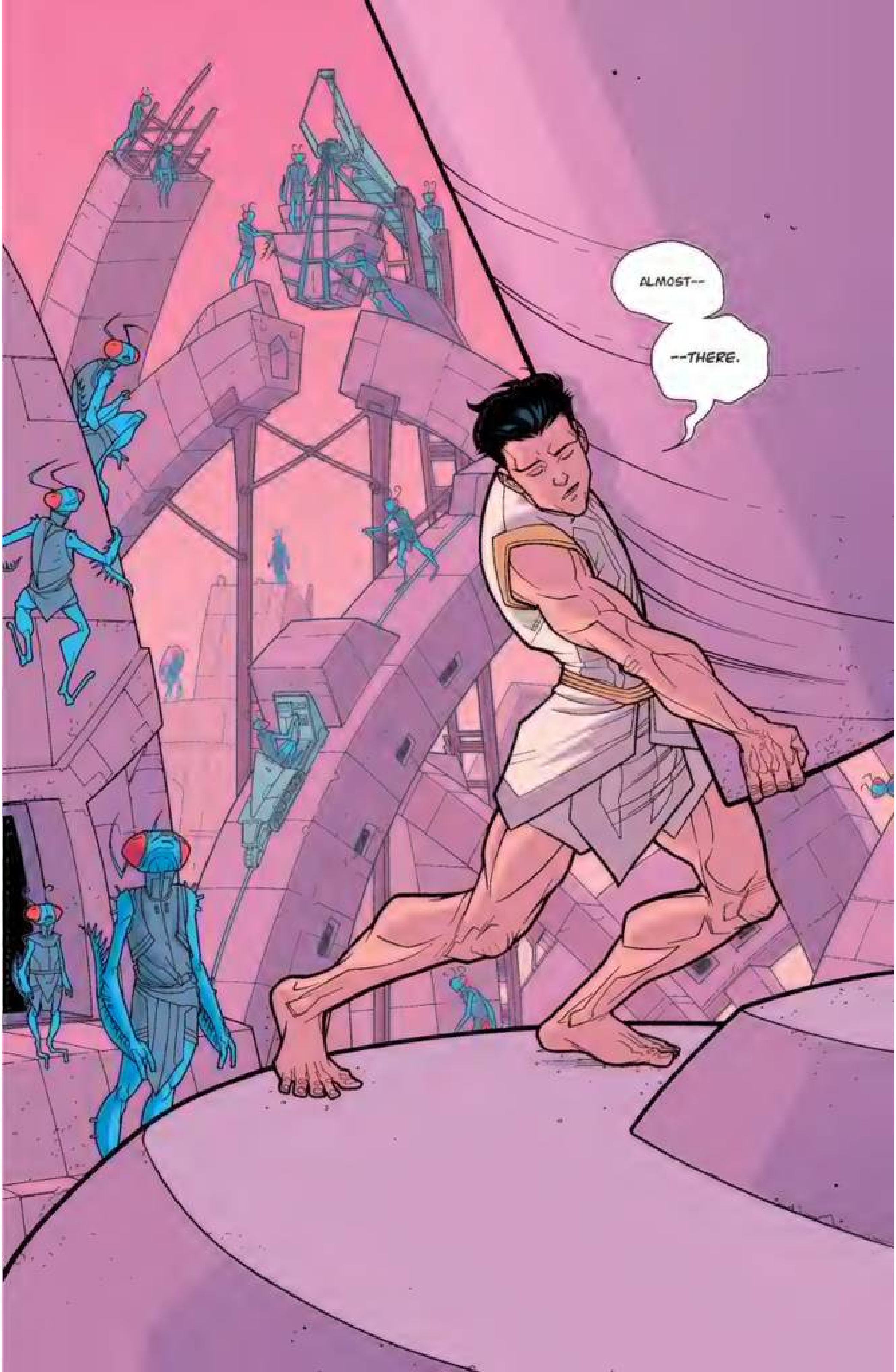

SOME TIME LATER.
WHAT--?
WHERE--?
READ MY-- BOOKS, MARK.
MY BOOKS.
YOUR BOOKS?
WE TENDED TO YOUR WOUNDS.
WHY?
BY ALL ACCOUNTS, YOU HAVE PROVEN YOURSELF A WORTHY MEMBER OF THE VILTRUMITE EMPIRE.
YOU ARE TO BE THE TEMPORARILY DESIGNATED VILTRUMITE AGENT OF EARTH. YOU WILL TAKE YOUR FATHER'S PLACE AND PREPARE FOR OUR EVENTUAL TAKEOVER OF THAT PLANET.
WE ARE AWARE THAT YOUR RETALIATION AGAINST US WAS DUE TO YOUR FATHER. YOU WILL HAVE ONE HUNDRED YEARS TO PUT THINGS IN ORDER.
IF YOU DO NOT COMPLETE THIS TASK, YOU WILL BE DETAINED AND EXECUTED UPON OUR ARRIVAL.

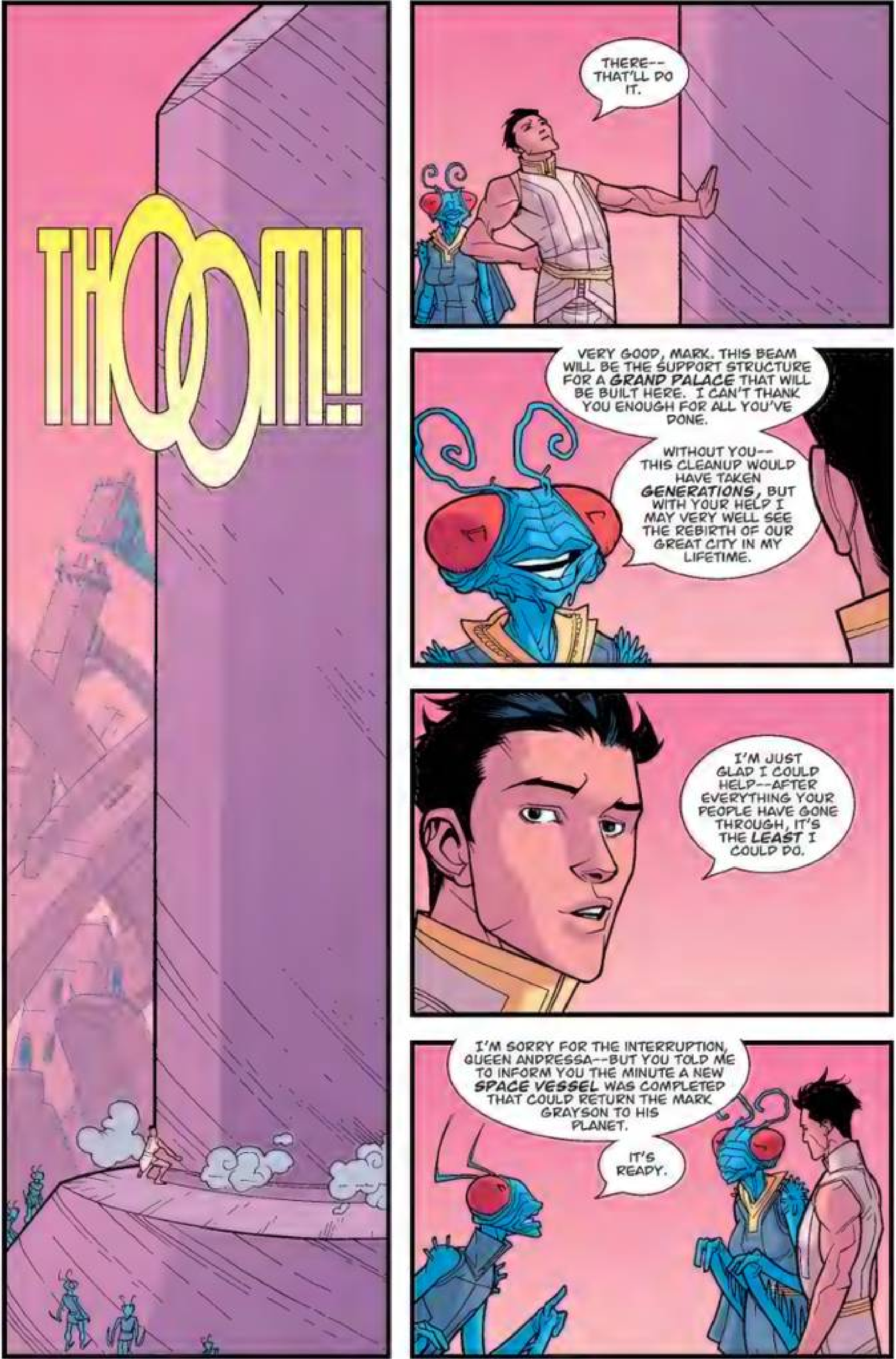

WHATEV--
THUD!

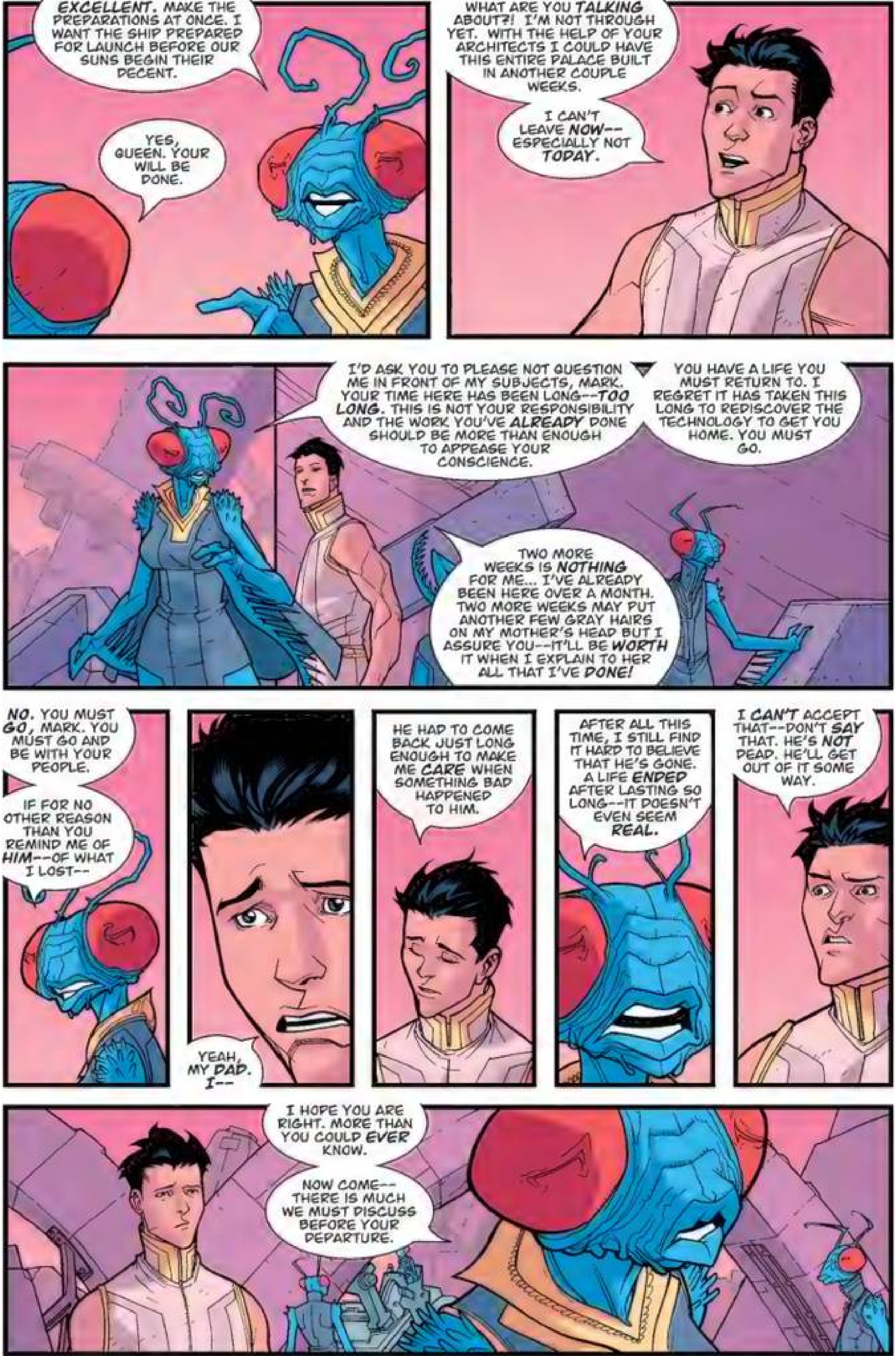

THE NEXT DAY.
MARK!
I--
WHERE IS NOLAN-- WHERE IS MY HUSBAND?!
HE'S GONE.
THEY TOOK HIM.

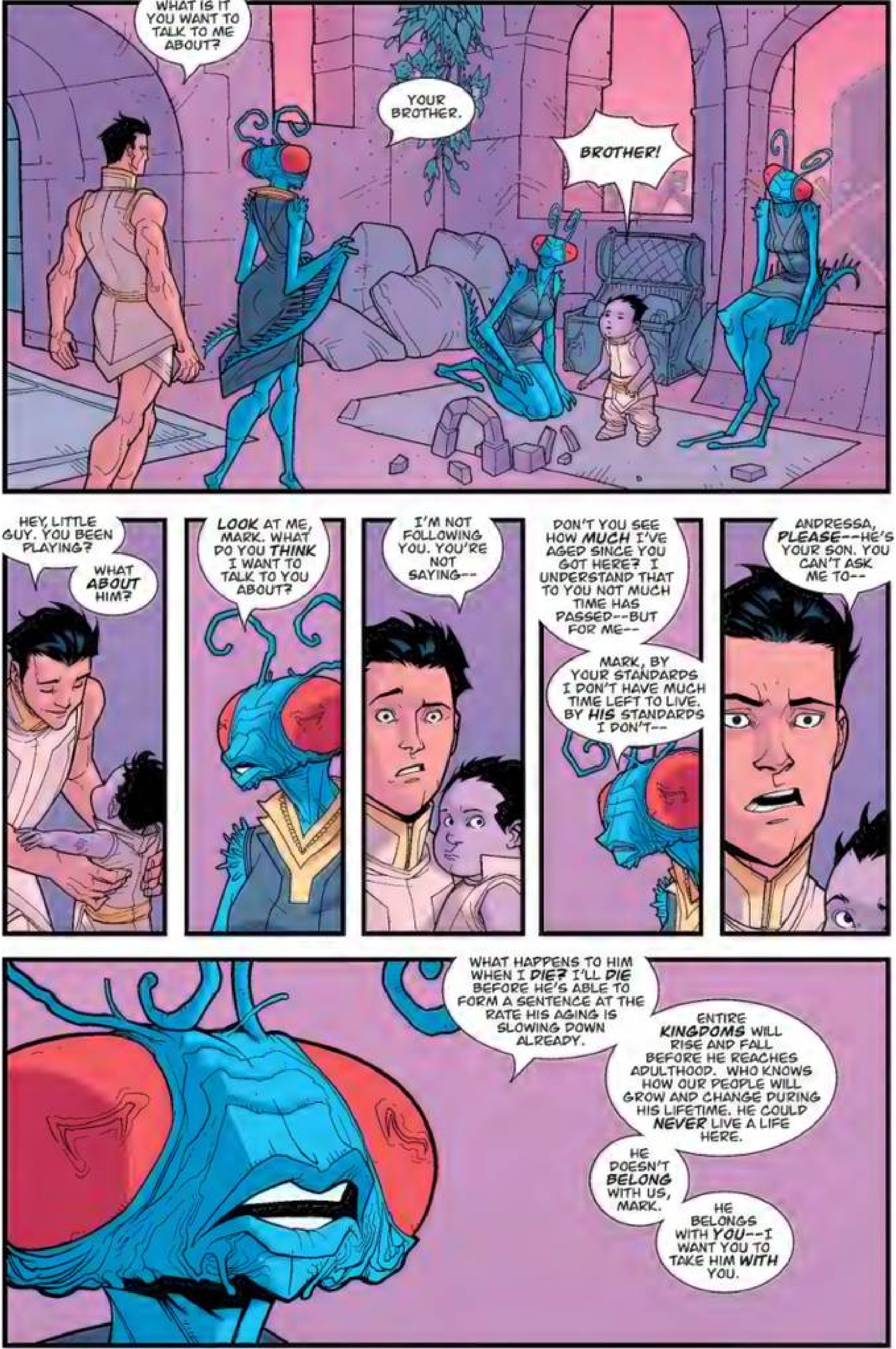


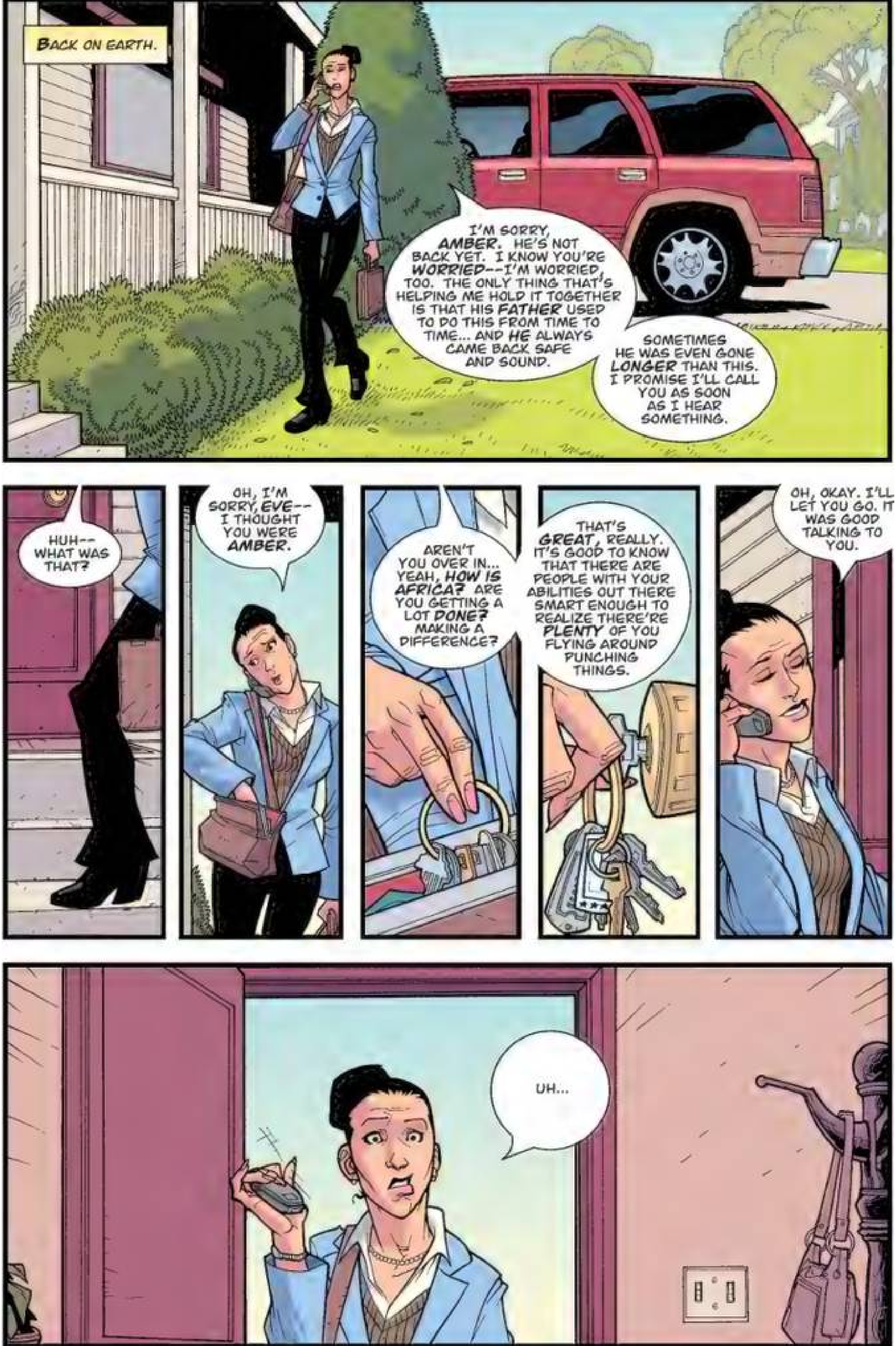
ISSUE THIRTY

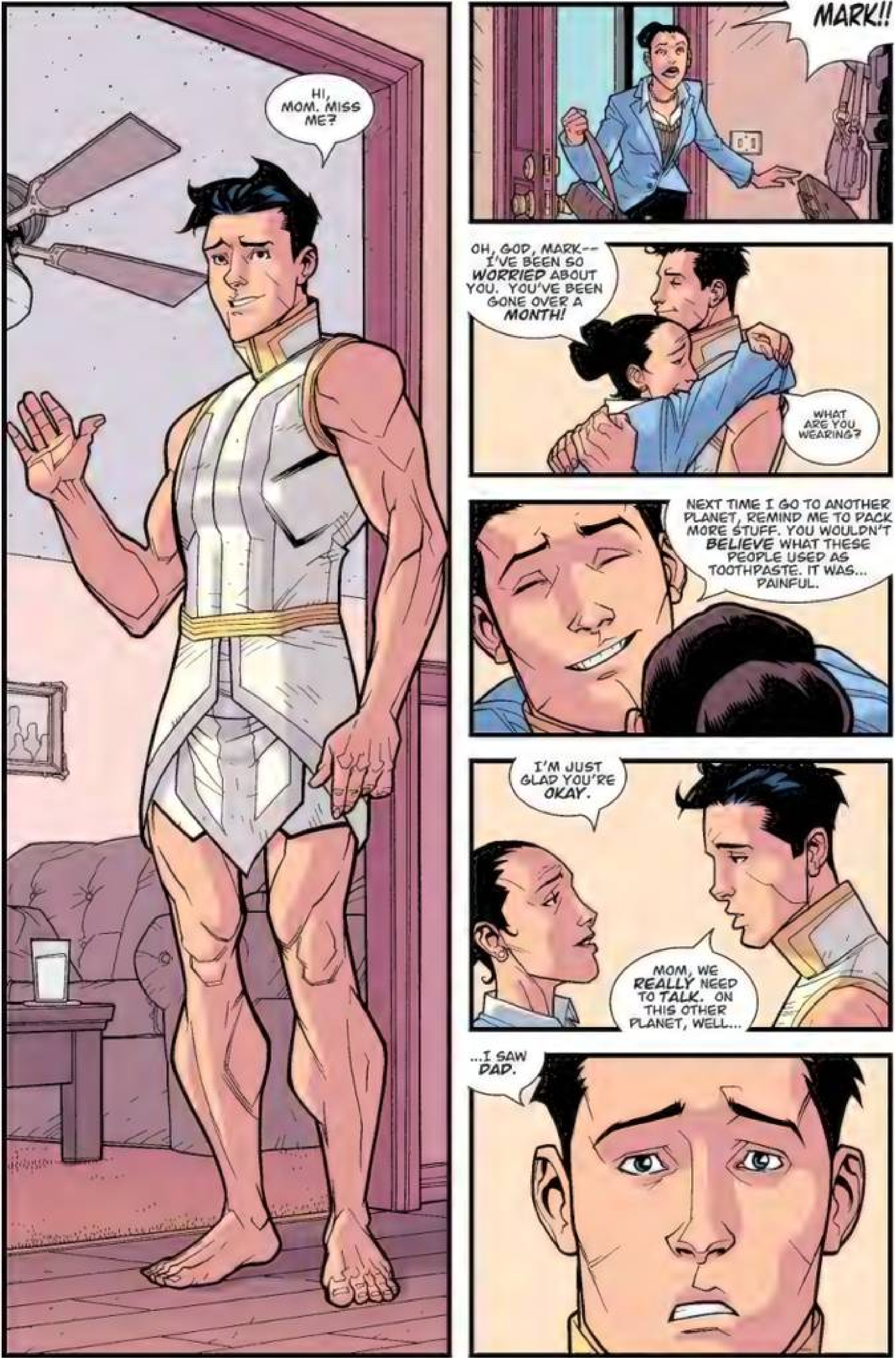

ALMOST--
--THERE.

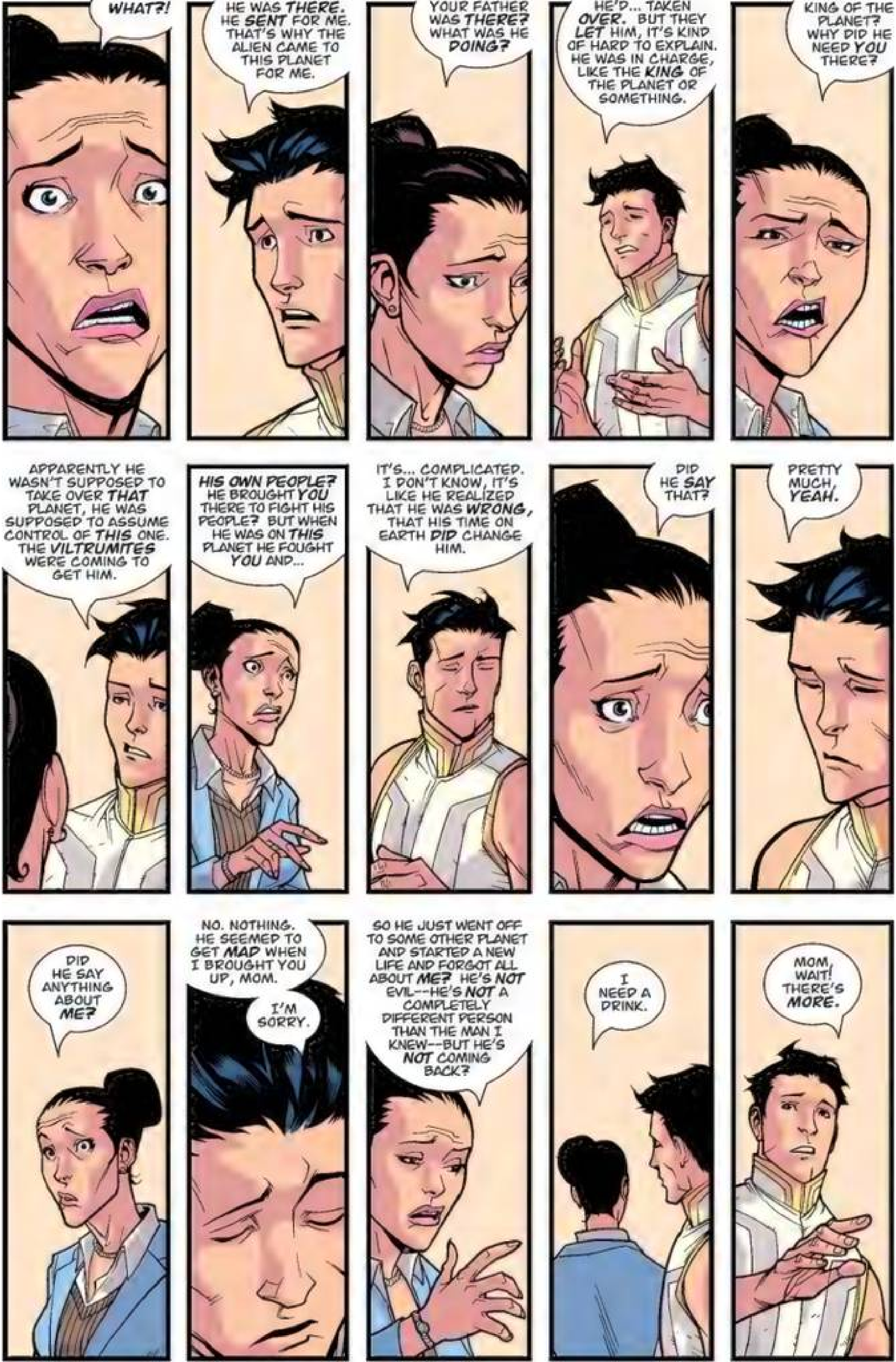

THOOM!!
THERE--THAT'LL DO IT.
VERY GOOD, MARK. THIS BEAM WILL BE THE SUPPORT STRUCTURE FOR A GRAND PALACE THAT WILL BE BUILT HERE. I CAN'T THANK YOU ENOUGH FOR ALL YOU'VE DONE.
WITHOUT YOU--THIS CLEANUP WOULD HAVE TAKEN GENERATIONS, BUT WITH YOUR HELP I MAY VERY WELL SEE THE REBIRTH OF OUR GREAT CITY IN MY LIFETIME.
I'M JUST GLAD I COULD HELP--AFTER EVERYTHING YOUR PEOPLE HAVE GONE THROUGH, IT'S THE LEAST I COULD DO.
I'M SORRY FOR THE INTERRUPTION, QUEEN ANDRESSA--BUT YOU TOLD ME TO INFORM YOU THE MINUTE A NEW SPACE VESSEL WAS COMPLETED THAT COULD RETURN THE MARK GRAYSON TO HIS PLANET.
IT'S READY.

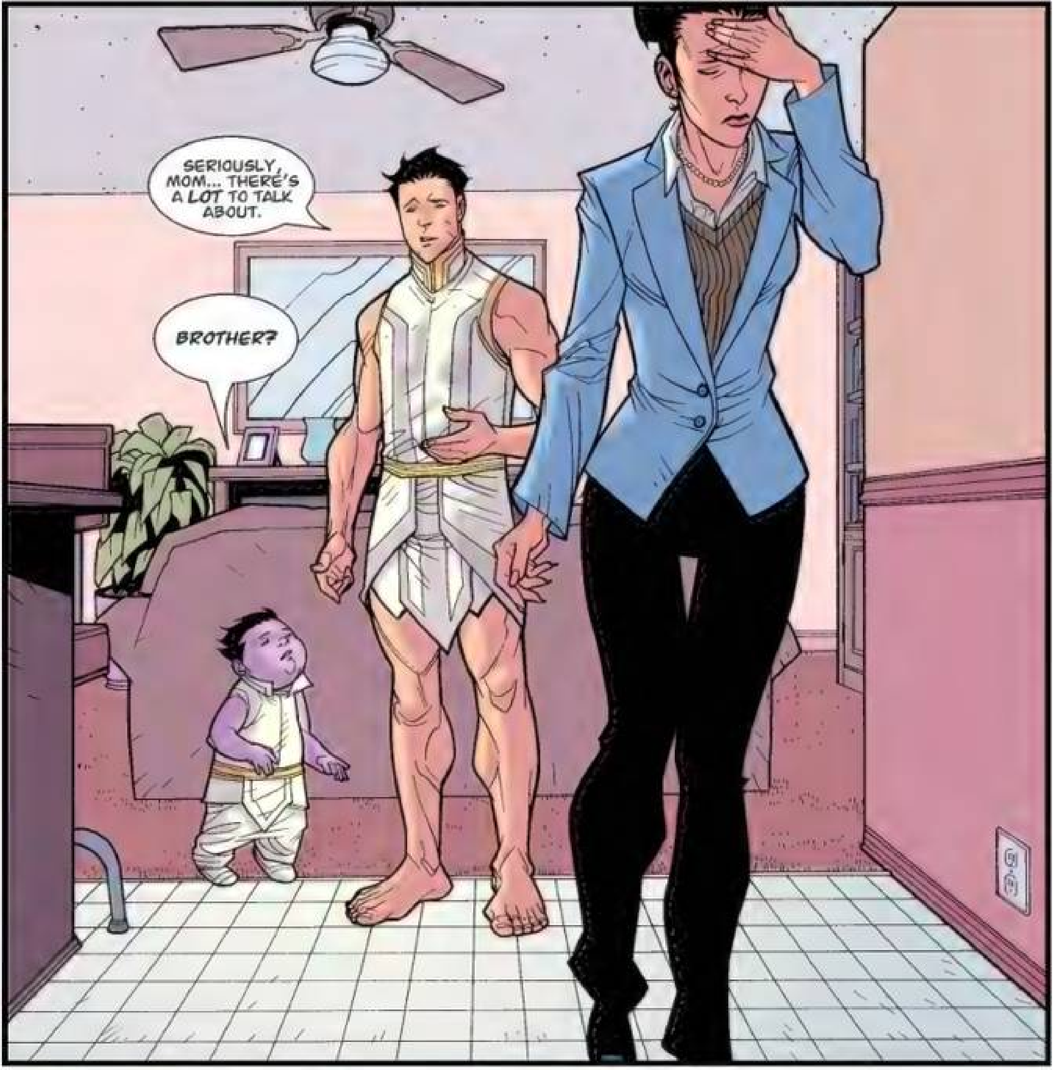

EXCELLENT. MAKE THE PREPARATIONS AT ONCE. I WANT THE SHIP PREPARED FOR LAUNCH BEFORE OUR SUNS BEGIN THEIR DECENT.
YES, QUEEN. YOUR WILL BE DONE.
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?! I'M NOT THROUGH YET. WITH THE HELP OF YOUR ARCHITECTS I COULD HAVE THIS ENTIRE PALACE BUILT IN ANOTHER COUPLE WEEKS.
I CAN'T LEAVE NOW-- ESPECIALLY NOT TODAY.
I'D ASK YOU TO PLEASE NOT QUESTION ME IN FRONT OF MY SUBJECTS, MARK. YOUR TIME HERE HAS BEEN LONG--TOO LONG. THIS IS NOT YOUR RESPONSIBILITY AND THE WORK YOU'VE ALREADY DONE SHOULD BE MORE THAN ENOUGH TO APPEASE YOUR CONSCIENCE.
YOU HAVE A LIFE YOU MUST RETURN TO. I REGRET IT HAS TAKEN THIS LONG TO REDISCOVER THE TECHNOLOGY TO GET YOU HOME. YOU MUST GO.
TWO MORE WEEKS IS NOTHING FOR ME... I'VE ALREADY BEEN HERE OVER A MONTH. TWO MORE WEEKS MAY PUT ANOTHER FEW GRAY HAIRS ON MY MOTHER'S HEAD BUT I ASSURE YOU--IT'LL BE WORTH IT WHEN I EXPLAIN TO HER ALL THAT I'VE DONE!
NO. YOU MUST GO, MARK. YOU MUST GO AND BE WITH YOUR PEOPLE.
IF FOR NO OTHER REASON THAN YOU REMIND ME OF HIM--OF WHAT I LOST--
YEAH, MY DAD. I--
HE HAD TO COME BACK JUST LONG ENOUGH TO MAKE ME CARE WHEN SOMETHING BAD HAPPENED TO HIM.
AFTER ALL THIS TIME, I STILL FIND IT HARD TO BELIEVE THAT HE'S GONE. A LIFE ENDED AFTER LASTING SO LONG--IT DOESN'T EVEN SEEM REAL.
I CAN'T ACCEPT THAT--DON'T SAY THAT. HE'S NOT DEAD. HE'LL GET OUT OF IT SOME WAY.
I HOPE YOU ARE RIGHT. MORE THAN YOU COULD EVER KNOW.
NOW COME-- THERE IS MUCH WE MUST DISCUSS BEFORE YOUR DEPARTURE.

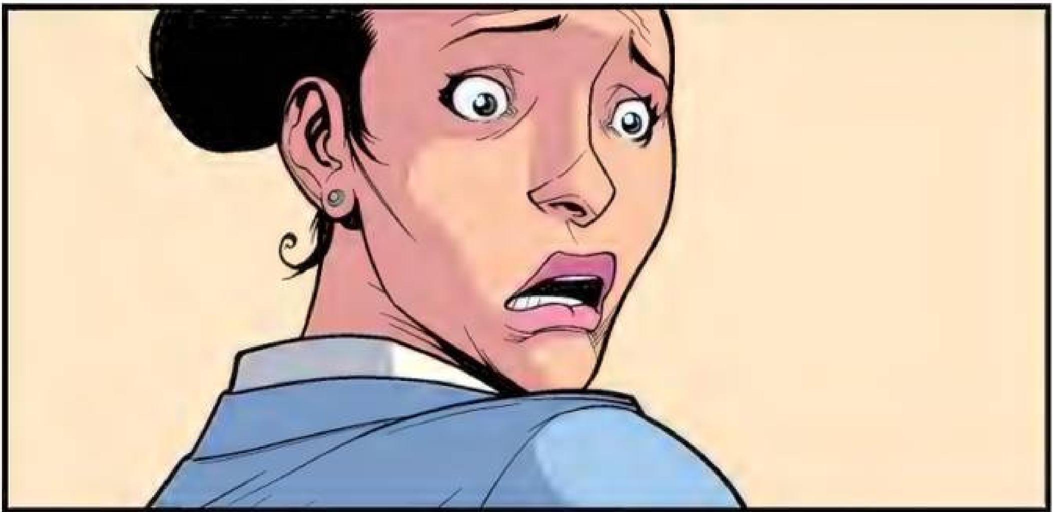

WHAT IS IT YOU WANT TO TALK TO ME ABOUT?
YOUR BROTHER.
BROTHER!
HEY, LITTLE GUY. YOU BEEN PLAYING?
WHAT ABOUT HIM?
LOOK AT ME, MARK. WHAT DO YOU THINK I WANT TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT?
I'M NOT FOLLOWING YOU. YOU'RE NOT SAYING--
DON'T YOU SEE HOW MUCH I'VE AGED SINCE YOU GOT HERE? I UNDERSTAND THAT TO YOU NOT MUCH TIME HAS PASSED--BUT FOR ME--
MARK, BY YOUR STANDARDS I DON'T HAVE MUCH TIME LEFT TO LIVE. BY HIS STANDARDS I DON'T--
ANDRESSA, PLEASE--HE'S YOUR SON. YOU CAN'T ASK ME TO--
WHAT HAPPENS TO HIM WHEN I DIE? I'LL DIE BEFORE HE'S ABLE TO FORM A SENTENCE AT THE RATE HIS AGING IS SLOWING DOWN ALREADY.
ENTIRE KINGDOMS WILL RISE AND FALL BEFORE HE REACHES ADULTHOOD. WHO KNOWS HOW OUR PEOPLE WILL GROW AND CHANGE DURING HIS LIFETIME. HE COULD NEVER LIVE A LIFE HERE.
HE DOESN'T BELONG WITH US, MARK.
HE BELONGS WITH YOU--I WANT YOU TO TAKE HIM WITH YOU.

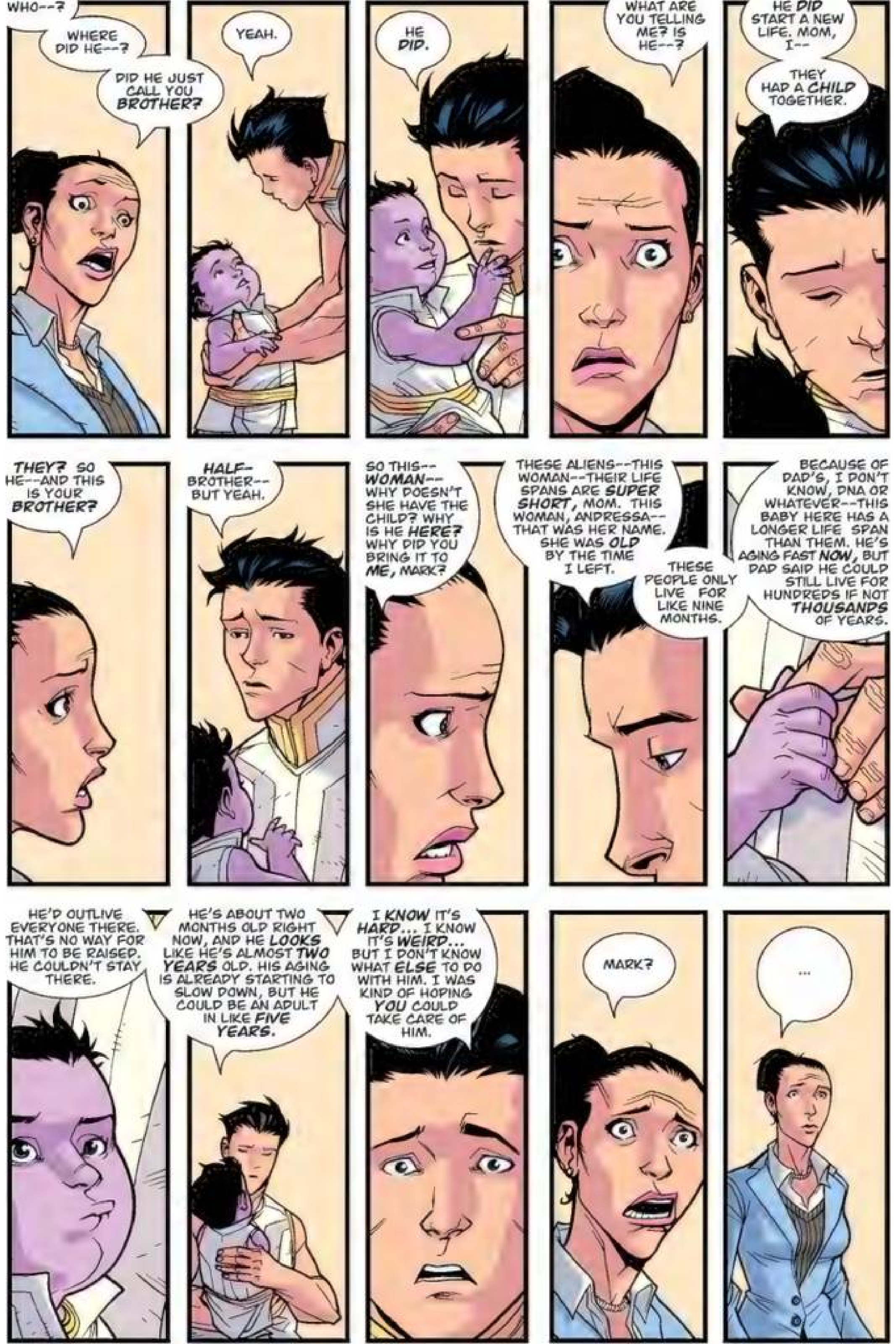

BACK ON EARTH.
I'M SORRY, AMBER. HE'S NOT BACK YET. I KNOW YOU'RE WORRIED--I'M WORRIED, TOO. THE ONLY THING THAT'S HELPING ME HOLD IT TOGETHER IS THAT HIS FATHER USED TO DO THIS FROM TIME TO TIME... AND HE ALWAYS CAME BACK SAFE AND SOUND.
SOMETIMES HE WAS EVEN GONE LONGER THAN THIS. I PROMISE I'LL CALL YOU AS SOON AS I HEAR SOMETHING.
HUH-- WHAT WAS THAT?
OH, I'M SORRY, EVE-- I THOUGHT YOU WERE AMBER.
AREN'T YOU OVER IN... YEAH, HOW IS AFRICA? ARE YOU GETTING A LOT DONE? MAKING A DIFFERENCE?
THAT'S GREAT, REALLY. IT'S GOOD TO KNOW THAT THERE ARE PEOPLE WITH YOUR ABILITIES OUT THERE SMART ENOUGH TO REALIZE THERE'RE PLENTY OF YOU FLYING AROUND PUNCHING THINGS.
OH, OKAY. I'LL LET YOU GO. IT WAS GOOD TALKING TO YOU.
UH...

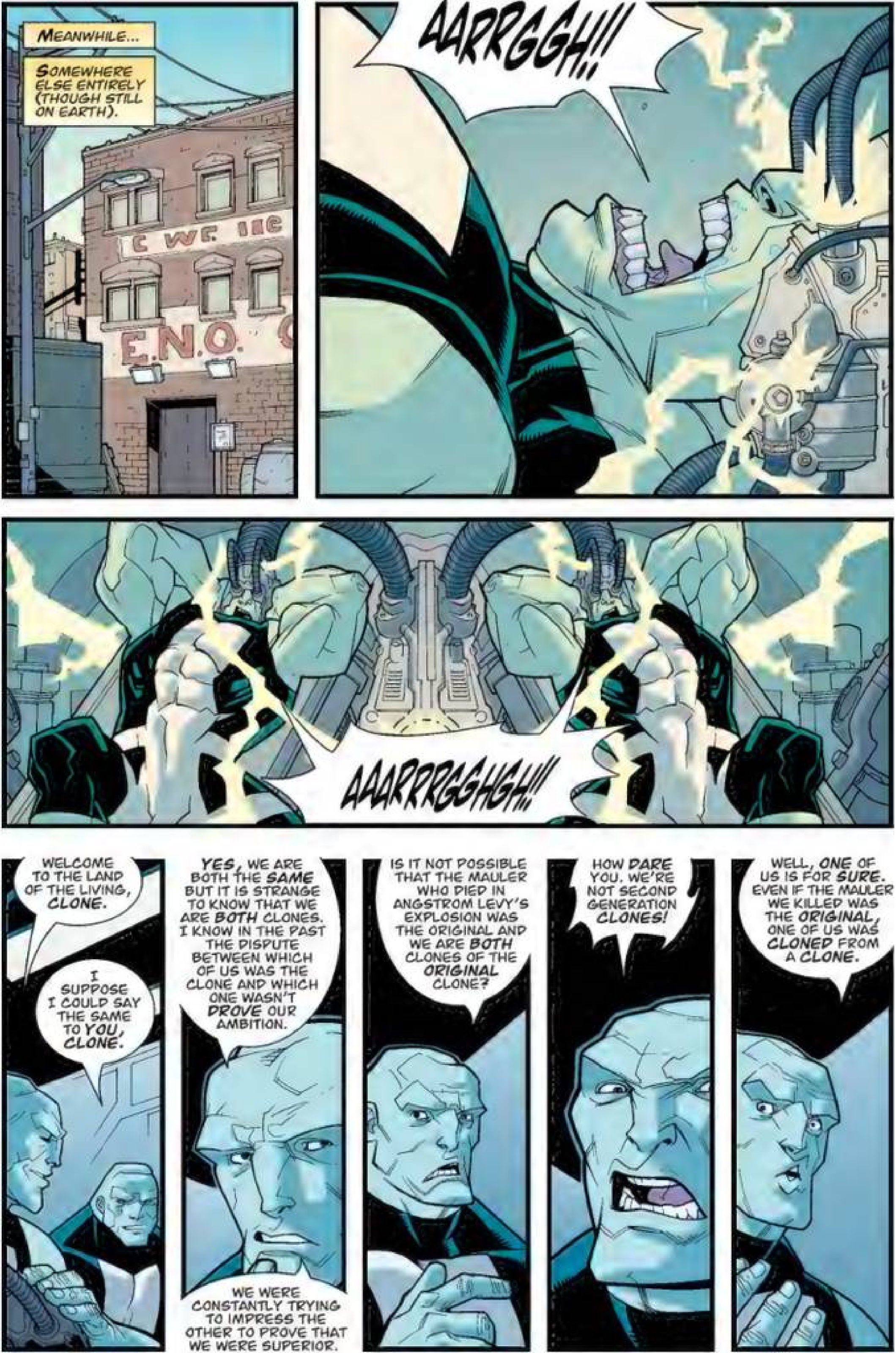

HI, MOM. MISS ME?
MARK!!
OH, GOD, MARK-- I'VE BEEN SO WORRIED ABOUT YOU. YOU'VE BEEN GONE OVER A MONTH!
WHAT ARE YOU WEARING?
NEXT TIME I GO TO ANOTHER PLANET, REMIND ME TO PACK MORE STUFF. YOU WOULDN'T BELIEVE WHAT THESE PEOPLE USED AS TOOTHPASTE. IT WAS... PAINFUL.
I'M JUST GLAD YOU'RE OKAY.
MOM, WE REALLY NEED TO TALK. ON THIS OTHER PLANET, WELL...
...I SAW DAD.

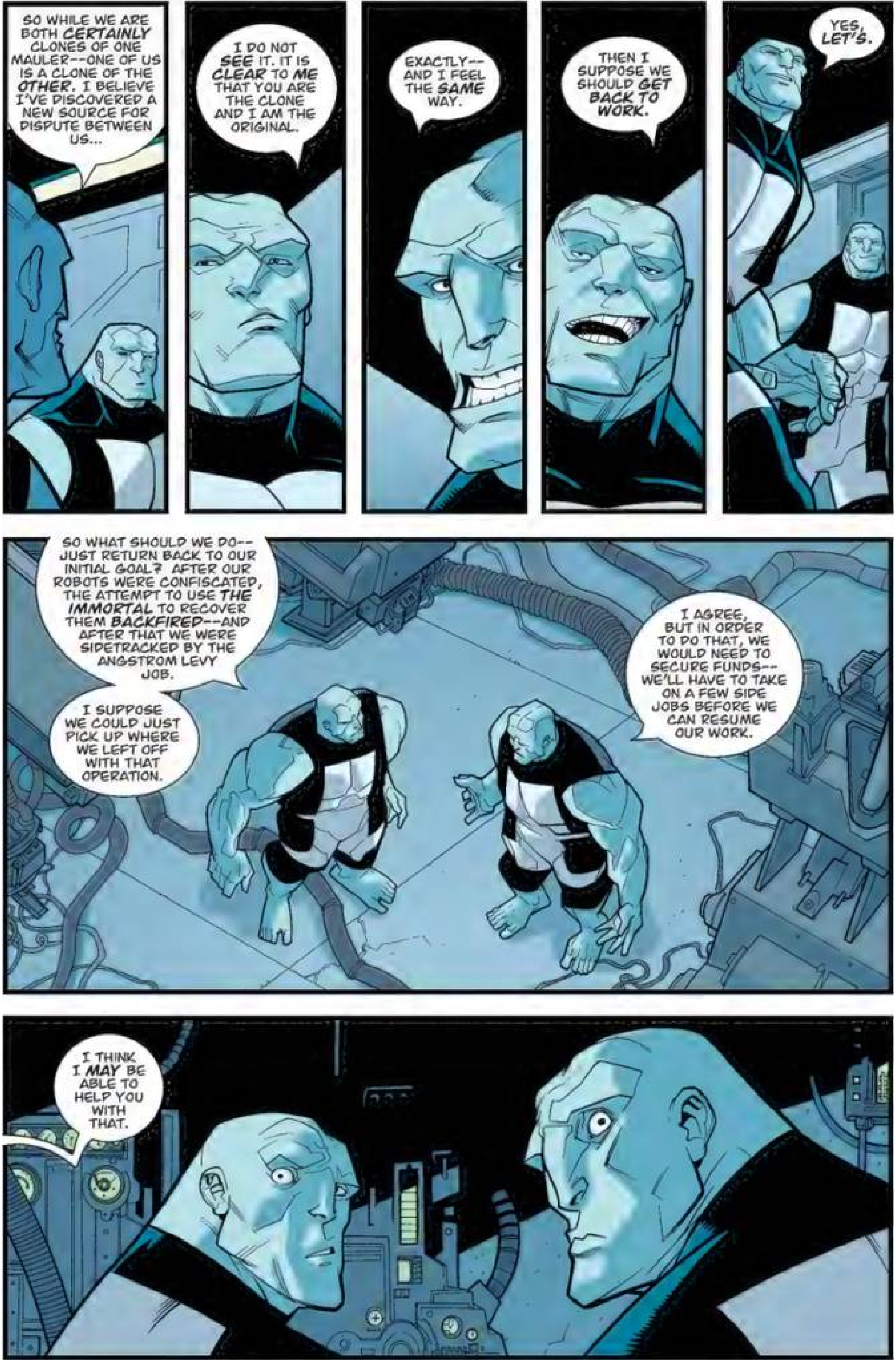

WHAT?!
HE WAS THERE. HE SENT FOR ME. THAT'S WHY THE ALIEN CAME TO THIS PLANET FOR ME.
YOUR FATHER WAS THERE? WHAT WAS HE DOING?
HE'D... TAKEN OVER. BUT THEY LET HIM, IT'S KIND OF HARD TO EXPLAIN. HE WAS IN CHARGE, LIKE THE KING OF THE PLANET OR SOMETHING.
KING OF THE PLANET? WHY DID HE NEED YOU THERE?
APPARENTLY HE WASN'T SUPPOSED TO TAKE OVER THAT PLANET, HE WAS SUPPOSED TO ASSUME CONTROL OF THIS ONE. THE VILTRUMITES WERE COMING TO GET HIM.
HIS OWN PEOPLE? HE BROUGHT YOU THERE TO FIGHT HIS PEOPLE? BUT WHEN HE WAS ON THIS PLANET HE FOUGHT YOU AND...
IT'S... COMPLICATED. I DON'T KNOW, IT'S LIKE HE REALIZED THAT HE WAS WRONG, THAT HIS TIME ON EARTH DID CHANGE HIM.
DID HE SAY THAT?
PRETTY MUCH, YEAH.
DID HE SAY ANYTHING ABOUT ME?
NO. NOTHING. HE SEEMED TO GET MAD WHEN I BROUGHT YOU UP, MOM.
I'M SORRY.
SO HE JUST WENT OFF TO SOME OTHER PLANET AND STARTED A NEW LIFE AND FORGOT ALL ABOUT ME? HE'S NOT EVIL--HE'S NOT A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT PERSON THAN THE MAN I KNEW--BUT HE'S NOT COMING BACK?
I NEED A DRINK.
MOM, WAIT! THERE'S MORE.

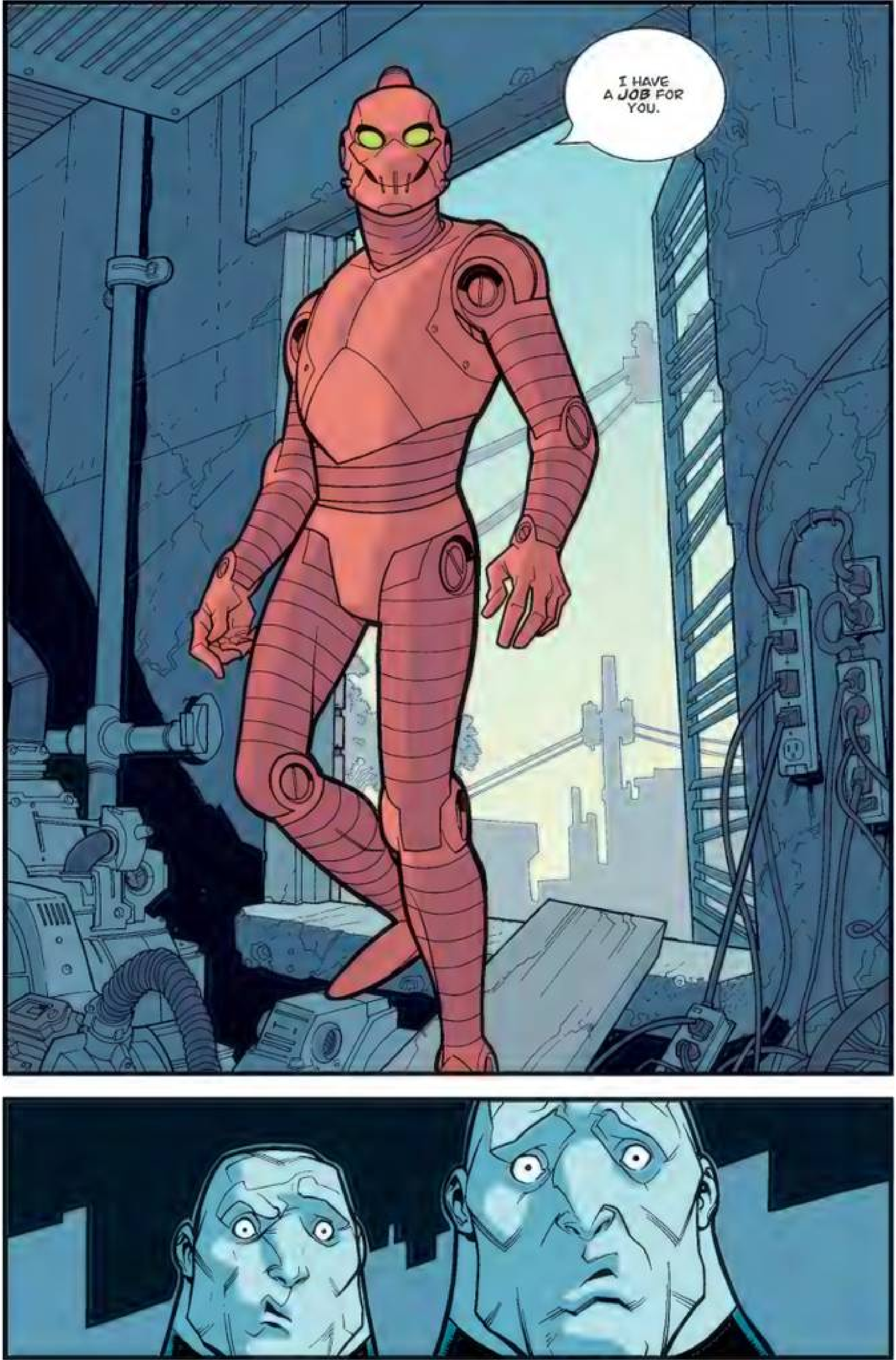

SERIOUSLY, MOM... THERE'S A LOT TO TALK ABOUT.
BROTHER?

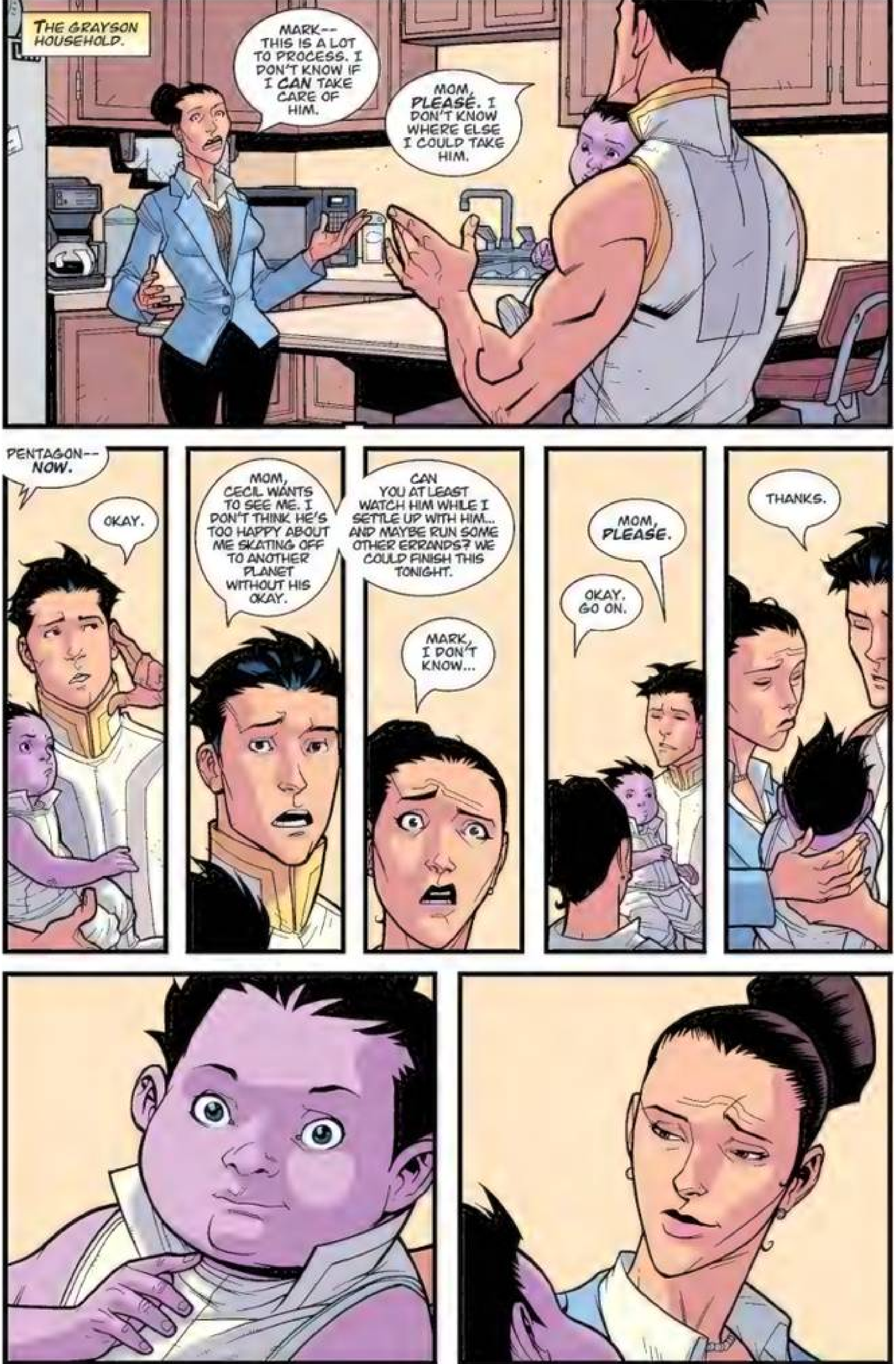


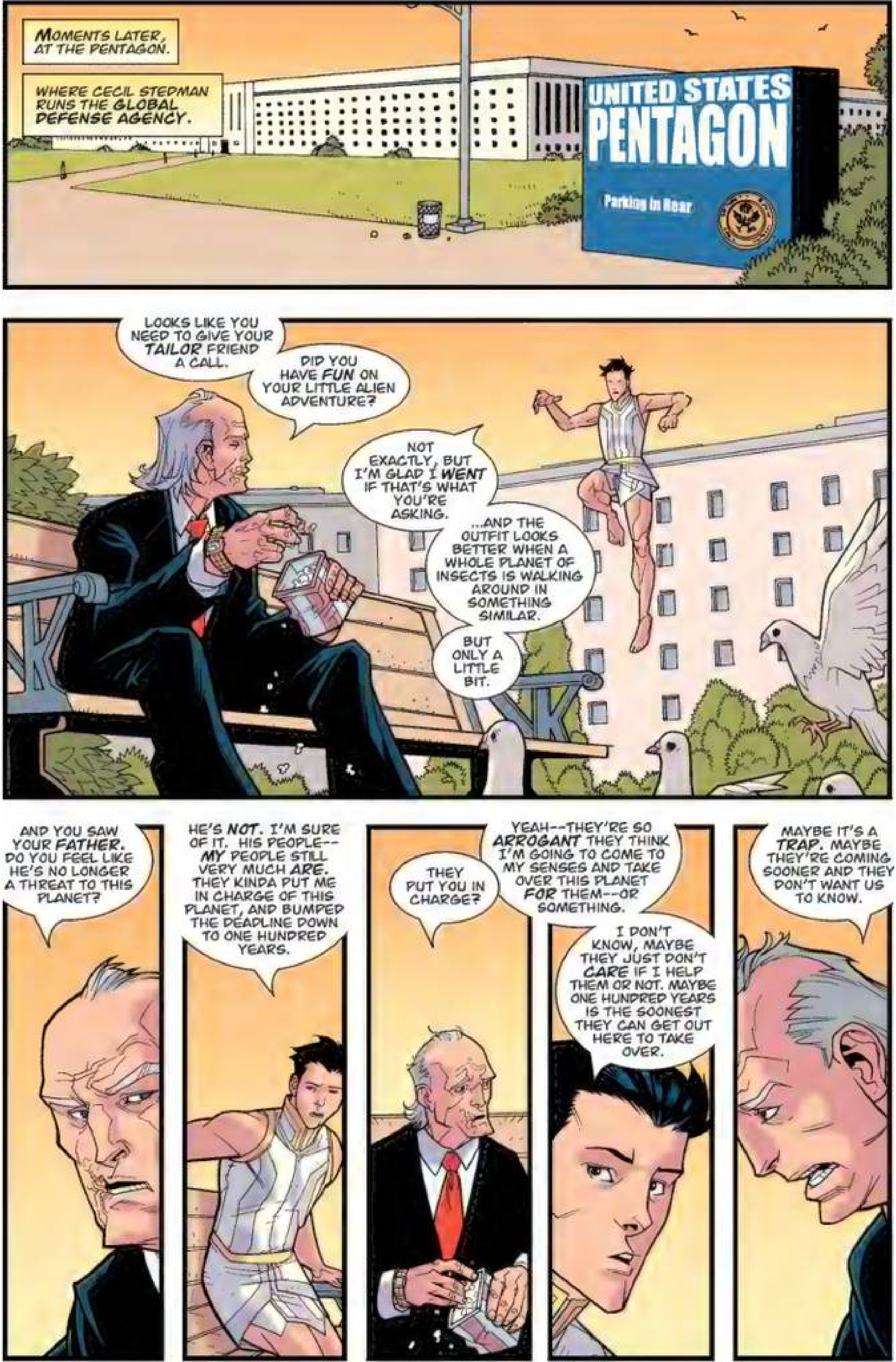

WHO--?
WHERE DID HE--?
DID HE JUST CALL YOU BROTHER?
YEAH.
HE DID.
WHAT ARE YOU TELLING ME? IS HE--?
HE DID START A NEW LIFE. MOM, I--
THEY HAD A CHILD TOGETHER.
THEY? SO HE--AND THIS IS YOUR BROTHER?
HALF-BROTHER--BUT YEAH.
SO THIS--WOMAN--WHY DOESN'T SHE HAVE THE CHILD? WHY IS HE HERE? WHY DID YOU BRING IT TO ME, MARK?
THESE ALIENS--THIS WOMAN--THEIR LIFE SPANS ARE SUPER SHORT, MOM. THIS WOMAN, ANDRESSA--THAT WAS HER NAME. SHE WAS OLD BY THE TIME I LEFT.
THESE PEOPLE ONLY LIVE FOR LIKE NINE MONTHS.
BECAUSE OF DAD'S, I DON'T KNOW, DNA OR WHATEVER--THIS BABY HERE HAS A LONGER LIFE SPAN THAN THEM. HE'S AGING FAST NOW, BUT DAD SAID HE COULD STILL LIVE FOR HUNDREDS IF NOT THOUSANDS OF YEARS.
HE'D OUTLIVE EVERYONE THERE. THAT'S NO WAY FOR HIM TO BE RAISED. HE COULDN'T STAY THERE.
HE'S ABOUT TWO MONTHS OLD RIGHT NOW, AND HE LOOKS LIKE HE'S ALMOST TWO YEARS OLD. HIS AGING IS ALREADY STARTING TO SLOW DOWN, BUT HE COULD BE AN ADULT IN LIKE FIVE YEARS.
I KNOW IT'S HARD... I KNOW IT'S WEIRD... BUT I DON'T KNOW WHAT ELSE TO DO WITH HIM. I WAS KIND OF HOPING YOU COULD TAKE CARE OF HIM.
MARK?
...

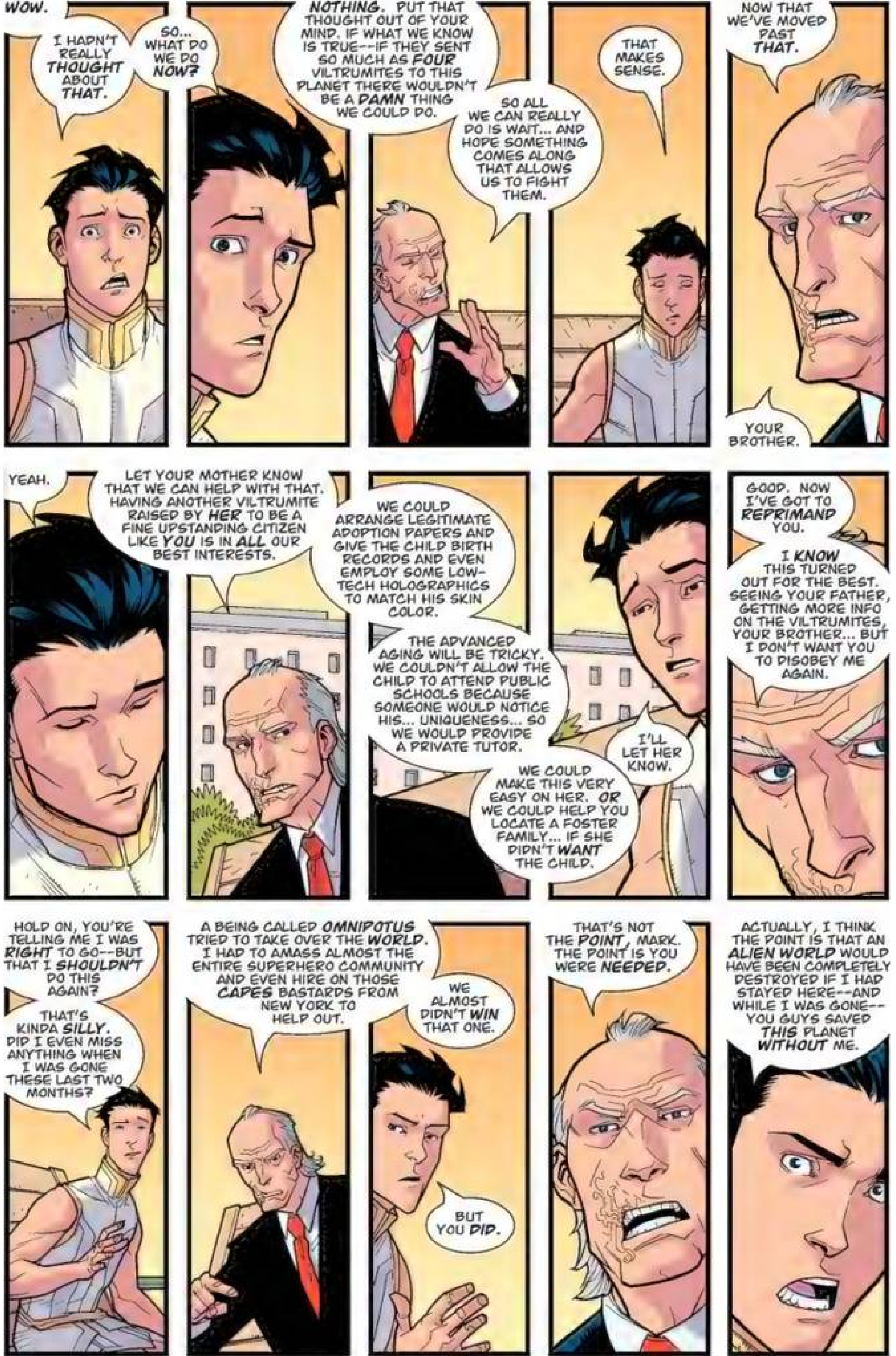

MEANWHILE...
SOMEWHERE ELSE ENTIRELY (THOUGH STILL ON EARTH).
C WE INC
E.N.O.
AARRGGH!!
AAARRRGGHGH!!
WELCOME TO THE LAND OF THE LIVING, CLONE.
I SUPPOSE I COULD SAY THE SAME TO YOU, CLONE.
YES, WE ARE BOTH THE SAME BUT IT IS STRANGE TO KNOW THAT WE ARE BOTH CLONES. I KNOW IN THE PAST THE DISPUTE BETWEEN WHICH OF US WAS THE CLONE AND WHICH ONE WASN'T DROVE OUR AMBITION.
WE WERE CONSTANTLY TRYING TO IMPRESS THE OTHER TO PROVE THAT WE WERE SUPERIOR.
IS IT NOT POSSIBLE THAT THE MAULER WHO DIED IN ANGSTROM LEVY'S EXPLOSION WAS THE ORIGINAL AND WE ARE BOTH CLONES OF THE ORIGINAL CLONE?
HOW DARE YOU. WE'RE NOT SECOND GENERATION CLONES!
WELL, ONE OF US IS FOR SURE. EVEN IF THE MAULER WE KILLED WAS THE ORIGINAL, ONE OF US WAS CLONED FROM A CLONE.

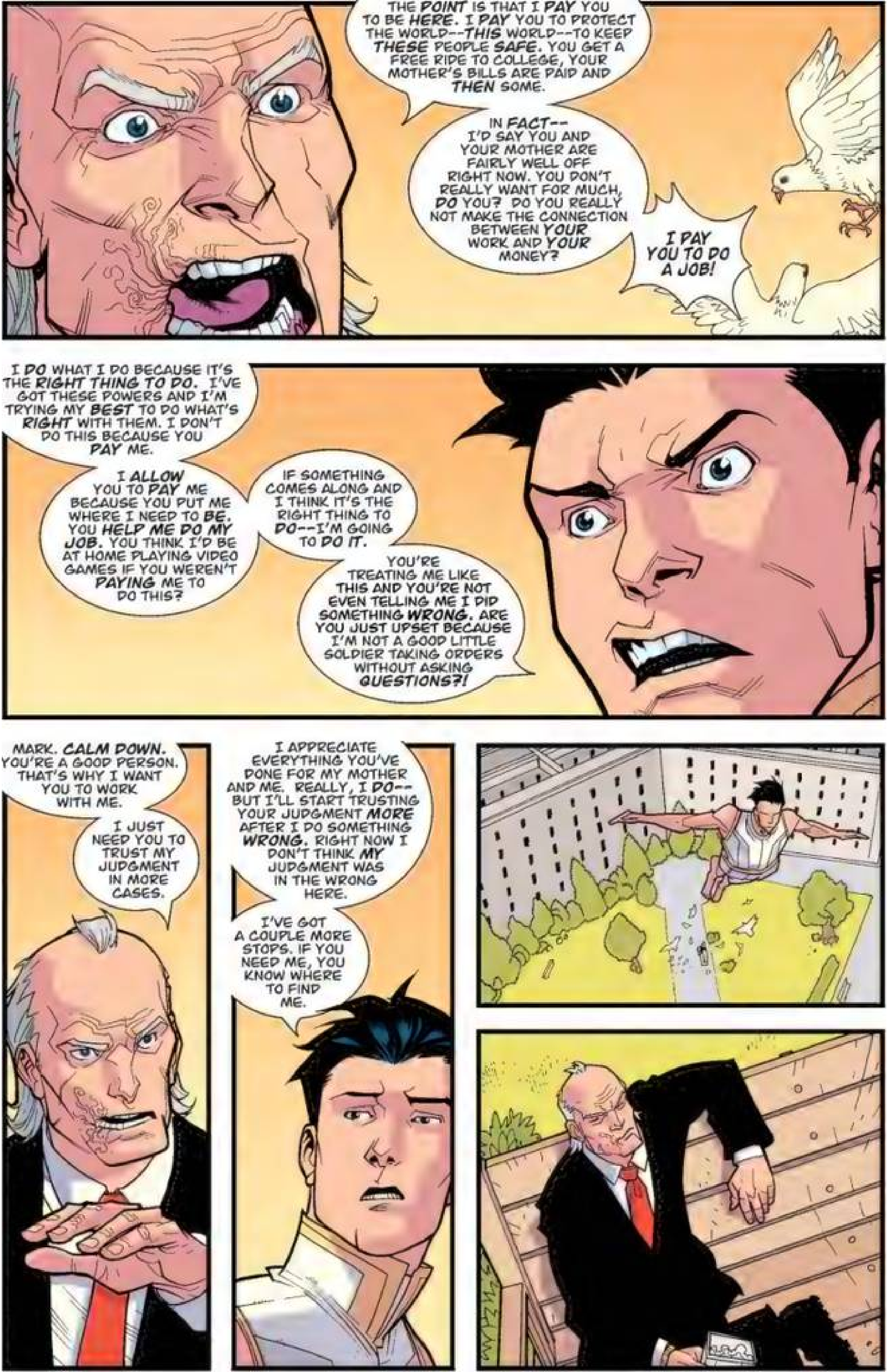

SO WHILE WE ARE BOTH CERTAINLY CLONES OF ONE MAULER--ONE OF US IS A CLONE OF THE OTHER. I BELIEVE I'VE DISCOVERED A NEW SOURCE FOR DISPUTE BETWEEN US...
I DO NOT SEE IT. IT IS CLEAR TO ME THAT YOU ARE THE CLONE AND I AM THE ORIGINAL.
EXACTLY-- AND I FEEL THE SAME WAY.
THEN I SUPPOSE WE SHOULD GET BACK TO WORK.
YES, LET'S.
SO WHAT SHOULD WE DO-- JUST RETURN BACK TO OUR INITIAL GOAL? AFTER OUR ROBOTS WERE CONFISCATED, THE ATTEMPT TO USE THE IMMORTAL TO RECOVER THEM BACKFIRED--AND AFTER THAT WE WERE SIDETRACKED BY THE ANGSTROM LEVY JOB.
I SUPPOSE WE COULD JUST PICK UP WHERE WE LEFT OFF WITH THAT OPERATION.
I AGREE, BUT IN ORDER TO DO THAT, WE WOULD NEED TO SECURE FUNDS-- WE'LL HAVE TO TAKE ON A FEW SIDE JOBS BEFORE WE CAN RESUME OUR WORK.
I THINK I MAY BE ABLE TO HELP YOU WITH THAT.

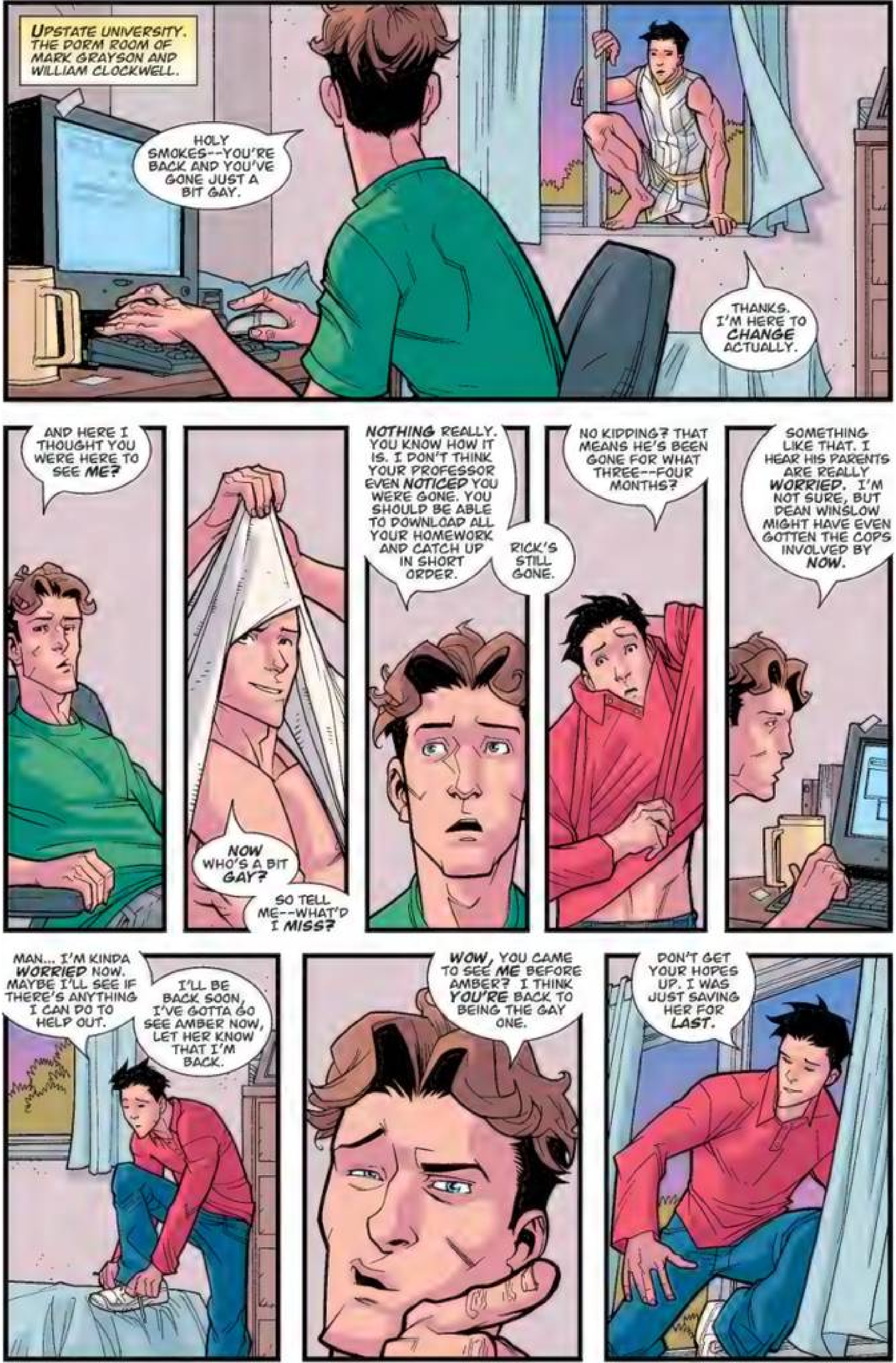

I HAVE A JOB FOR YOU.

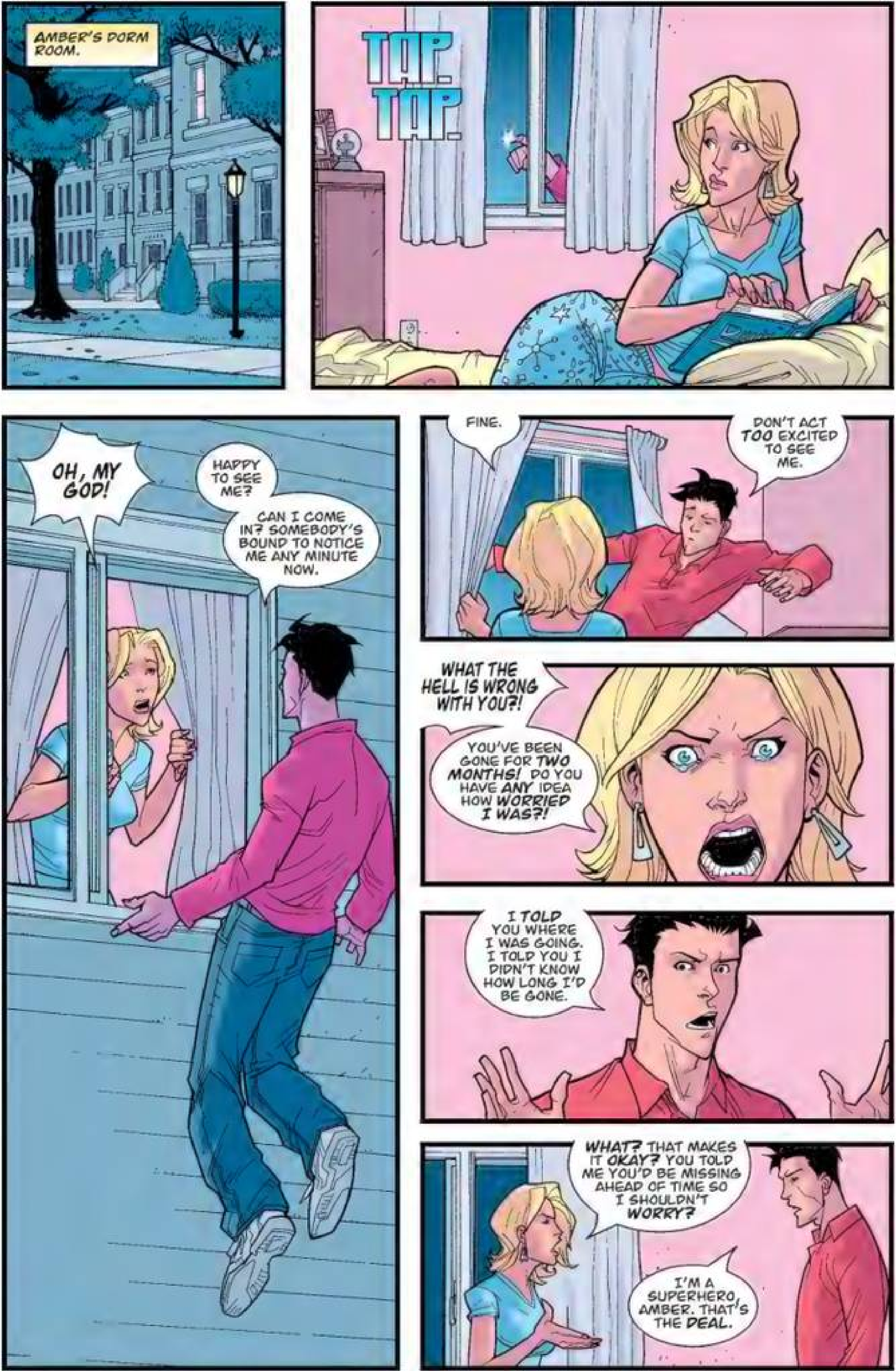

THE GRAYSON HOUSEHOLD.
MARK-- THIS IS A LOT TO PROCESS. I DON'T KNOW IF I CAN TAKE CARE OF HIM.
MOM, PLEASE. I DON'T KNOW WHERE ELSE I COULD TAKE HIM.
PENTAGON-- NOW.
OKAY.
MOM, CECIL WANTS TO SEE ME. I DON'T THINK HE'S TOO HAPPY ABOUT ME SKATING OFF TO ANOTHER PLANET WITHOUT HIS OKAY.
CAN YOU AT LEAST WATCH HIM WHILE I SETTLE UP WITH HIM... AND MAYBE RUN SOME OTHER ERRANDS? WE COULD FINISH THIS TONIGHT.
MARK, I DON'T KNOW...
MOM, PLEASE.
OKAY. GO ON.
THANKS.

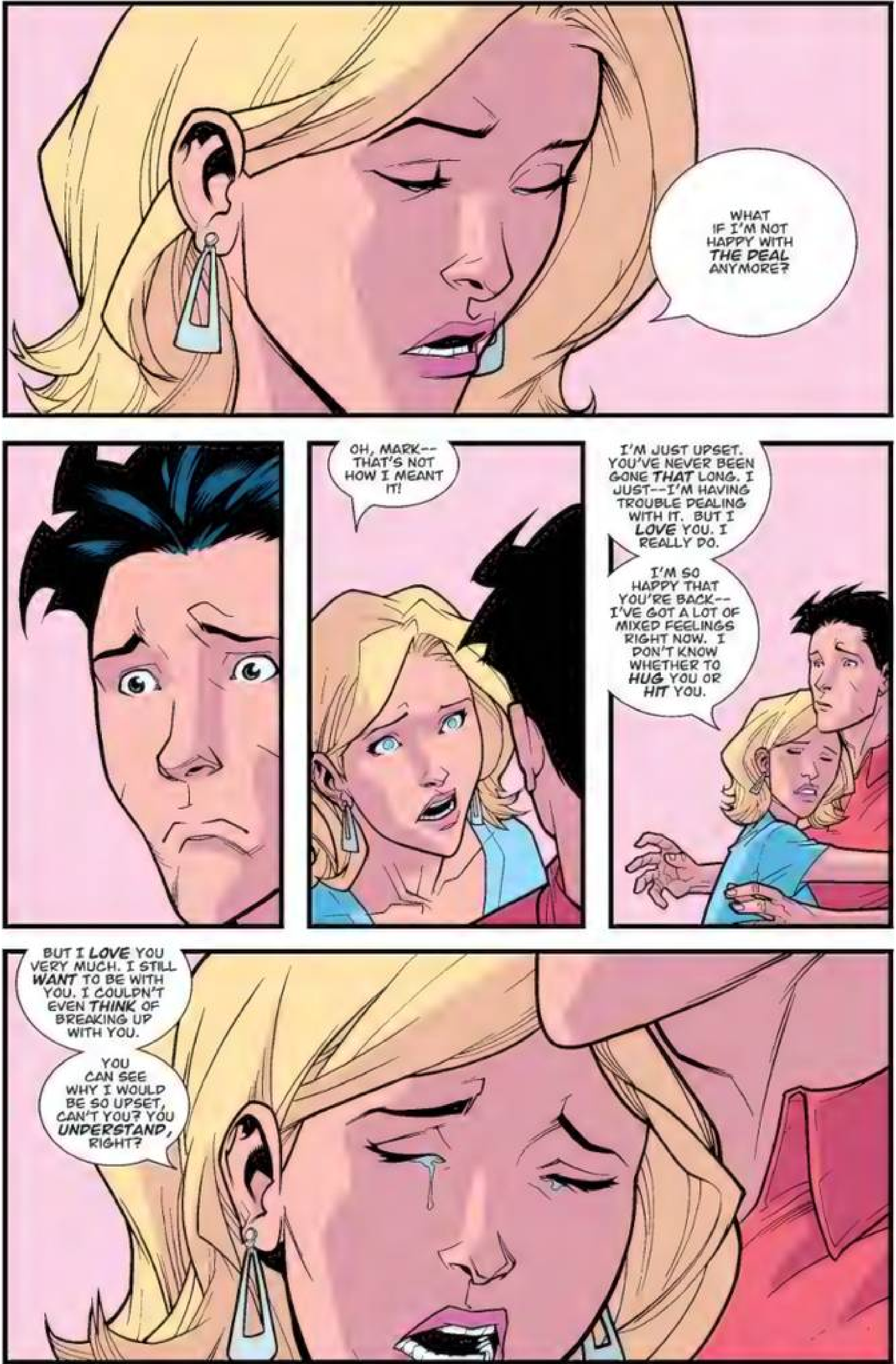

MOMENTS LATER, AT THE PENTAGON.
WHERE CECIL STEDMAN RUNS THE GLOBAL DEFENSE AGENCY.
UNITED STATES PENTAGON
Parking in Rear
LOOKS LIKE YOU NEED TO GIVE YOUR TAILOR FRIEND A CALL.
DID YOU HAVE FUN ON YOUR LITTLE ALIEN ADVENTURE?
NOT EXACTLY, BUT I'M GLAD I WENT IF THAT'S WHAT YOU'RE ASKING.
...AND THE OUTFIT LOOKS BETTER WHEN A WHOLE PLANET OF INSECTS IS WALKING AROUND IN SOMETHING SIMILAR.
BUT ONLY A LITTLE BIT.
AND YOU SAW YOUR FATHER. DO YOU FEEL LIKE HE'S NO LONGER A THREAT TO THIS PLANET?
HE'S NOT. I'M SURE OF IT. HIS PEOPLE-- MY PEOPLE STILL VERY MUCH ARE. THEY KINDA PUT ME IN CHARGE OF THIS PLANET, AND BUMPED THE DEADLINE DOWN TO ONE HUNDRED YEARS.
THEY PUT YOU IN CHARGE?
YEAH--THEY'RE SO ARROGANT THEY THINK I'M GOING TO COME TO MY SENSES AND TAKE OVER THIS PLANET FOR THEM--OR SOMETHING.
I DON'T KNOW, MAYBE THEY JUST DON'T CARE IF I HELP THEM OR NOT. MAYBE ONE HUNDRED YEARS IS THE SOONEST THEY CAN GET OUT HERE TO TAKE OVER.
MAYBE IT'S A TRAP. MAYBE THEY'RE COMING SOONER AND THEY DON'T WANT US TO KNOW.

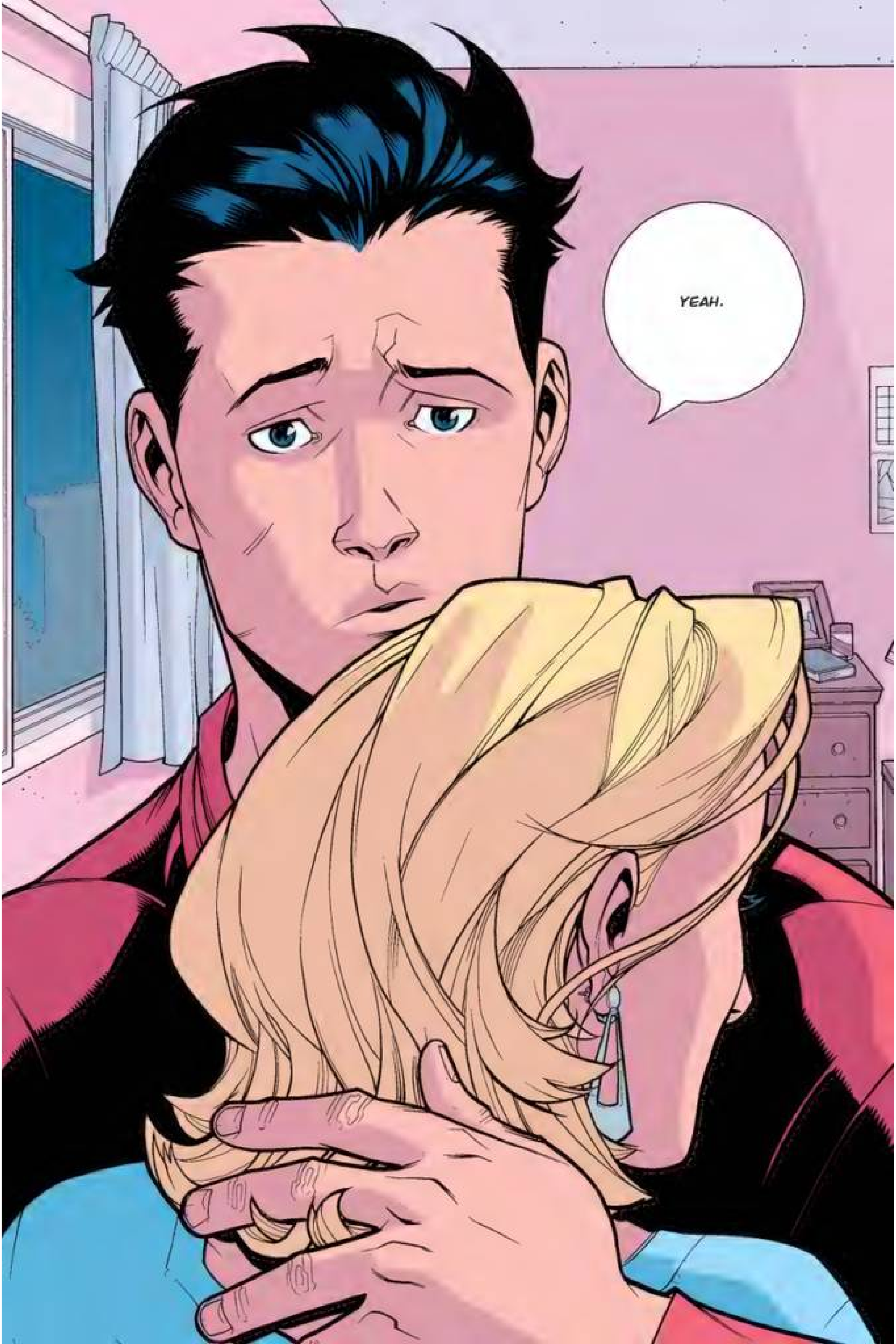

WOW.
I HADN'T REALLY THOUGHT ABOUT THAT.
SO... WHAT DO WE DO NOW?
NOTHING. PUT THAT THOUGHT OUT OF YOUR MIND. IF WHAT WE KNOW IS TRUE--IF THEY SENT SO MUCH AS FOUR VILTRUMITES TO THIS PLANET THERE WOULDN'T BE A DAMN THING WE COULD DO.
SO ALL WE CAN REALLY DO IS WAIT... AND HOPE SOMETHING COMES ALONG THAT ALLOWS US TO FIGHT THEM.
THAT MAKES SENSE.
NOW THAT WE'VE MOVED PAST THAT.
YOUR BROTHER.
YEAH.
LET YOUR MOTHER KNOW THAT WE CAN HELP WITH THAT. HAVING ANOTHER VILTRUMITE RAISED BY HER TO BE A FINE UPSTANDING CITIZEN LIKE YOU IS IN ALL OUR BEST INTERESTS.
WE COULD ARRANGE LEGITIMATE ADOPTION PAPERS AND GIVE THE CHILD BIRTH RECORDS AND EVEN EMPLOY SOME LOW-TECH HOLOGRAPHICS TO MATCH HIS SKIN COLOR.
THE ADVANCED AGING WILL BE TRICKY. WE COULDN'T ALLOW THE CHILD TO ATTEND PUBLIC SCHOOLS BECAUSE SOMEONE WOULD NOTICE HIS... UNIQUENESS... SO WE WOULD PROVIDE A PRIVATE TUTOR.
WE COULD MAKE THIS VERY EASY ON HER. OR WE COULD HELP YOU LOCATE A FOSTER FAMILY... IF SHE DIDN'T WANT THE CHILD.
I'LL LET HER KNOW.
GOOD. NOW I'VE GOT TO REPRIMAND YOU.
I KNOW THIS TURNED OUT FOR THE BEST. SEEING YOUR FATHER, GETTING MORE INFO ON THE VILTRUMITES, YOUR BROTHER... BUT I DON'T WANT YOU TO DISOBEY ME AGAIN.
HOLD ON, YOU'RE TELLING ME I WAS RIGHT TO GO--BUT THAT I SHOULDN'T DO THIS AGAIN?
THAT'S KINDA SILLY. DID I EVEN MISS ANYTHING WHEN I WAS GONE THESE LAST TWO MONTHS?
A BEING CALLED OMNIPOTUS TRIED TO TAKE OVER THE WORLD. I HAD TO AMASS ALMOST THE ENTIRE SUPERHERO COMMUNITY AND EVEN HIRE ON THOSE CAPES BASTARDS FROM NEW YORK TO HELP OUT.
WE ALMOST DIDN'T WIN THAT ONE.
BUT YOU DID.
THAT'S NOT THE POINT, MARK. THE POINT IS YOU WERE NEEDED.
ACTUALLY, I THINK THE POINT IS THAT AN ALIEN WORLD WOULD HAVE BEEN COMPLETELY DESTROYED IF I HAD STAYED HERE--AND WHILE I WAS GONE--YOU GUYS SAVED THIS PLANET WITHOUT ME.


THE POINT IS THAT I PAY YOU TO BE HERE. I PAY YOU TO PROTECT THE WORLD--THIS WORLD--TO KEEP THESE PEOPLE SAFE. YOU GET A FREE RIDE TO COLLEGE, YOUR MOTHER'S BILLS ARE PAID AND THEN SOME.
IN FACT-- I'D SAY YOU AND YOUR MOTHER ARE FAIRLY WELL OFF RIGHT NOW. YOU DON'T REALLY WANT FOR MUCH, DO YOU? DO YOU REALLY NOT MAKE THE CONNECTION BETWEEN YOUR WORK AND YOUR MONEY?
I PAY YOU TO DO A JOB!
I DO WHAT I DO BECAUSE IT'S THE RIGHT THING TO DO. I'VE GOT THESE POWERS AND I'M TRYING MY BEST TO DO WHAT'S RIGHT WITH THEM. I DON'T DO THIS BECAUSE YOU PAY ME.
I ALLOW YOU TO PAY ME BECAUSE YOU PUT ME WHERE I NEED TO BE. YOU HELP ME DO MY JOB. YOU THINK I'D BE AT HOME PLAYING VIDEO GAMES IF YOU WEREN'T PAYING ME TO DO THIS?
IF SOMETHING COMES ALONG AND I THINK IT'S THE RIGHT THING TO DO--I'M GOING TO DO IT.
YOU'RE TREATING ME LIKE THIS AND YOU'RE NOT EVEN TELLING ME I DID SOMETHING WRONG. ARE YOU JUST UPSET BECAUSE I'M NOT A GOOD LITTLE SOLDIER TAKING ORDERS WITHOUT ASKING QUESTIONS?!
MARK. CALM DOWN. YOU'RE A GOOD PERSON. THAT'S WHY I WANT YOU TO WORK WITH ME.
I JUST NEED YOU TO TRUST MY JUDGMENT IN MORE CASES.
I APPRECIATE EVERYTHING YOU'VE DONE FOR MY MOTHER AND ME. REALLY, I DO-- BUT I'LL START TRUSTING YOUR JUDGMENT MORE AFTER I DO SOMETHING WRONG. RIGHT NOW I DON'T THINK MY JUDGMENT WAS IN THE WRONG HERE.
I'VE GOT A COUPLE MORE STOPS. IF YOU NEED ME, YOU KNOW WHERE TO FIND ME.

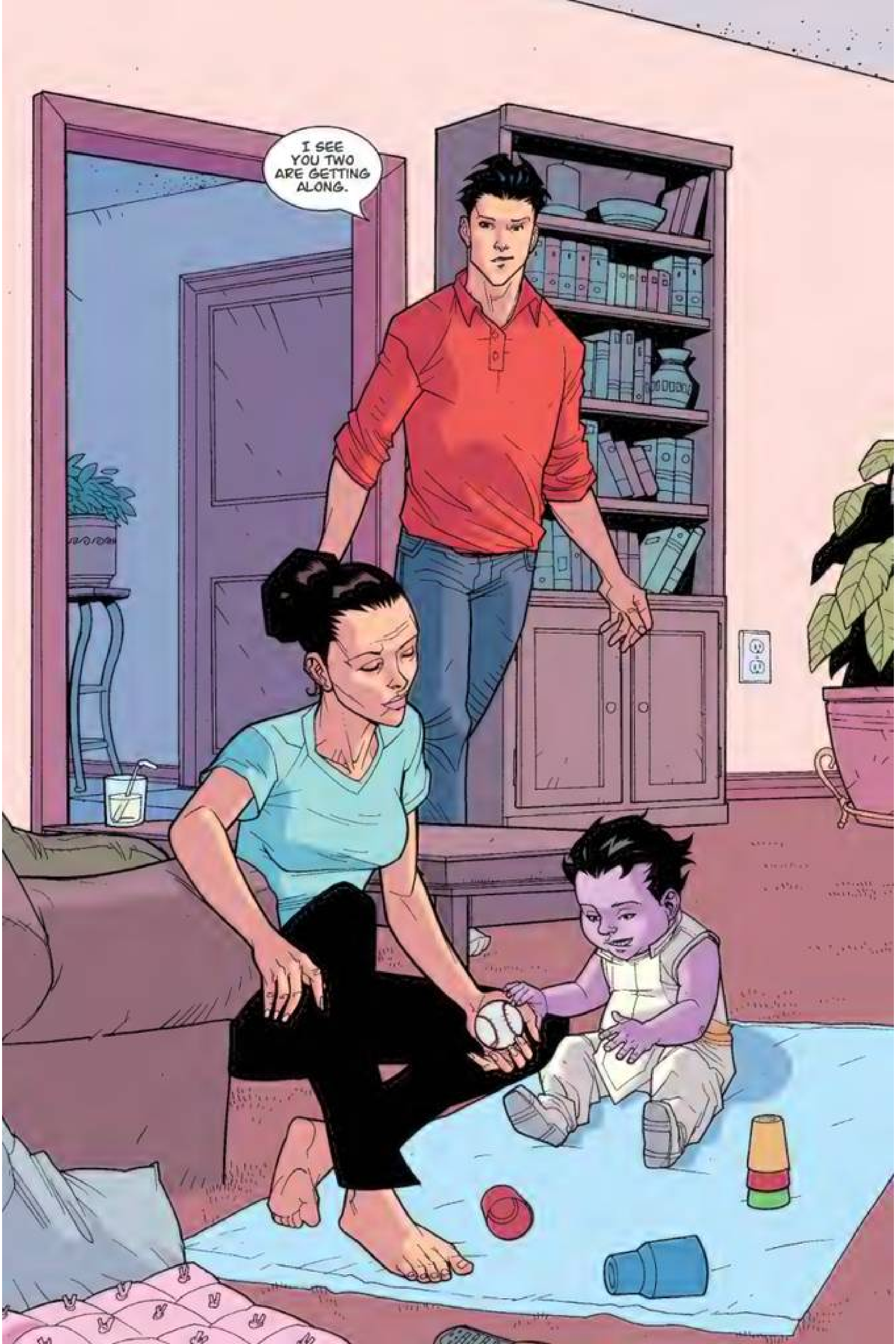

UPSTATE UNIVERSITY. THE DORM ROOM OF MARK GRAYSON AND WILLIAM CLOCKWELL.
HOLY SMOKES--YOU'RE BACK AND YOU'VE GONE JUST A BIT GAY.
THANKS. I'M HERE TO CHANGE ACTUALLY.
AND HERE I THOUGHT YOU WERE HERE TO SEE ME?
NOW WHO'S A BIT GAY?
SO TELL ME--WHAT'D I MISS?
NOTHING REALLY. YOU KNOW HOW IT IS. I DON'T THINK YOUR PROFESSOR EVEN NOTICED YOU WERE GONE. YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO DOWNLOAD ALL YOUR HOMEWORK AND CATCH UP IN SHORT ORDER.
RICK'S STILL GONE.
NO KIDDING? THAT MEANS HE'S BEEN GONE FOR WHAT THREE--FOUR MONTHS?
SOMETHING LIKE THAT. I HEAR HIS PARENTS ARE REALLY WORRIED. I'M NOT SURE, BUT DEAN WINSLOW MIGHT HAVE EVEN GOTTEN THE COPS INVOLVED BY NOW.
MAN... I'M KINDA WORRIED NOW. MAYBE I'LL SEE IF THERE'S ANYTHING I CAN DO TO HELP OUT.
I'LL BE BACK SOON, I'VE GOTTA GO SEE AMBER NOW, LET HER KNOW THAT I'M BACK.
WOW, YOU CAME TO SEE ME BEFORE AMBER? I THINK YOU'RE BACK TO BEING THE GAY ONE.
DON'T GET YOUR HOPES UP. I WAS JUST SAVING HER FOR LAST.

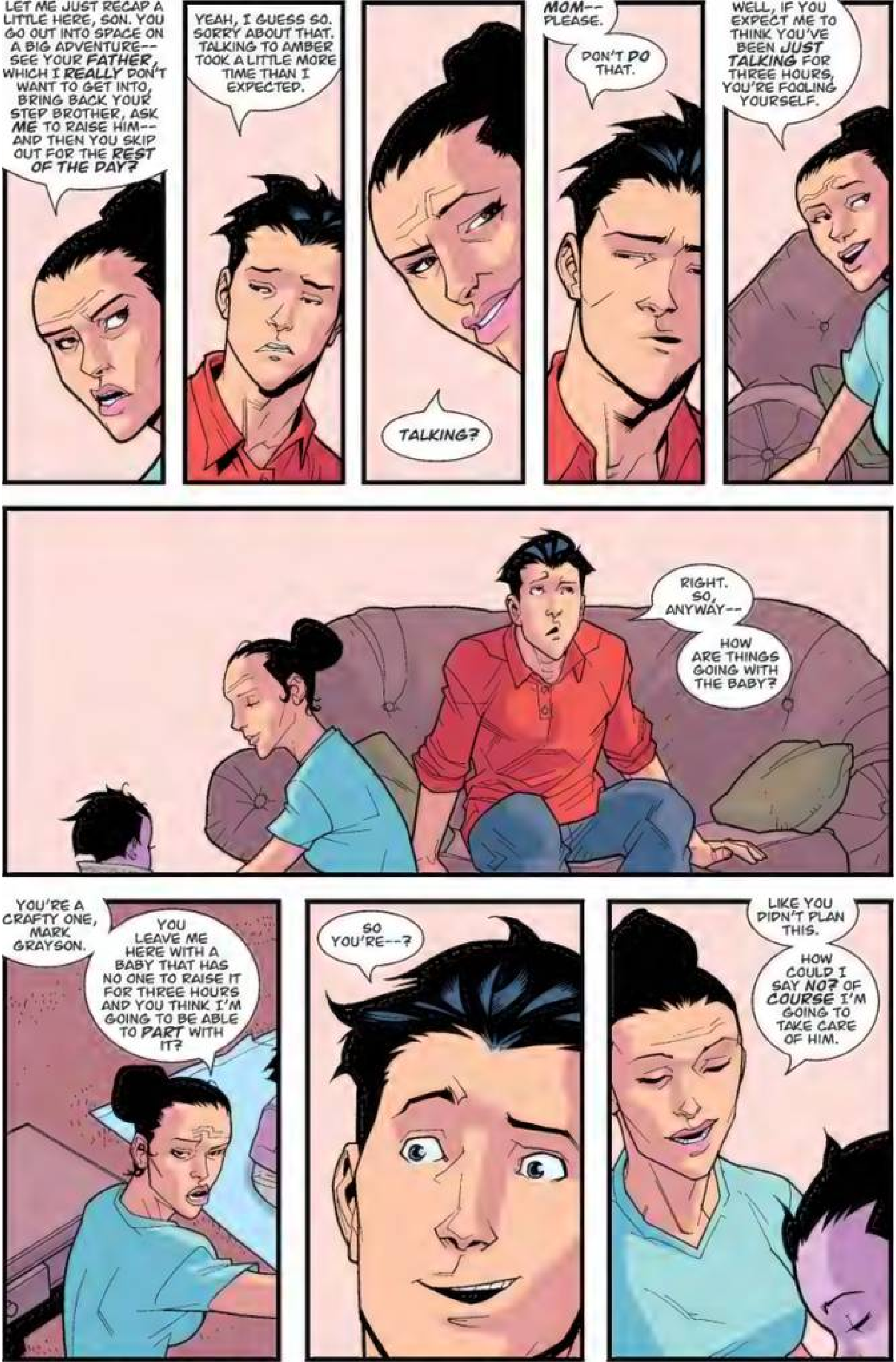

AMBER'S DORM ROOM.
TAP. TAP.
OH, MY GOD!
HAPPY TO SEE ME?
CAN I COME IN? SOMEBODY'S BOUND TO NOTICE ME ANY MINUTE NOW.
FINE.
DON'T ACT TOO EXCITED TO SEE ME.
WHAT THE HELL IS WRONG WITH YOU?!
YOU'VE BEEN GONE FOR TWO MONTHS! DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA HOW WORRIED I WAS?!
I TOLD YOU WHERE I WAS GOING. I TOLD YOU I DIDN'T KNOW HOW LONG I'D BE GONE.
WHAT? THAT MAKES IT OKAY? YOU TOLD ME YOU'D BE MISSING AHEAD OF TIME SO I SHOULDN'T WORRY?
I'M A SUPERHERO, AMBER. THAT'S THE DEAL.

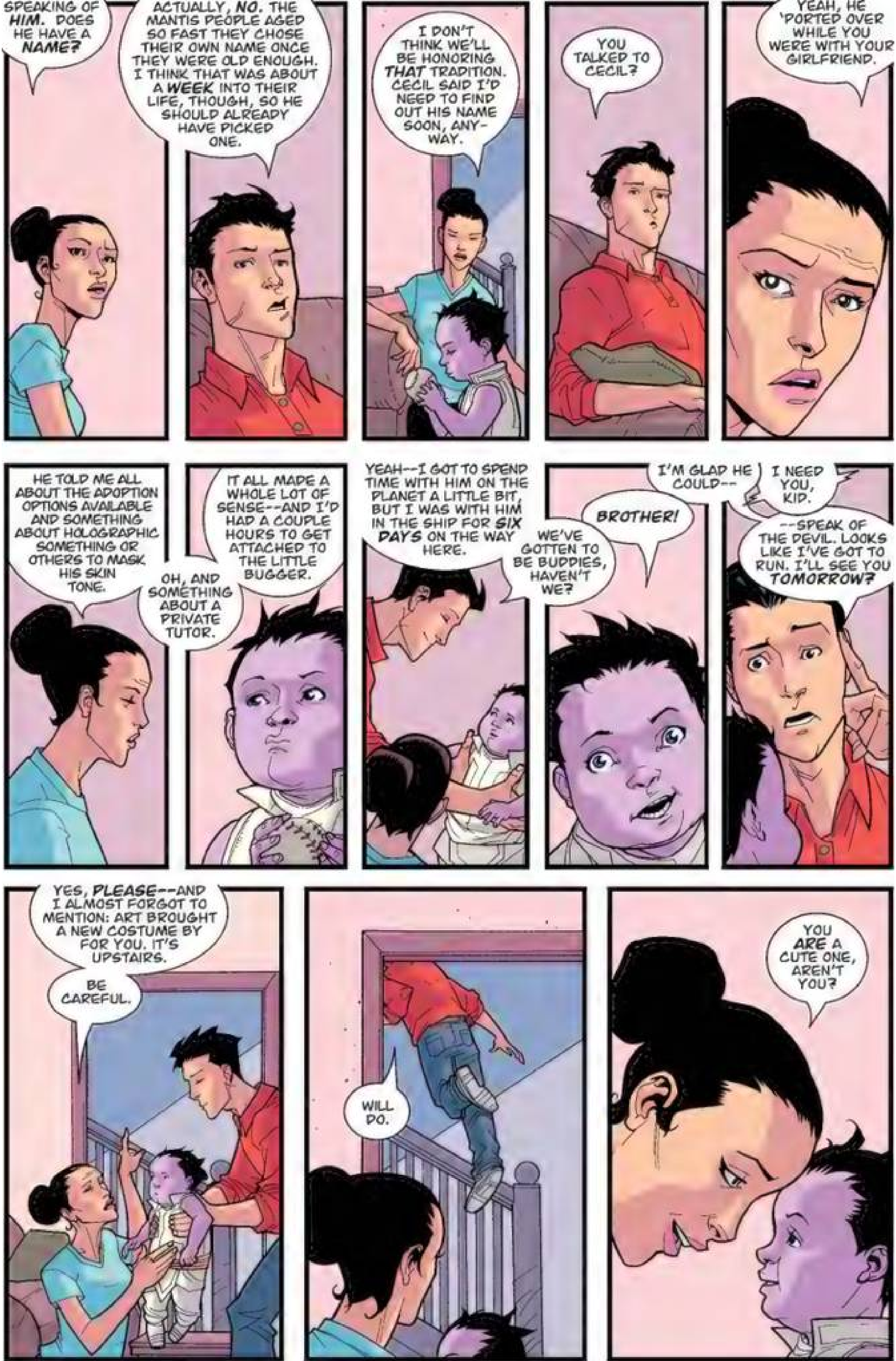

WHAT IF I'M NOT HAPPY WITH **THE DEAL** ANYMORE?
OH, MARK-- THAT'S NOT HOW I MEANT IT!
I'M JUST UPSET. YOU'VE NEVER BEEN GONE **THAT** LONG. I JUST--I'M HAVING TROUBLE DEALING WITH IT. BUT I **LOVE** YOU. I REALLY DO.
I'M SO HAPPY THAT YOU'RE BACK-- I'VE GOT A LOT OF MIXED FEELINGS RIGHT NOW. I DON'T KNOW WHETHER TO **HUG** YOU OR **HIT** YOU.
BUT I **LOVE** YOU VERY MUCH. I STILL **WANT** TO BE WITH YOU. I COULDN'T EVEN **THINK** OF BREAKING UP WITH YOU.
YOU CAN SEE WHY I WOULD BE SO UPSET, CAN'T YOU? YOU **UNDERSTAND**, RIGHT?

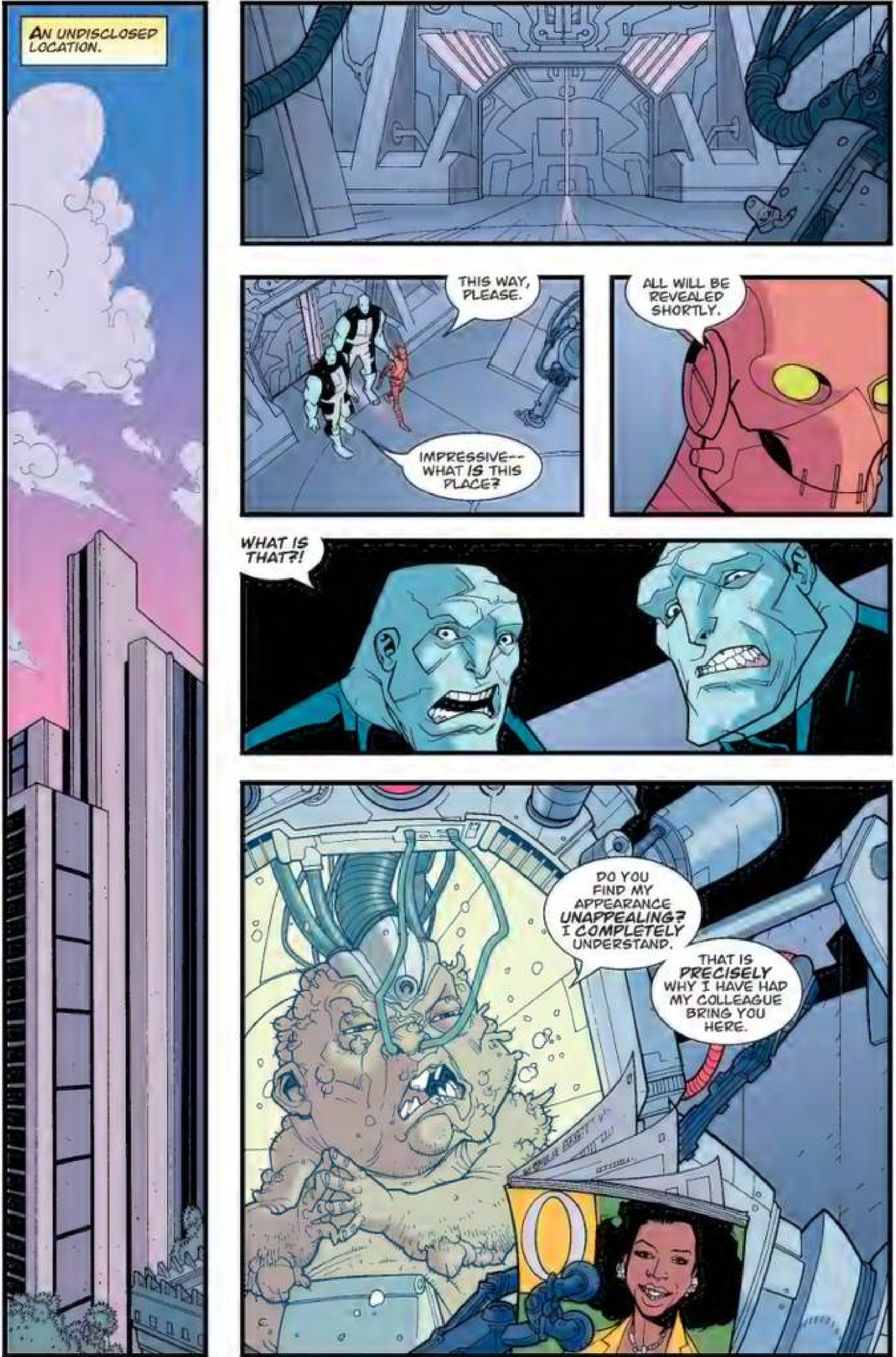

YEAH.

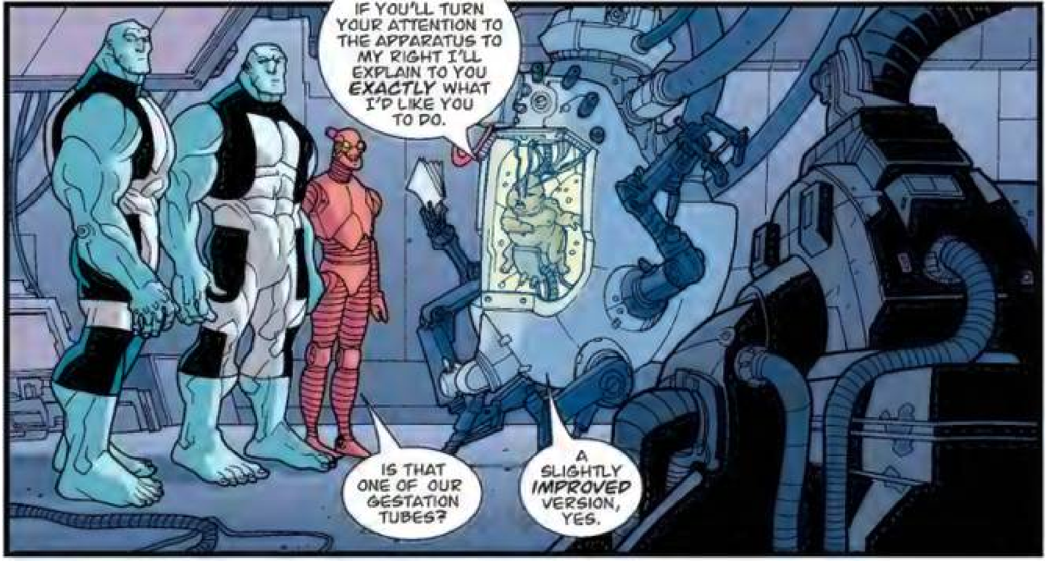
ISSUE THIRTY-ONE

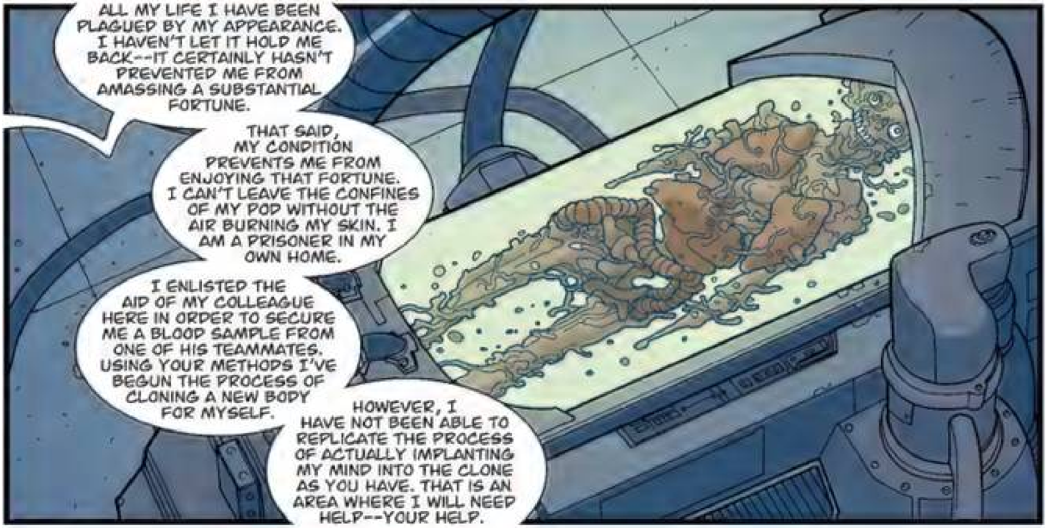

I SEE YOU TWO ARE GETTING ALONG.

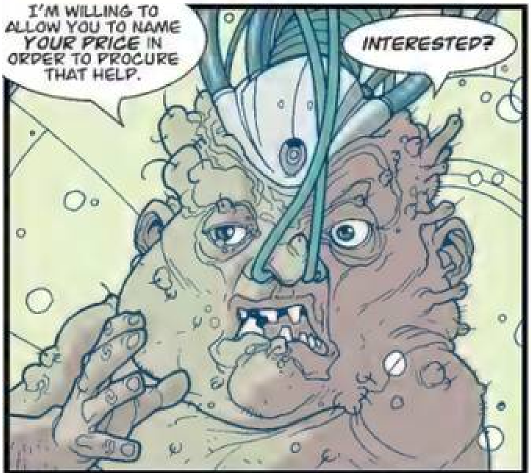

LET ME JUST RECAP A LITTLE HERE, SON. YOU GO OUT INTO SPACE ON A BIG ADVENTURE-- SEE YOUR FATHER, WHICH I REALLY DON'T WANT TO GET INTO, BRING BACK YOUR STEP BROTHER, ASK ME TO RAISE HIM-- AND THEN YOU SKIP OUT FOR THE REST OF THE DAY?
YEAH, I GUESS SO. SORRY ABOUT THAT. TALKING TO AMBER TOOK A LITTLE MORE TIME THAN I EXPECTED.
TALKING?
MOM-- PLEASE.
DON'T DO THAT.
WELL, IF YOU EXPECT ME TO THINK YOU'VE BEEN JUST TALKING FOR THREE HOURS, YOU'RE FOOLING YOURSELF.
RIGHT. SO, ANYWAY--
HOW ARE THINGS GOING WITH THE BABY?
YOU'RE A CRAFTY ONE, MARK GRAYSON.
YOU LEAVE ME HERE WITH A BABY THAT HAS NO ONE TO RAISE IT FOR THREE HOURS AND YOU THINK I'M GOING TO BE ABLE TO PART WITH IT?
SO YOU'RE--?
LIKE YOU DIDN'T PLAN THIS.
HOW COULD I SAY NO? OF COURSE I'M GOING TO TAKE CARE OF HIM.

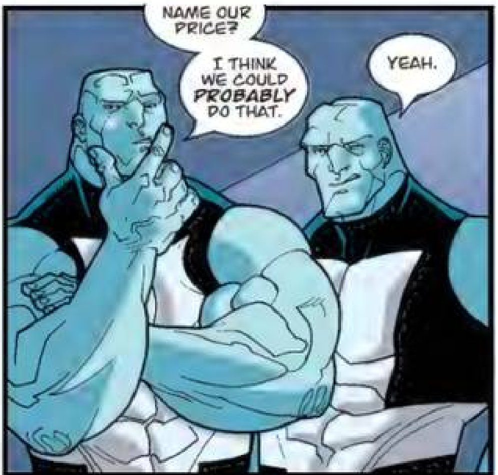

SPEAKING OF HIM. DOES HE HAVE A NAME?
ACTUALLY, NO. THE MANTIS PEOPLE AGED SO FAST THEY CHOSE THEIR OWN NAME ONCE THEY WERE OLD ENOUGH. I THINK THAT WAS ABOUT A WEEK INTO THEIR LIFE, THOUGH, SO HE SHOULD ALREADY HAVE PICKED ONE.
I DON'T THINK WE'LL BE HONORING THAT TRADITION. CECIL SAID I'D NEED TO FIND OUT HIS NAME SOON, ANYWAY.
YOU TALKED TO CECIL?
YEAH, HE 'PORTED OVER WHILE YOU WERE WITH YOUR GIRLFRIEND.
HE TOLD ME ALL ABOUT THE ADOPTION OPTIONS AVAILABLE AND SOMETHING ABOUT HOLOGRAPHIC SOMETHING OR OTHERS TO MASK HIS SKIN TONE.
OH, AND SOMETHING ABOUT A PRIVATE TUTOR.
IT ALL MADE A WHOLE LOT OF SENSE--AND I'D HAD A COUPLE HOURS TO GET ATTACHED TO THE LITTLE BUGGER.
YEAH--I GOT TO SPEND TIME WITH HIM ON THE PLANET A LITTLE BIT, BUT I WAS WITH HIM IN THE SHIP FOR SIX DAYS ON THE WAY HERE.
WE'VE GOTTEN TO BE BUDDIES, HAVEN'T WE?
BROTHER!
I'M GLAD HE COULD--
I NEED YOU, KID.
--SPEAK OF THE DEVIL. LOOKS LIKE I'VE GOT TO RUN. I'LL SEE YOU TOMORROW?
YES, PLEASE--AND I ALMOST FORGOT TO MENTION: ART BROUGHT A NEW COSTUME BY FOR YOU. IT'S UPSTAIRS.
BE CAREFUL.
WILL DO.
YOU ARE A CUTE ONE, AREN'T YOU?

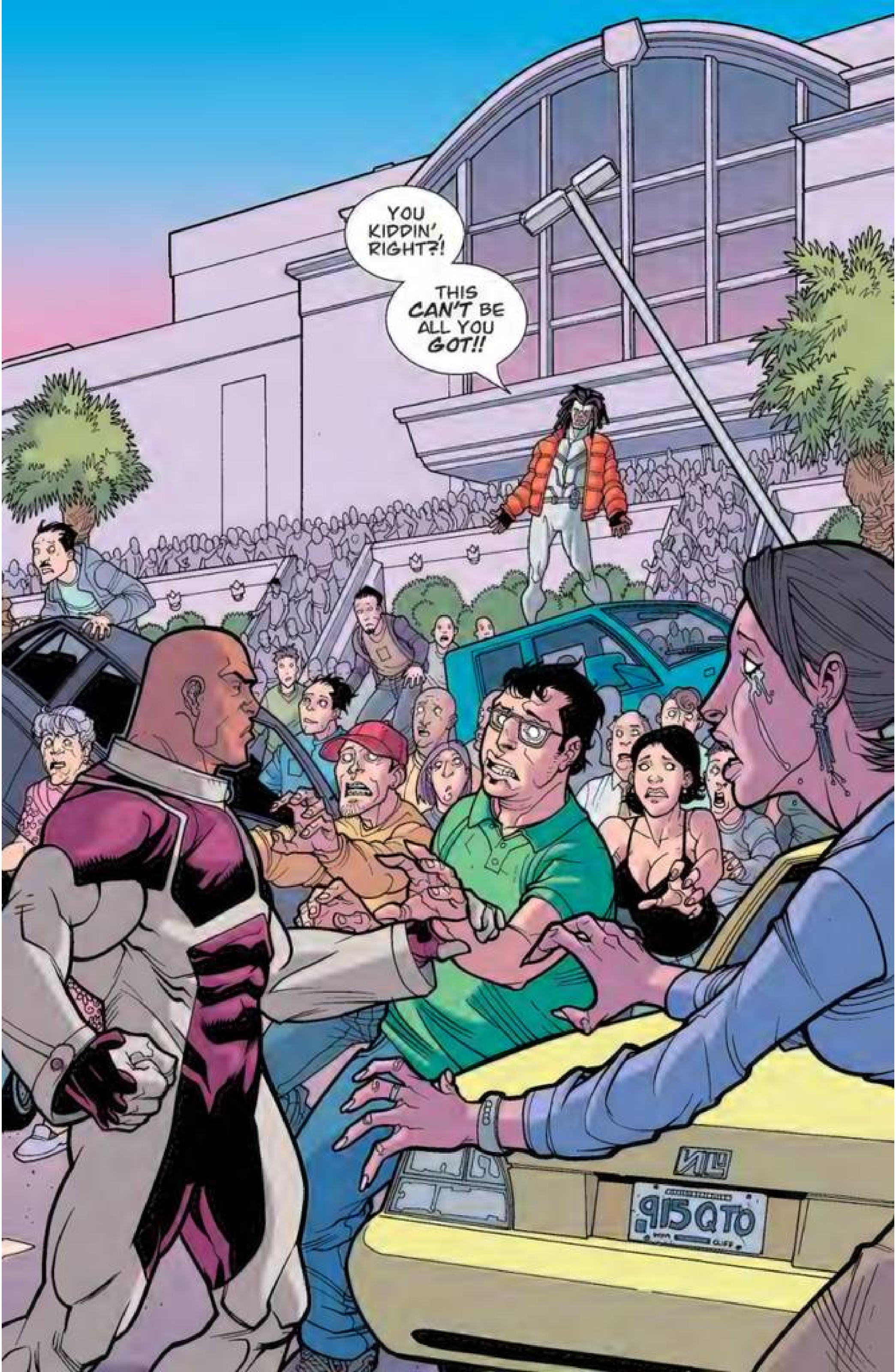

AN UNDISCLOSED LOCATION.
THIS WAY, PLEASE.
IMPRESSIVE-- WHAT IS THIS PLACE?
ALL WILL BE REVEALED SHORTLY.
WHAT IS THAT?!
DO YOU FIND MY APPEARANCE UNAPPEALING? I COMPLETELY UNDERSTAND.
THAT IS PRECISELY WHY I HAVE HAD MY COLLEAGUE BRING YOU HERE.
O

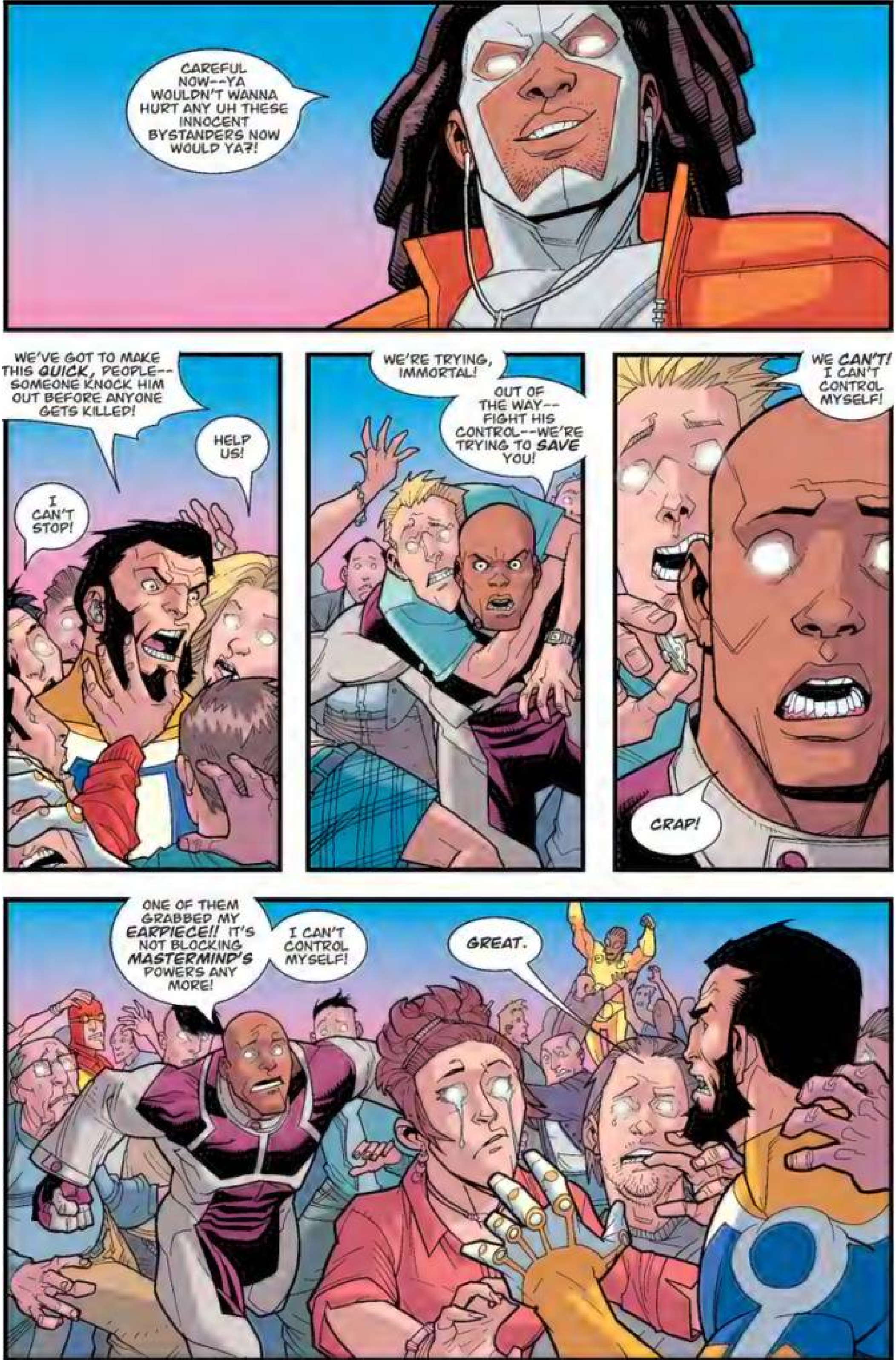

IF YOU'LL TURN YOUR ATTENTION TO THE APPARATUS TO MY RIGHT I'LL EXPLAIN TO YOU ***EXACTLY*** WHAT I'D LIKE YOU TO DO.
IS THAT ONE OF OUR GESTATION TUBES?
A SLIGHTLY ***IMPROVED*** VERSION, YES.

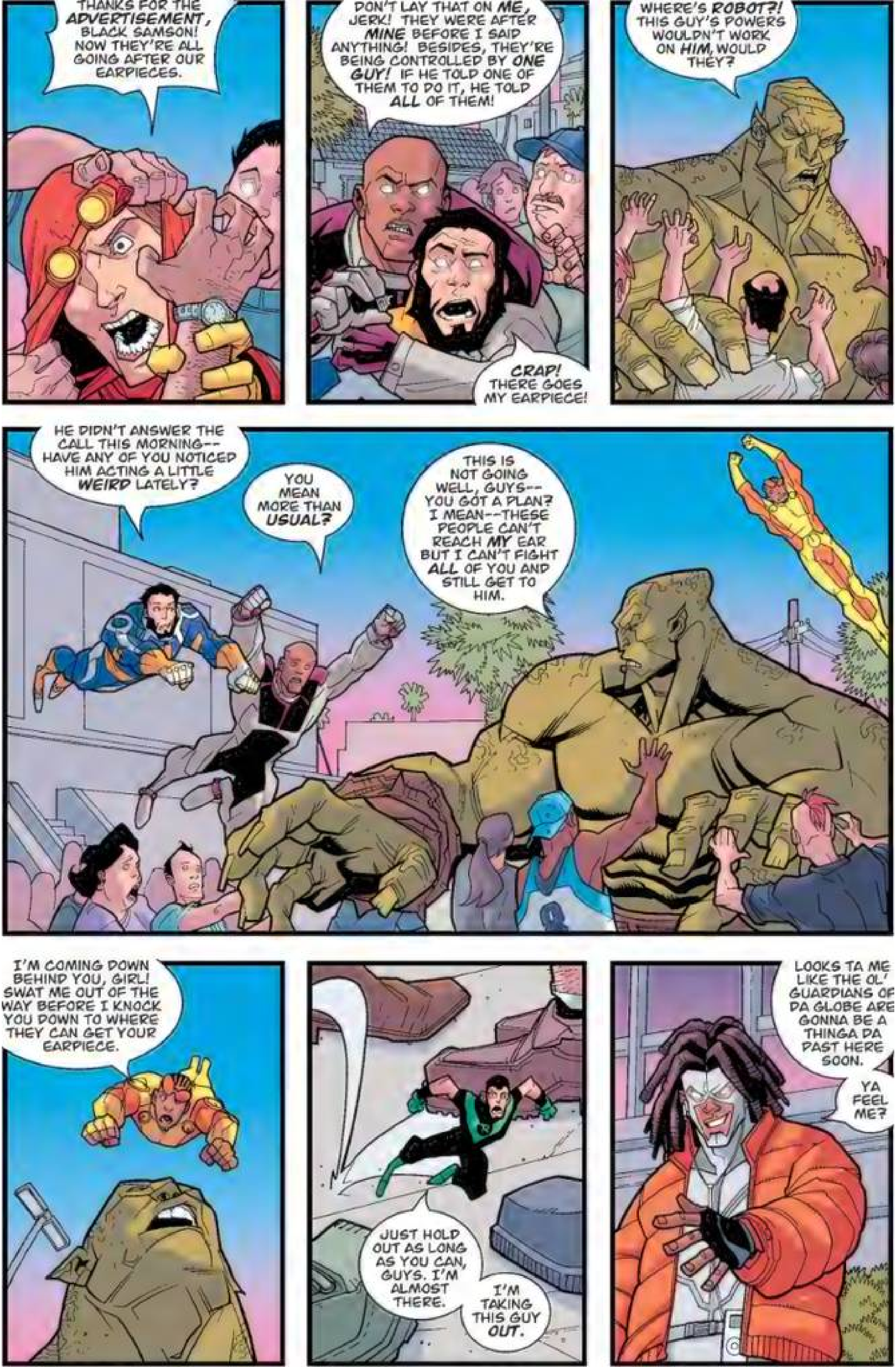

ALL MY LIFE I HAVE BEEN PLAGUED BY MY APPEARANCE. I HAVEN'T LET IT HOLD ME BACK--IT CERTAINLY HASN'T PREVENTED ME FROM AMASSING A SUBSTANTIAL FORTUNE.
THAT SAID, MY CONDITION PREVENTS ME FROM ENJOYING THAT FORTUNE. I CAN'T LEAVE THE CONFINES OF MY POD WITHOUT THE AIR BURNING MY SKIN. I AM A PRISONER IN MY OWN HOME.
I ENLISTED THE AID OF MY COLLEAGUE HERE IN ORDER TO SECURE ME A BLOOD SAMPLE FROM ONE OF HIS TEAMMATES. USING YOUR METHODS I'VE BEGUN THE PROCESS OF CLONING A NEW BODY FOR MYSELF.
HOWEVER, I HAVE NOT BEEN ABLE TO REPLICATE THE PROCESS OF ACTUALLY IMPLANTING MY MIND INTO THE CLONE AS YOU HAVE. THAT IS AN AREA WHERE I WILL NEED HELP--YOUR HELP.

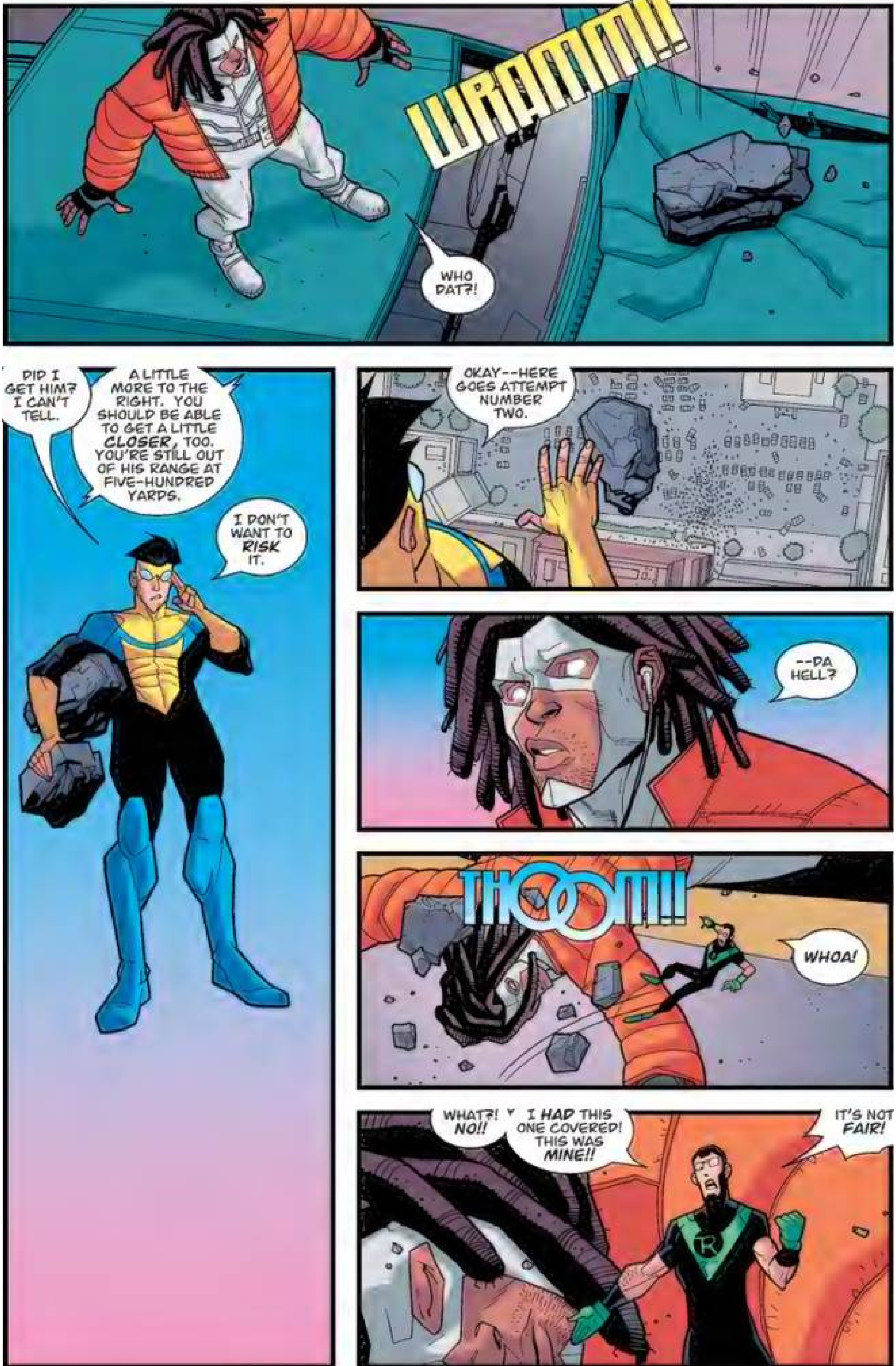

I'M WILLING TO ALLOW YOU TO NAME ***YOUR PRICE*** IN ORDER TO PROCURE THAT HELP.
INTERESTED?

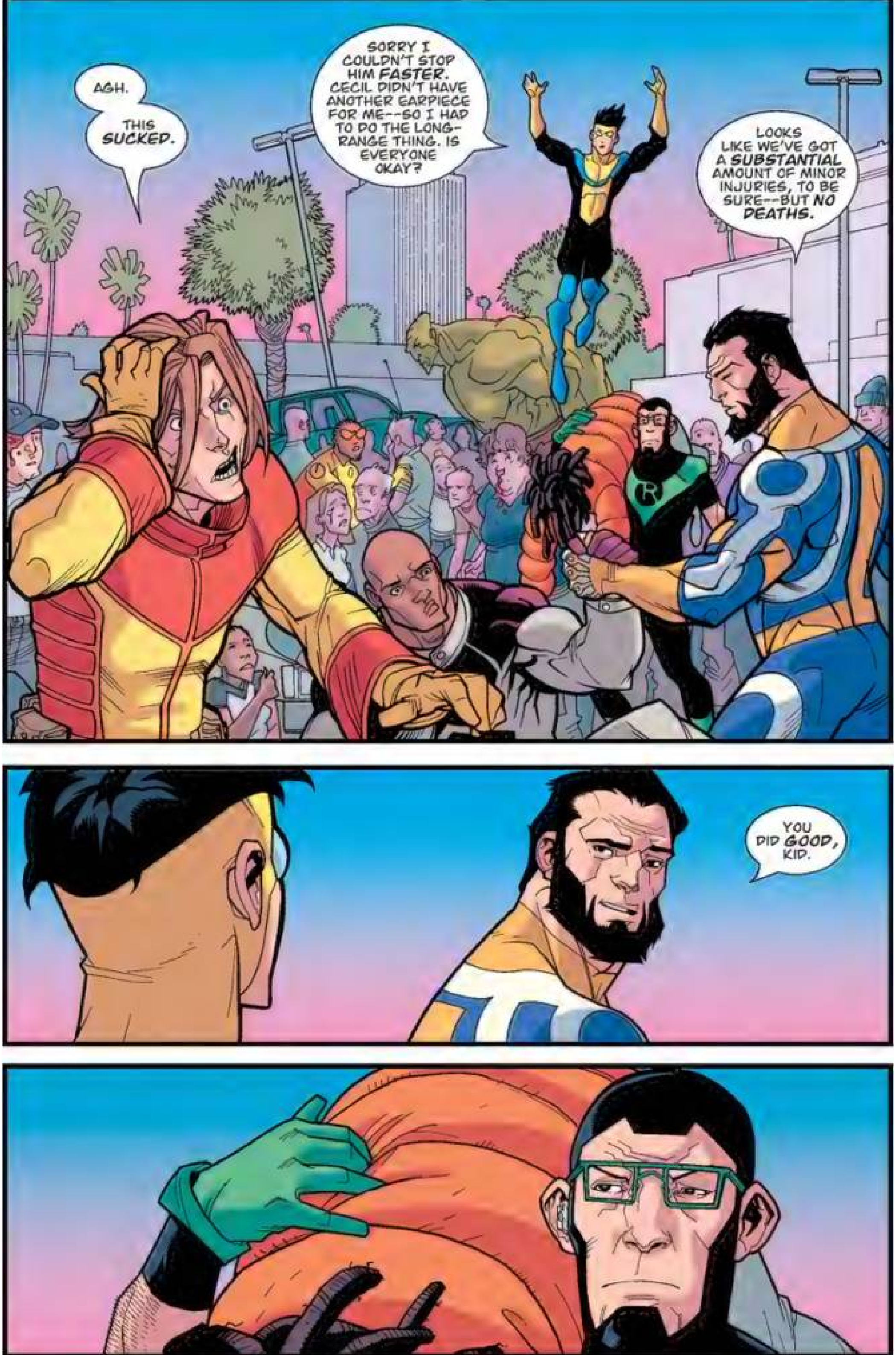

NAME OUR PRICE?
I THINK WE COULD ***PROBABLY*** DO THAT.
YEAH.

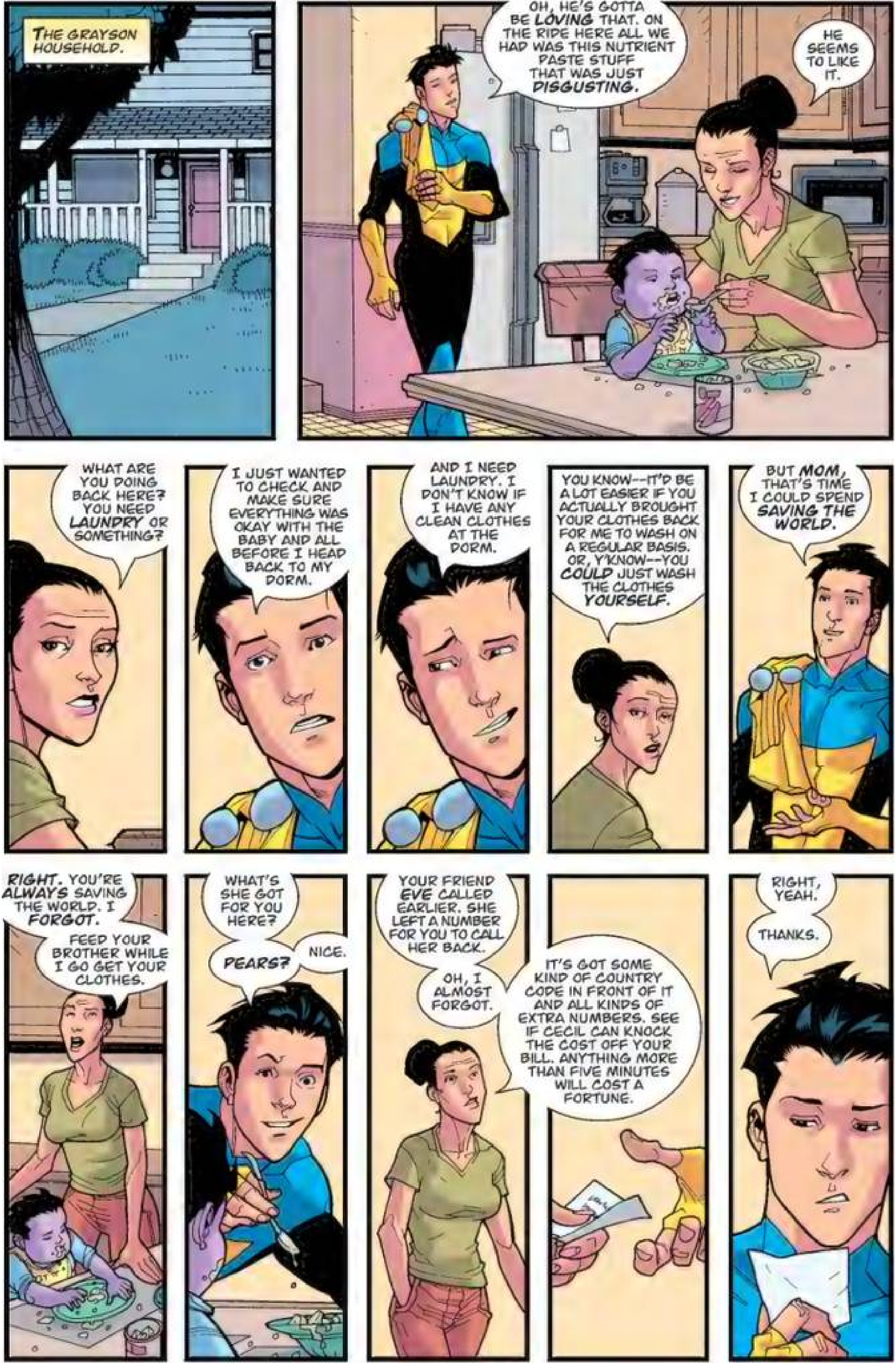

YOU KIDDIN', RIGHT?!
THIS *CAN'T* BE ALL YOU *GOT!!*
915QTO

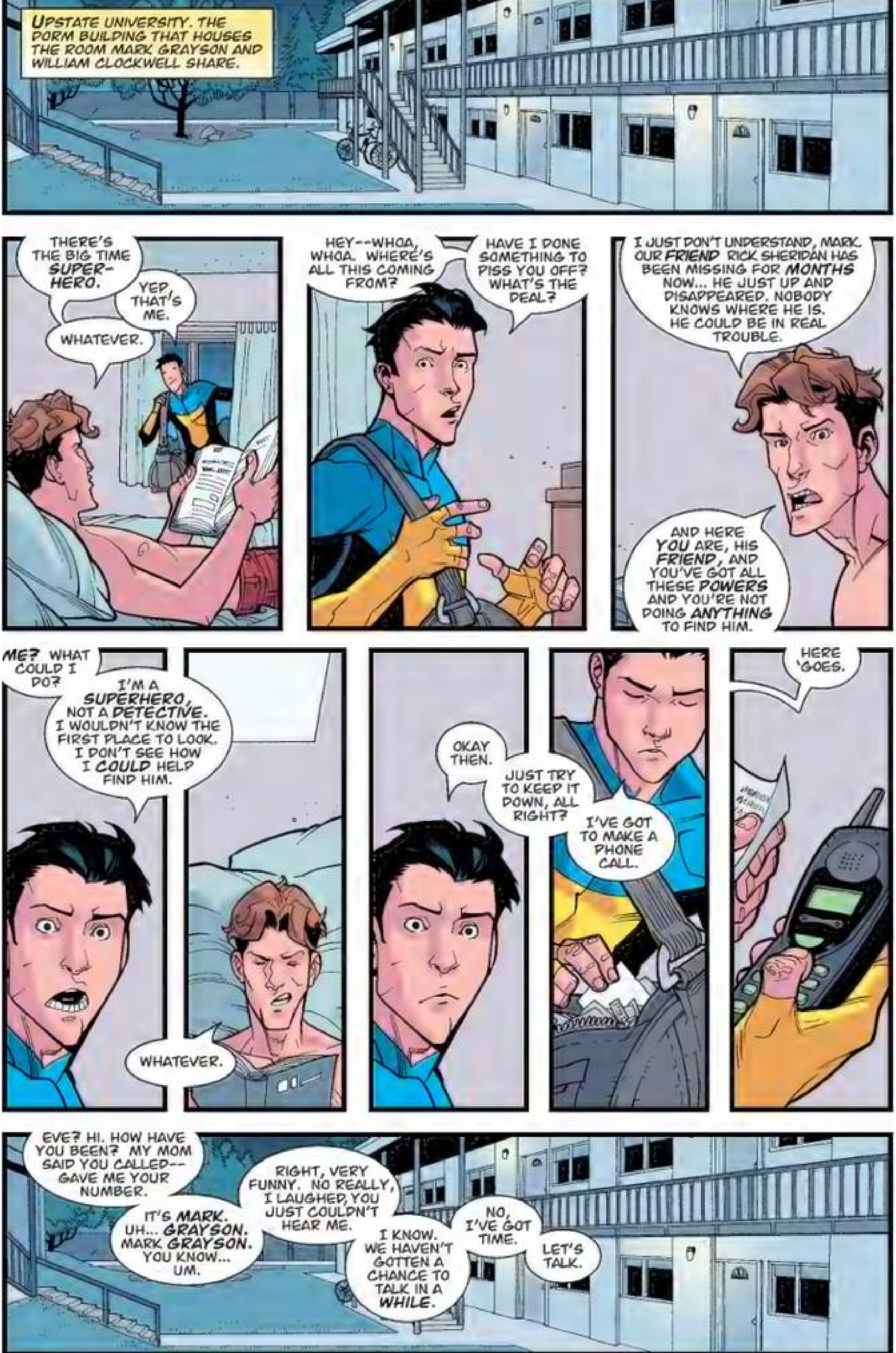

CAREFUL NOW--YA WOULDN'T WANNA HURT ANY UH THESE INNOCENT BYSTANDERS NOW WOULD YA?!
WE'VE GOT TO MAKE THIS **QUICK**, PEOPLE-- SOMEONE KNOCK HIM OUT BEFORE ANYONE GETS KILLED!
HELP US!
I CAN'T STOP!
WE'RE TRYING, IMMORTAL!
OUT OF THE WAY-- FIGHT HIS CONTROL--WE'RE TRYING TO **SAVE** YOU!
WE **CAN'T**! I CAN'T CONTROL MYSELF!
CRAP!
ONE OF THEM GRABBED MY **EARPIECE!!** IT'S NOT BLOCKING **MASTERMIND'S** POWERS ANY MORE!
I CAN'T CONTROL MYSELF!
GREAT.

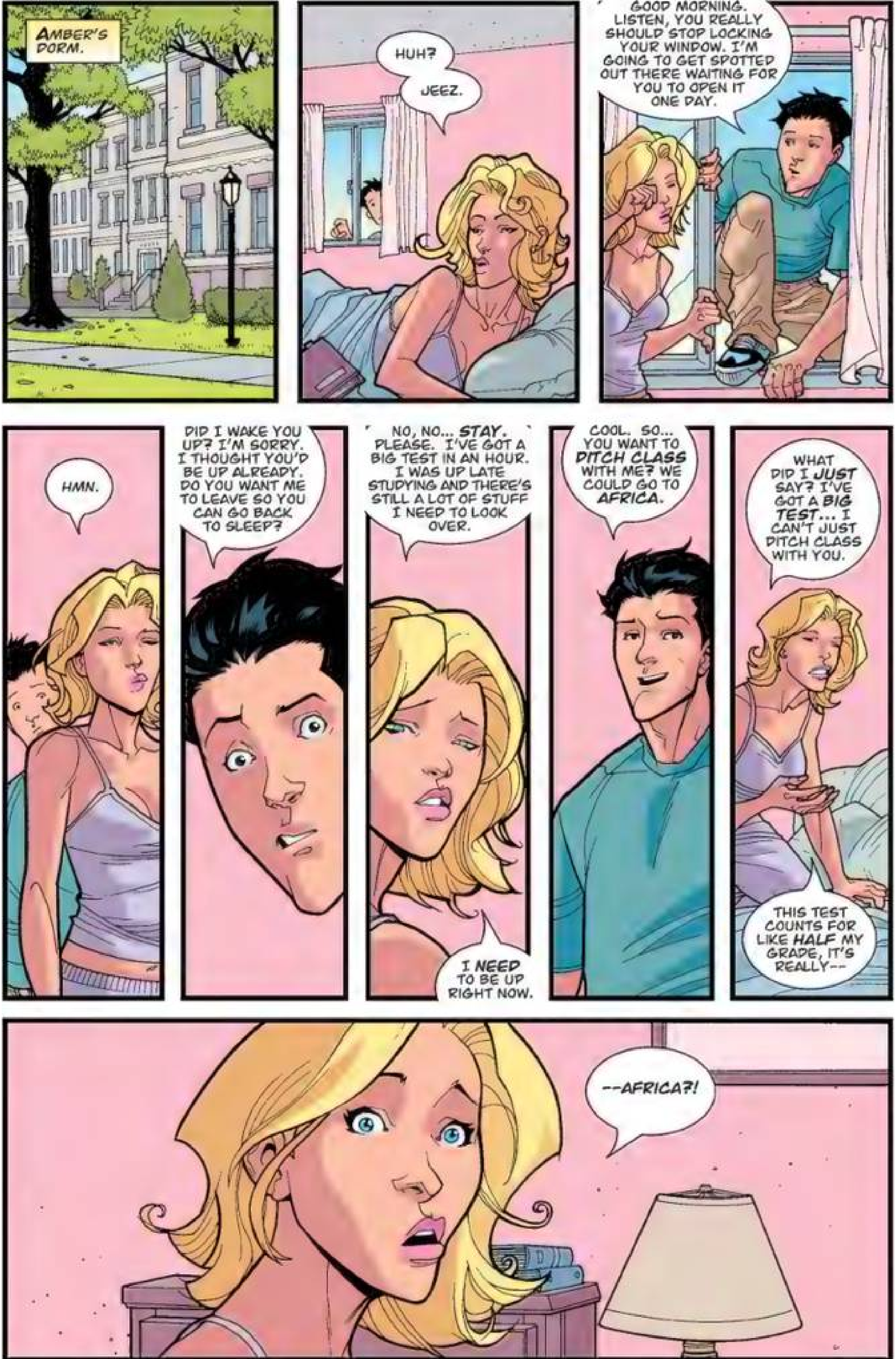

THANKS FOR THE ADVERTISEMENT, BLACK SAMSON! NOW THEY'RE ALL GOING AFTER OUR EARPIECES.
DON'T LAY THAT ON ME, JERK! THEY WERE AFTER MINE BEFORE I SAID ANYTHING! BESIDES, THEY'RE BEING CONTROLLED BY ONE GUY! IF HE TOLD ONE OF THEM TO DO IT, HE TOLD ALL OF THEM!
CRAP! THERE GOES MY EARPIECE!
WHERE'S ROBOT?! THIS GUY'S POWERS WOULDN'T WORK ON HIM, WOULD THEY?
HE DIDN'T ANSWER THE CALL THIS MORNING-- HAVE ANY OF YOU NOTICED HIM ACTING A LITTLE WEIRD LATELY?
YOU MEAN MORE THAN USUAL?
THIS IS NOT GOING WELL, GUYS-- YOU GOT A PLAN? I MEAN--THESE PEOPLE CAN'T REACH MY EAR BUT I CAN'T FIGHT ALL OF YOU AND STILL GET TO HIM.
I'M COMING DOWN BEHIND YOU, GIRL! SWAT ME OUT OF THE WAY BEFORE I KNOCK YOU DOWN TO WHERE THEY CAN GET YOUR EARPIECE.
JUST HOLD OUT AS LONG AS YOU CAN, GUYS. I'M ALMOST THERE.
I'M TAKING THIS GUY OUT.
LOOKS TA ME LIKE THE OL' GUARDIANS OF DA GLOBE ARE GONNA BE A THINGA DA PAST HERE SOON.
YA FEEL ME?

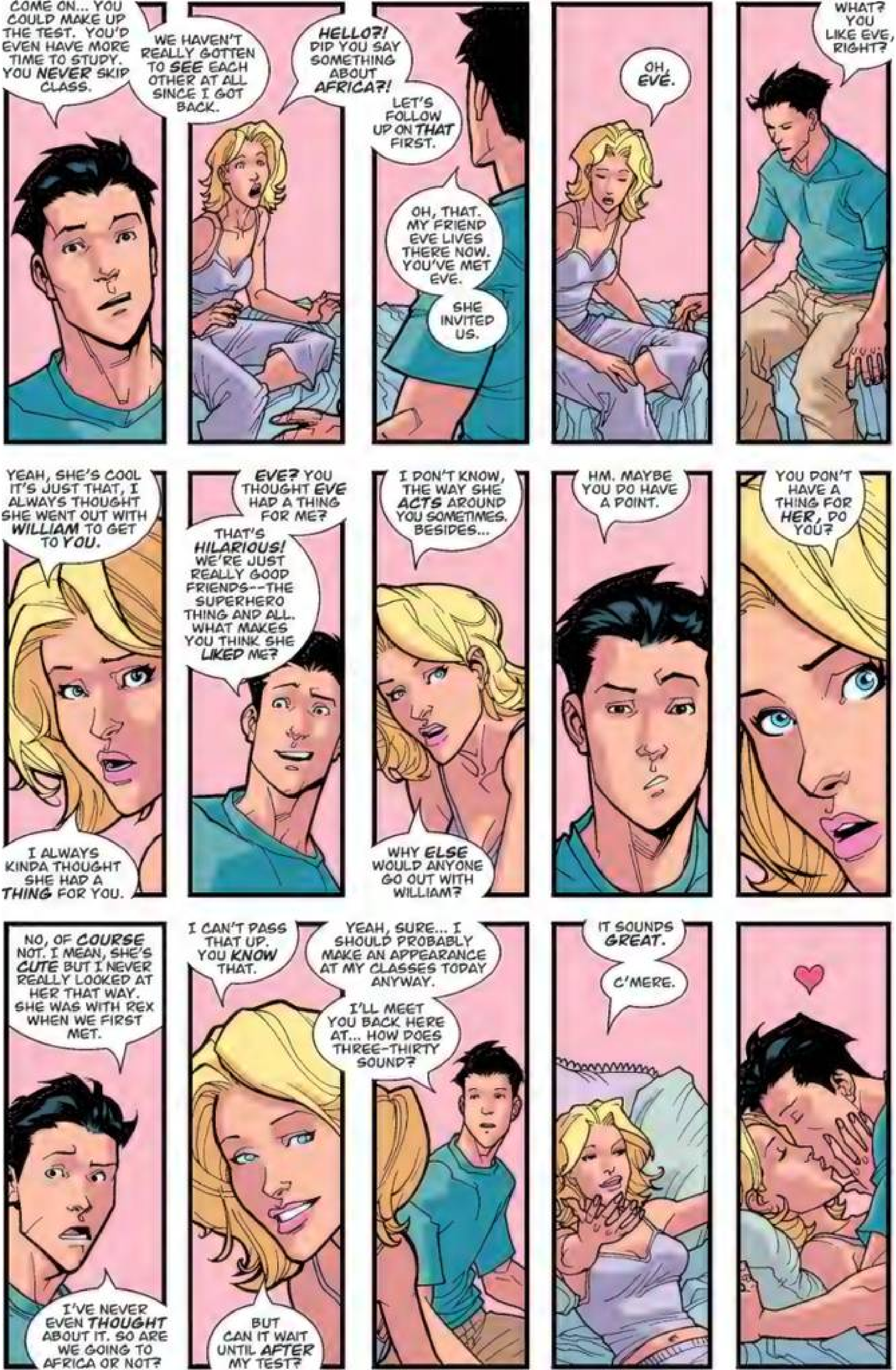

WRAMMM!!
WHO DAT?!
DID I GET HIM? I CAN'T TELL.
A LITTLE MORE TO THE RIGHT. YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO GET A LITTLE *CLOSER*, TOO. YOU'RE STILL OUT OF HIS RANGE AT FIVE-HUNDRED YARDS.
I DON'T WANT TO *RISK* IT.
OKAY--HERE GOES ATTEMPT NUMBER TWO.
--DA HELL?
THOOM!!
WHOA!
WHAT?! *NO!!*
I *HAD* THIS ONE COVERED! THIS WAS *MINE!!*
IT'S NOT *FAIR!*

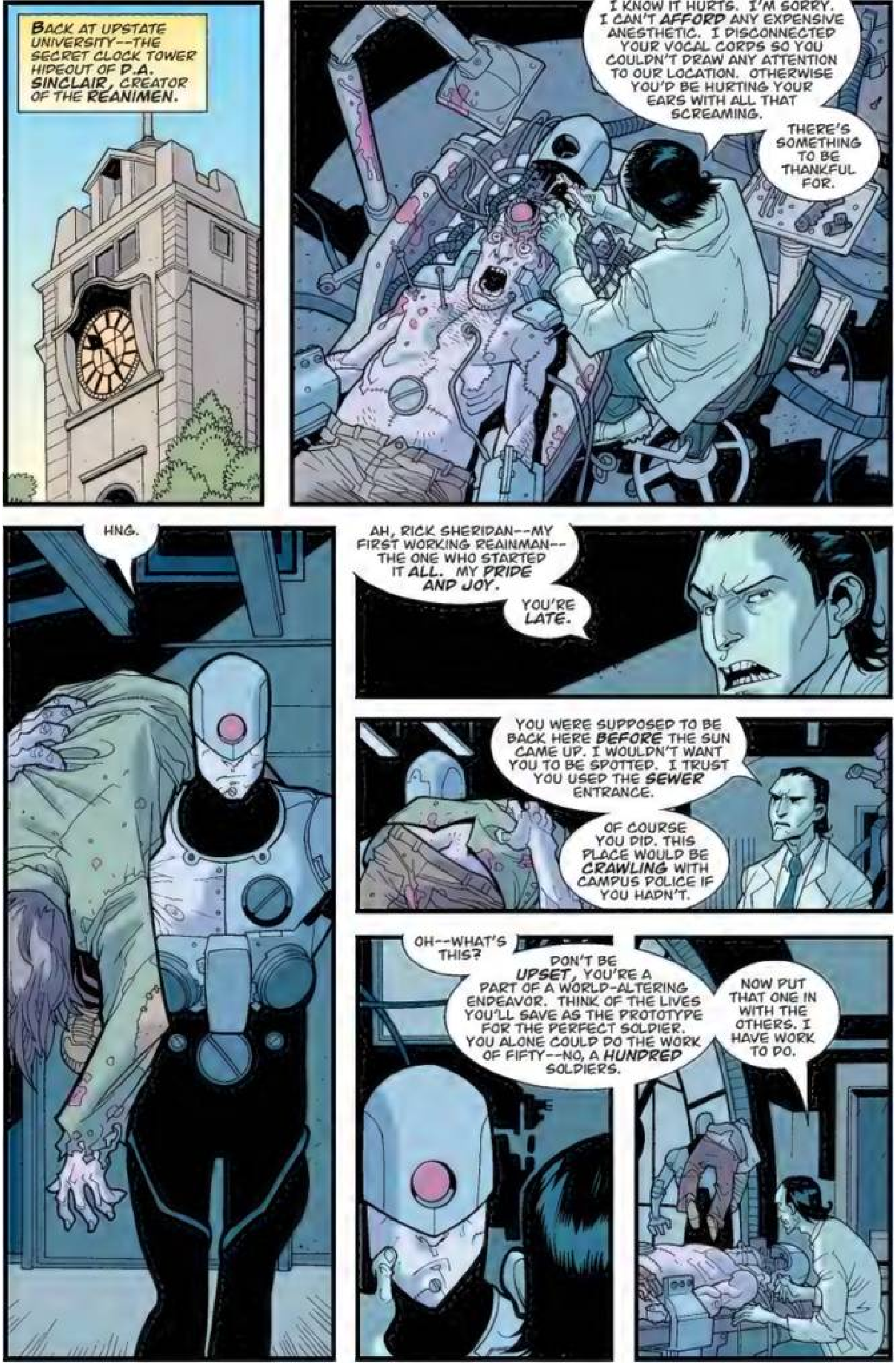

AGH.
THIS **SUCKED.**
SORRY I COULDN'T STOP HIM **FASTER.** CECIL DIDN'T HAVE ANOTHER EARPIECE FOR ME--SO I HAD TO DO THE LONG-RANGE THING. IS EVERYONE OKAY?
LOOKS LIKE WE'VE GOT A **SUBSTANTIAL** AMOUNT OF MINOR INJURIES, TO BE SURE--BUT **NO DEATHS.**
YOU DID **GOOD,** KID.

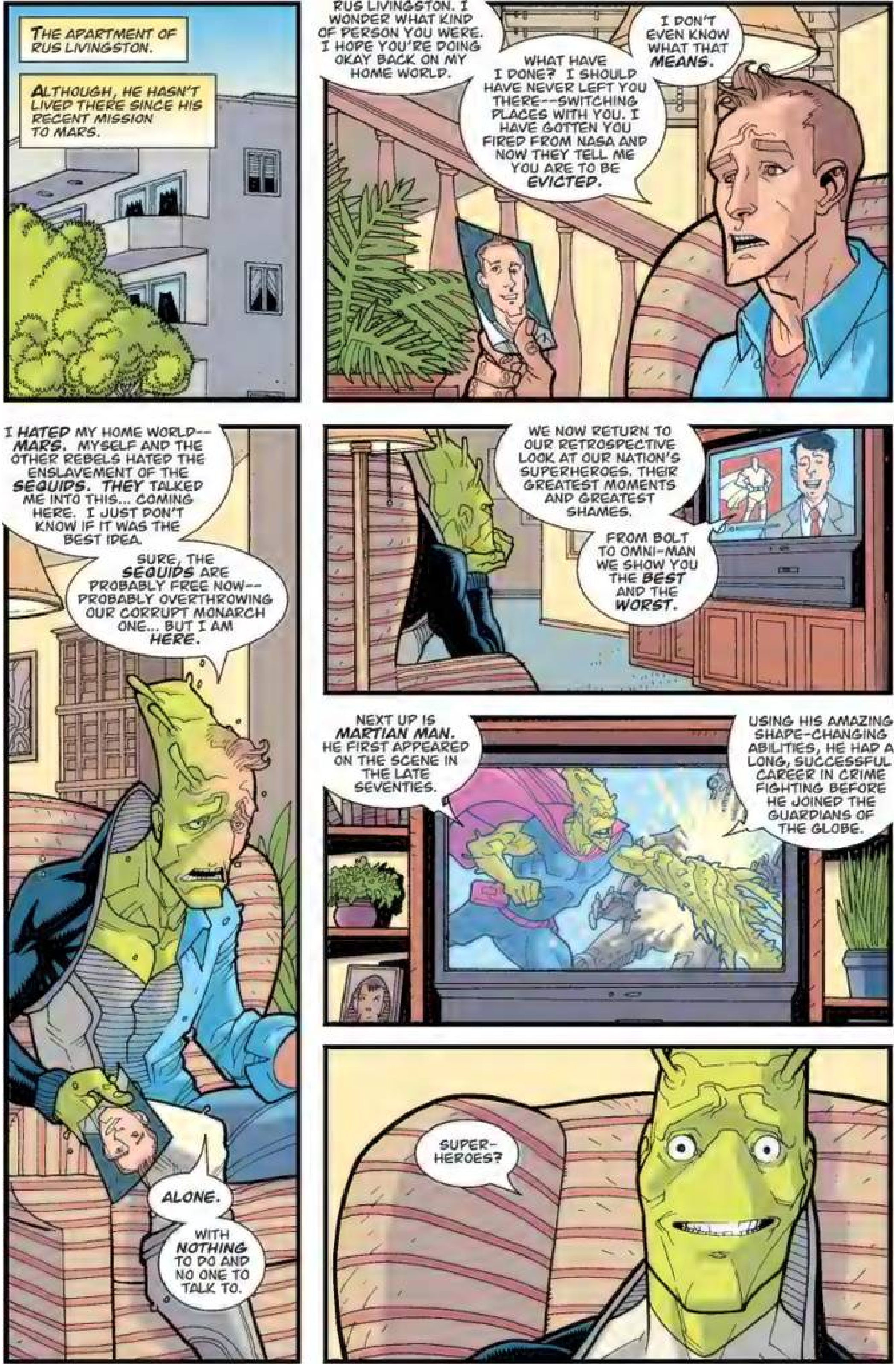

THE GRAYSON HOUSEHOLD.
OH, HE'S GOTTA BE LOVING THAT. ON THE RIDE HERE ALL WE HAD WAS THIS NUTRIENT PASTE STUFF THAT WAS JUST DISGUSTING.
HE SEEMS TO LIKE IT.
WHAT ARE YOU DOING BACK HERE? YOU NEED LAUNDRY OR SOMETHING?
I JUST WANTED TO CHECK AND MAKE SURE EVERYTHING WAS OKAY WITH THE BABY AND ALL BEFORE I HEAD BACK TO MY DORM.
AND I NEED LAUNDRY. I DON'T KNOW IF I HAVE ANY CLEAN CLOTHES AT THE DORM.
YOU KNOW--IT'D BE A LOT EASIER IF YOU ACTUALLY BROUGHT YOUR CLOTHES BACK FOR ME TO WASH ON A REGULAR BASIS. OR, Y'KNOW--YOU COULD JUST WASH THE CLOTHES YOURSELF.
BUT MOM, THAT'S TIME I COULD SPEND SAVING THE WORLD.
RIGHT. YOU'RE ALWAYS SAVING THE WORLD. I FORGOT.
FEED YOUR BROTHER WHILE I GO GET YOUR CLOTHES.
WHAT'S SHE GOT FOR YOU HERE?
PEARS?
NICE.
YOUR FRIEND EVE CALLED EARLIER. SHE LEFT A NUMBER FOR YOU TO CALL HER BACK.
OH, I ALMOST FORGOT.
IT'S GOT SOME KIND OF COUNTRY CODE IN FRONT OF IT AND ALL KINDS OF EXTRA NUMBERS. SEE IF CECIL CAN KNOCK THE COST OFF YOUR BILL. ANYTHING MORE THAN FIVE MINUTES WILL COST A FORTUNE.
RIGHT, YEAH.
THANKS.

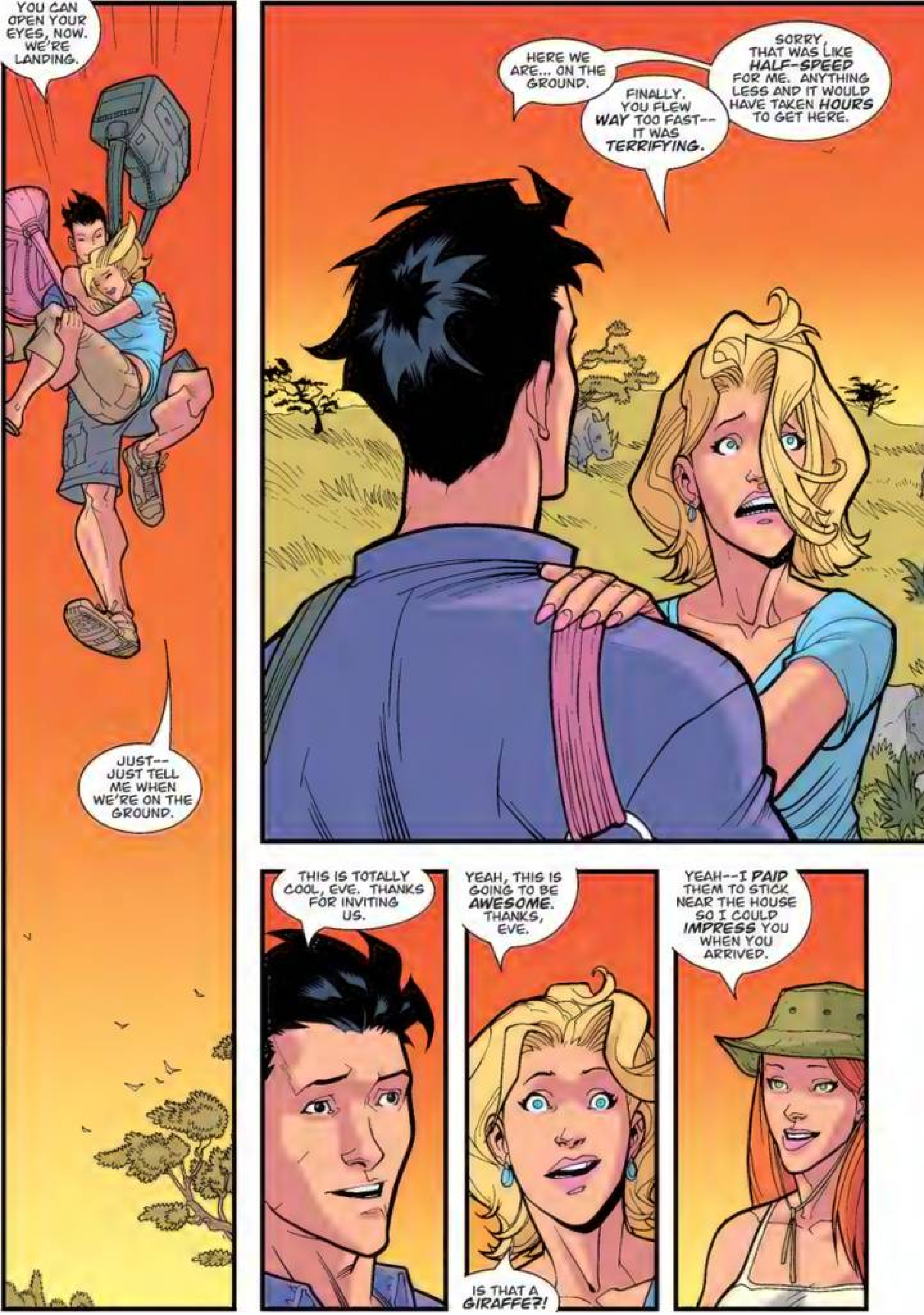

UPSTATE UNIVERSITY. THE DORM BUILDING THAT HOUSES THE ROOM MARK GRAYSON AND WILLIAM CLOCKWELL SHARE.
THERE'S THE BIG TIME SUPER-HERO.
YEP. THAT'S ME.
WHATEVER.
HEY--WHOA, WHOA. WHERE'S ALL THIS COMING FROM?
HAVE I DONE SOMETHING TO PISS YOU OFF? WHAT'S THE DEAL?
I JUST DON'T UNDERSTAND, MARK. OUR FRIEND RICK SHERIDAN HAS BEEN MISSING FOR MONTHS NOW... HE JUST UP AND DISAPPEARED. NOBODY KNOWS WHERE HE IS. HE COULD BE IN REAL TROUBLE.
AND HERE YOU ARE, HIS FRIEND, AND YOU'VE GOT ALL THESE POWERS AND YOU'RE NOT DOING ANYTHING TO FIND HIM.
ME? WHAT COULD I DO?
I'M A SUPERHERO, NOT A DETECTIVE. I WOULDN'T KNOW THE FIRST PLACE TO LOOK. I DON'T SEE HOW I COULD HELP FIND HIM.
WHATEVER.
OKAY THEN.
JUST TRY TO KEEP IT DOWN, ALL RIGHT?
I'VE GOT TO MAKE A PHONE CALL.
HERE 'GOES.
EVE? HI. HOW HAVE YOU BEEN? MY MOM SAID YOU CALLED-- GAVE ME YOUR NUMBER.
IT'S MARK. UH... GRAYSON. MARK GRAYSON. YOU KNOW... UM.
RIGHT, VERY FUNNY. NO REALLY, I LAUGHED, YOU JUST COULDN'T HEAR ME.
I KNOW. WE HAVEN'T GOTTEN A CHANCE TO TALK IN A WHILE.
NO, I'VE GOT TIME.
LET'S TALK.

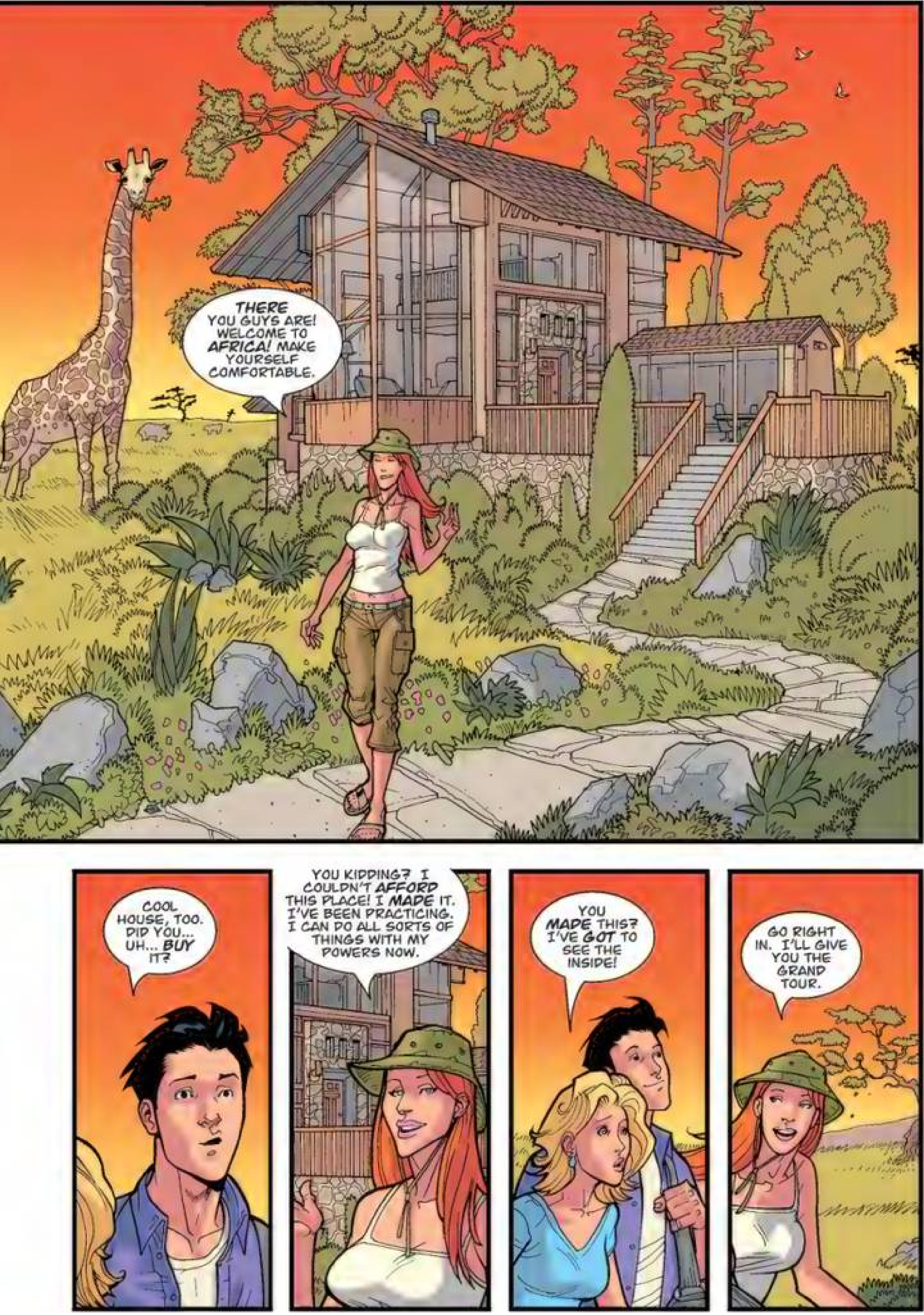

AMBER'S DORM.
HUH?
JEEZ.
GOOD MORNING. LISTEN, YOU REALLY SHOULD STOP LOCKING YOUR WINDOW. I'M GOING TO GET SPOTTED OUT THERE WAITING FOR YOU TO OPEN IT ONE DAY.
HMN.
DID I WAKE YOU UP? I'M SORRY. I THOUGHT YOU'D BE UP ALREADY. DO YOU WANT ME TO LEAVE SO YOU CAN GO BACK TO SLEEP?
NO, NO... STAY. PLEASE. I'VE GOT A BIG TEST IN AN HOUR. I WAS UP LATE STUDYING AND THERE'S STILL A LOT OF STUFF I NEED TO LOOK OVER.
I NEED TO BE UP RIGHT NOW.
COOL. SO... YOU WANT TO DITCH CLASS WITH ME? WE COULD GO TO AFRICA.
WHAT DID I JUST SAY? I'VE GOT A BIG TEST... I CAN'T JUST DITCH CLASS WITH YOU.
THIS TEST COUNTS FOR LIKE HALF MY GRADE, IT'S REALLY--
--AFRICA?!

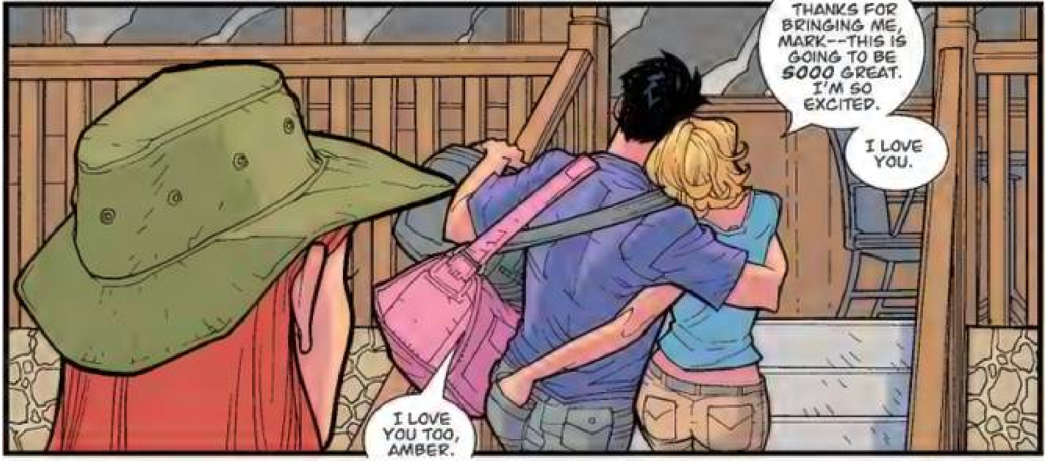

COME ON... YOU COULD MAKE UP THE TEST. YOU'D EVEN HAVE MORE TIME TO STUDY. YOU NEVER SKIP CLASS.
WE HAVEN'T REALLY GOTTEN TO SEE EACH OTHER AT ALL SINCE I GOT BACK.
HELLO?! DID YOU SAY SOMETHING ABOUT AFRICA?!
LET'S FOLLOW UP ON THAT FIRST.
OH, THAT. MY FRIEND EVE LIVES THERE NOW. YOU'VE MET EVE.
SHE INVITED US.
OH, EVE.
WHAT? YOU LIKE EVE, RIGHT?
YEAH, SHE'S COOL IT'S JUST THAT, I ALWAYS THOUGHT SHE WENT OUT WITH WILLIAM TO GET TO YOU.
I ALWAYS KINDA THOUGHT SHE HAD A THING FOR YOU.
EVE? YOU THOUGHT EVE HAD A THING FOR ME?
THAT'S HILARIOUS! WE'RE JUST REALLY GOOD FRIENDS--THE SUPERHERO THING AND ALL. WHAT MAKES YOU THINK SHE LIKED ME?
I DON'T KNOW, THE WAY SHE ACTS AROUND YOU SOMETIMES. BESIDES...
WHY ELSE WOULD ANYONE GO OUT WITH WILLIAM?
HM. MAYBE YOU DO HAVE A POINT.
YOU DON'T HAVE A THING FOR HER, DO YOU?
NO, OF COURSE NOT. I MEAN, SHE'S CUTE BUT I NEVER REALLY LOOKED AT HER THAT WAY. SHE WAS WITH REX WHEN WE FIRST MET.
I'VE NEVER EVEN THOUGHT ABOUT IT. SO ARE WE GOING TO AFRICA OR NOT?
I CAN'T PASS THAT UP. YOU KNOW THAT.
BUT CAN IT WAIT UNTIL AFTER MY TEST?
YEAH, SURE... I SHOULD PROBABLY MAKE AN APPEARANCE AT MY CLASSES TODAY ANYWAY.
I'LL MEET YOU BACK HERE AT... HOW DOES THREE-THIRTY SOUND?
IT SOUNDS GREAT.
C'MERE.

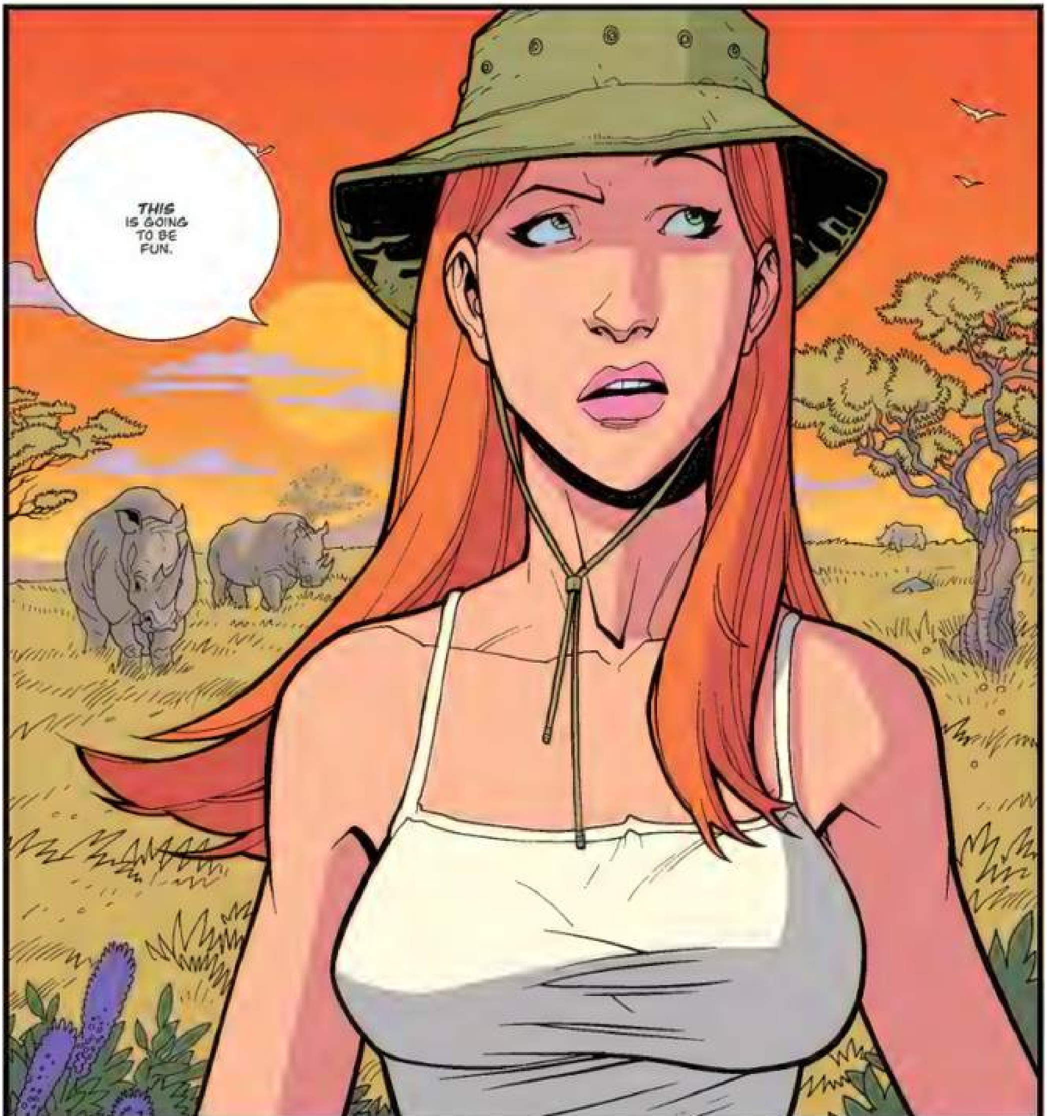

BACK AT UPSTATE UNIVERSITY--THE SECRET CLOCK TOWER HIDEOUT OF D.A. SINCLAIR, CREATOR OF THE REANIMEN.
I KNOW IT HURTS. I'M SORRY. I CAN'T AFFORD ANY EXPENSIVE ANESTHETIC. I DISCONNECTED YOUR VOCAL CORDS SO YOU COULDN'T DRAW ANY ATTENTION TO OUR LOCATION. OTHERWISE YOU'D BE HURTING YOUR EARS WITH ALL THAT SCREAMING.
THERE'S SOMETHING TO BE THANKFUL FOR.
HNG.
AH, RICK SHERIDAN--MY FIRST WORKING REAINMAN--THE ONE WHO STARTED IT ALL. MY PRIDE AND JOY.
YOU'RE LATE.
YOU WERE SUPPOSED TO BE BACK HERE BEFORE THE SUN CAME UP. I WOULDN'T WANT YOU TO BE SPOTTED. I TRUST YOU USED THE SEWER ENTRANCE.
OF COURSE YOU DID. THIS PLACE WOULD BE CRAWLING WITH CAMPUS POLICE IF YOU HADN'T.
OH--WHAT'S THIS?
DON'T BE UPSET, YOU'RE A PART OF A WORLD-ALTERING ENDEAVOR. THINK OF THE LIVES YOU'LL SAVE AS THE PROTOTYPE FOR THE PERFECT SOLDIER. YOU ALONE COULD DO THE WORK OF FIFTY--NO, A HUNDRED SOLDIERS.
NOW PUT THAT ONE IN WITH THE OTHERS. I HAVE WORK TO DO.

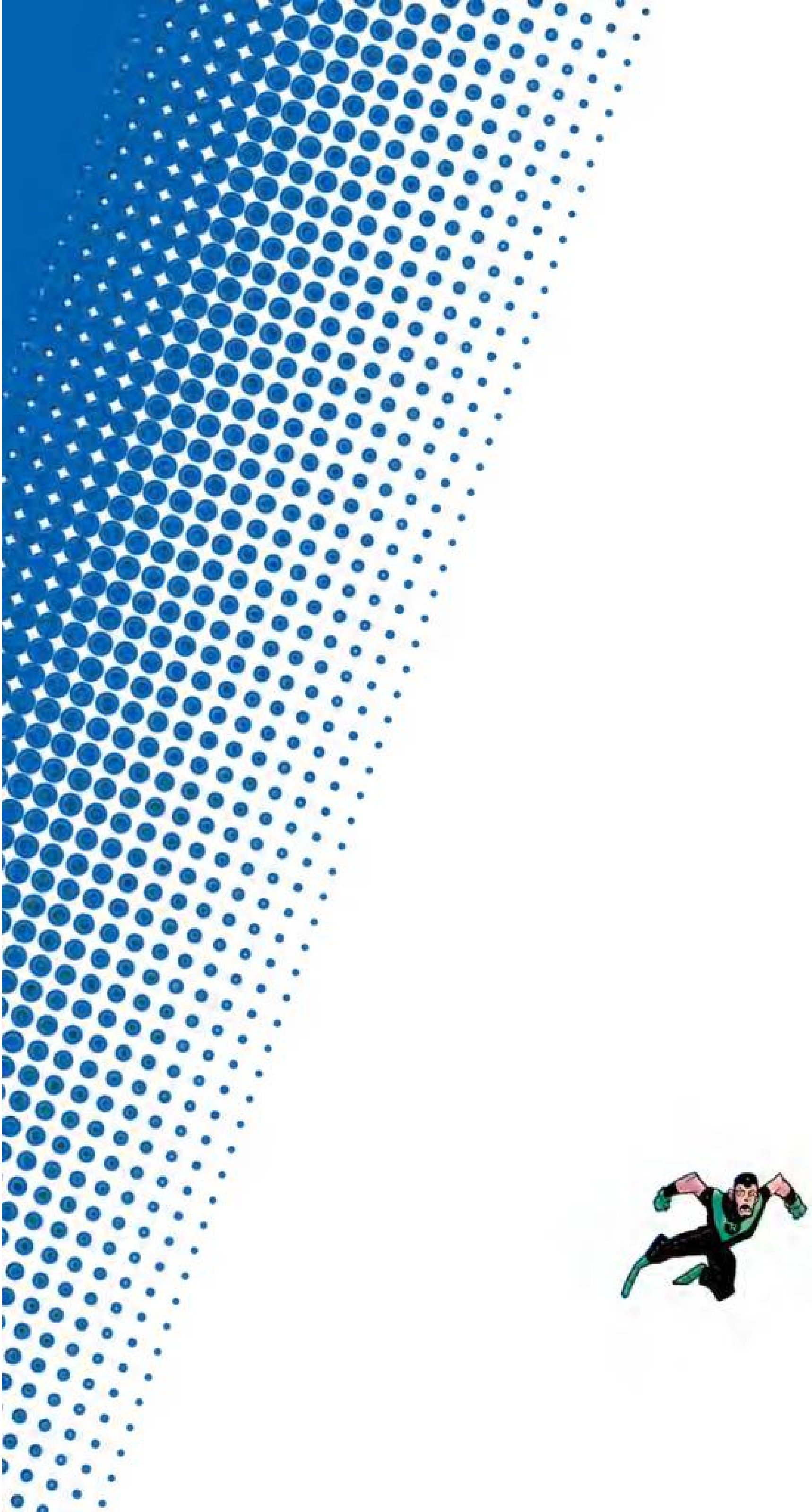

THE APARTMENT OF RUS LIVINGSTON.
ALTHOUGH, HE HASN'T LIVED THERE SINCE HIS RECENT MISSION TO MARS.
RUS LIVINGSTON. I WONDER WHAT KIND OF PERSON YOU WERE. I HOPE YOU'RE DOING OKAY BACK ON MY HOME WORLD.
WHAT HAVE I DONE? I SHOULD HAVE NEVER LEFT YOU THERE--SWITCHING PLACES WITH YOU. I HAVE GOTTEN YOU FIRED FROM NASA AND NOW THEY TELL ME YOU ARE TO BE **EVICTED**.
I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT THAT **MEANS**.
I **HATED** MY HOME WORLD--**MARS**. MYSELF AND THE OTHER REBELS HATED THE ENSLAVEMENT OF THE **SEQUIDS**. **THEY** TALKED ME INTO THIS... COMING HERE. I JUST DON'T KNOW IF IT WAS THE BEST IDEA.
SURE, THE **SEQUIDS** ARE PROBABLY FREE NOW--PROBABLY OVERTHROWING OUR CORRUPT MONARCH ONE... BUT I AM **HERE**.
ALONE.
WITH **NOTHING** TO DO AND NO ONE TO TALK TO.
WE NOW RETURN TO OUR RETROSPECTIVE LOOK AT OUR NATION'S SUPERHEROES. THEIR GREATEST MOMENTS AND GREATEST SHAMES.
FROM BOLT TO OMNI-MAN WE SHOW YOU THE **BEST** AND THE **WORST**.
NEXT UP IS **MARTIAN MAN**. HE FIRST APPEARED ON THE SCENE IN THE LATE SEVENTIES.
USING HIS AMAZING SHAPE-CHANGING ABILITIES, HE HAD A LONG, SUCCESSFUL CAREER IN CRIME FIGHTING BEFORE HE JOINED THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE.
SUPER-HEROES?


YOU CAN OPEN YOUR EYES, NOW. WE'RE LANDING.
JUST-- JUST TELL ME WHEN WE'RE ON THE GROUND.
HERE WE ARE... ON THE GROUND.
FINALLY. YOU FLEW **WAY** TOO FAST-- IT WAS **TERRIFYING.**
SORRY, THAT WAS LIKE ***HALF-SPEED*** FOR ME. ANYTHING LESS AND IT WOULD HAVE TAKEN ***HOURS*** TO GET HERE.
THIS IS TOTALLY COOL, EVE. THANKS FOR INVITING US.
YEAH, THIS IS GOING TO BE ***AWESOME.*** THANKS, EVE.
IS THAT A ***GIRAFFE?!***
YEAH--I ***PAID*** THEM TO STICK NEAR THE HOUSE SO I COULD ***IMPRESS*** YOU WHEN YOU ARRIVED.

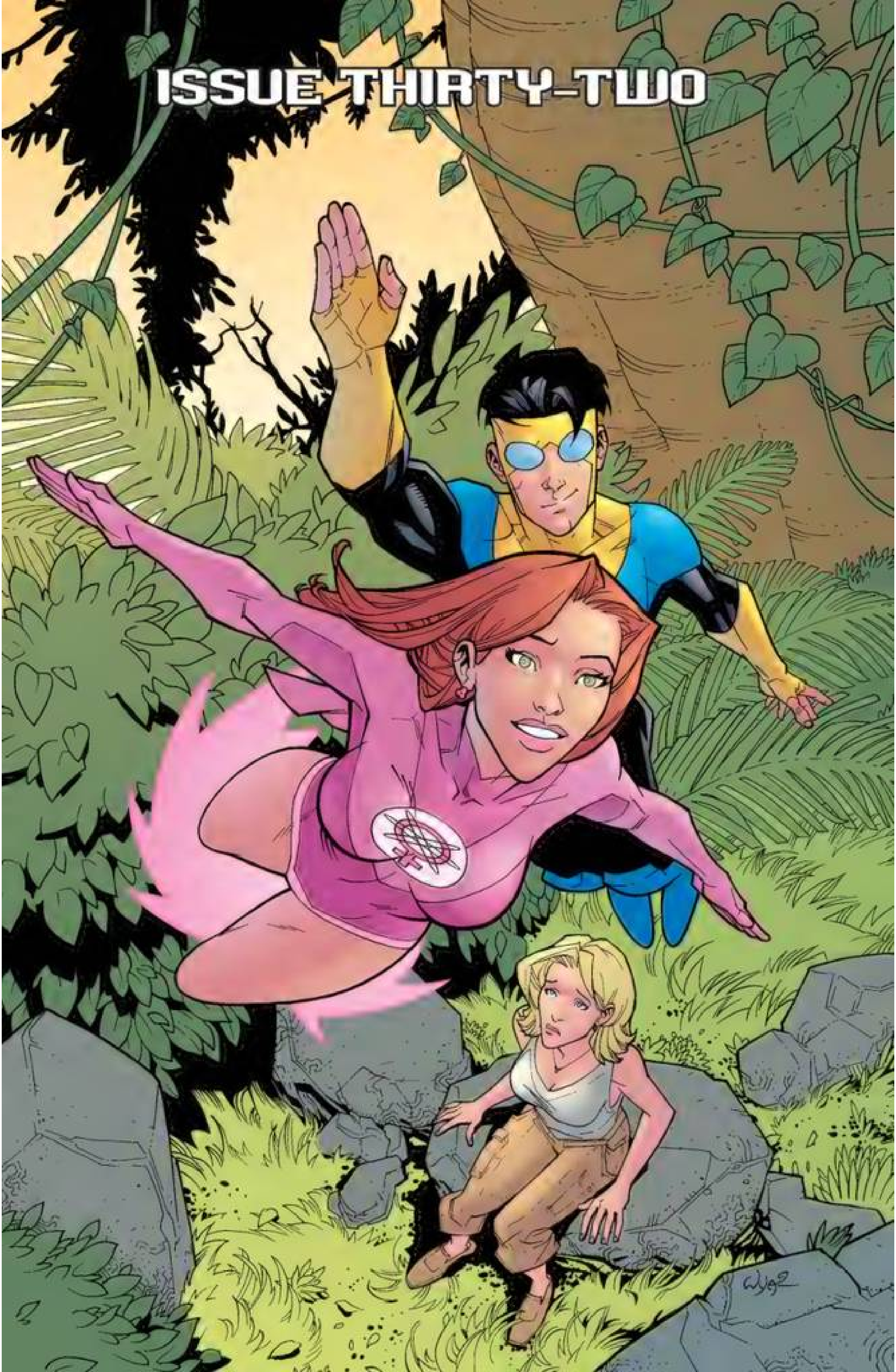

THERE YOU GUYS ARE! WELCOME TO AFRICA! MAKE YOURSELF COMFORTABLE.
COOL HOUSE, TOO. DID YOU... UH... BUY IT?
YOU KIDDING? I COULDN'T AFFORD THIS PLACE! I MADE IT. I'VE BEEN PRACTICING. I CAN DO ALL SORTS OF THINGS WITH MY POWERS NOW.
YOU MADE THIS? I'VE GOT TO SEE THE INSIDE!
GO RIGHT IN. I'LL GIVE YOU THE GRAND TOUR.

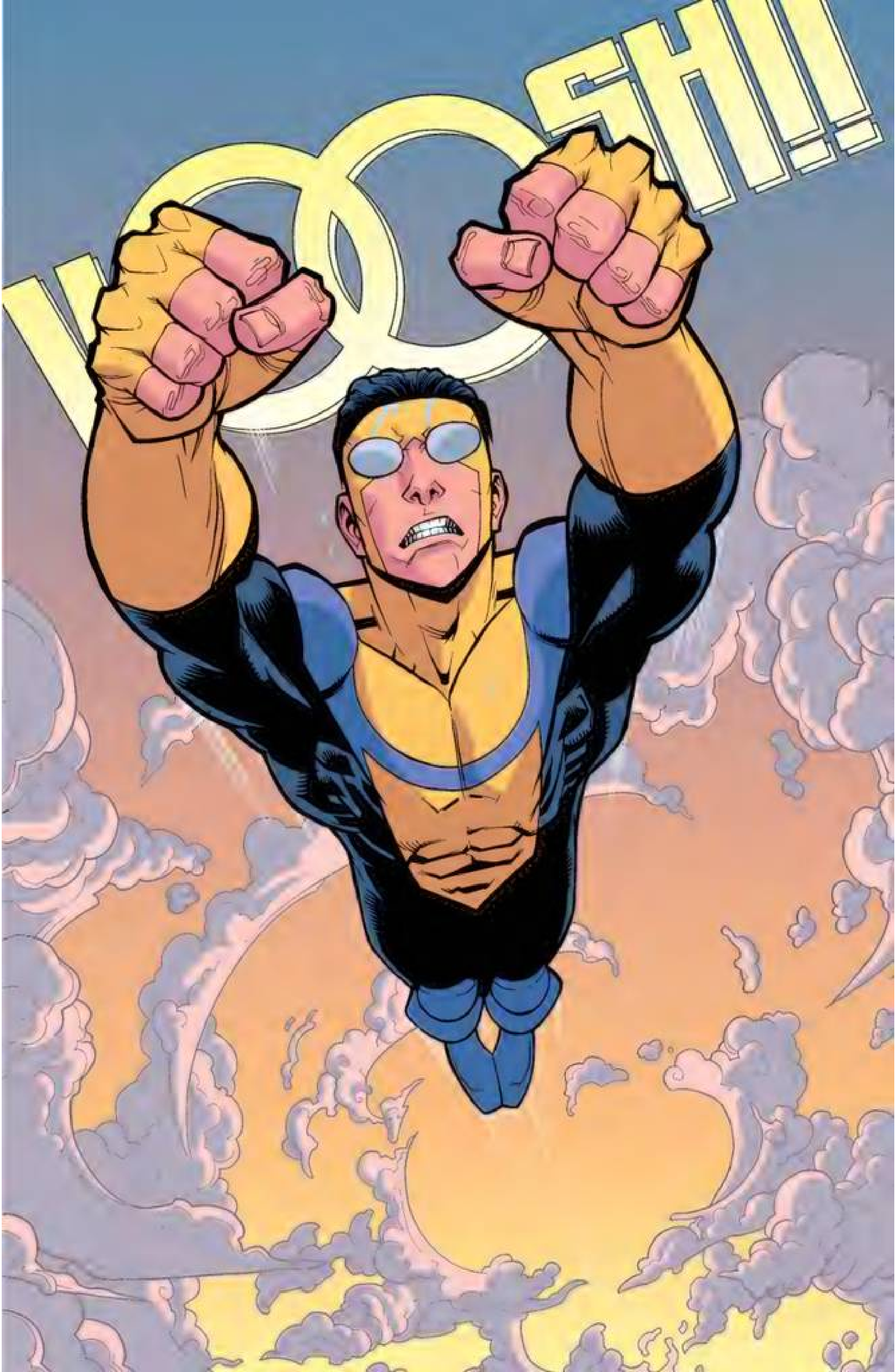

THANKS FOR BRINGING ME, MARK--THIS IS GOING TO BE SOOO GREAT. I'M SO EXCITED.
I LOVE YOU.
I LOVE YOU TOO, AMBER.

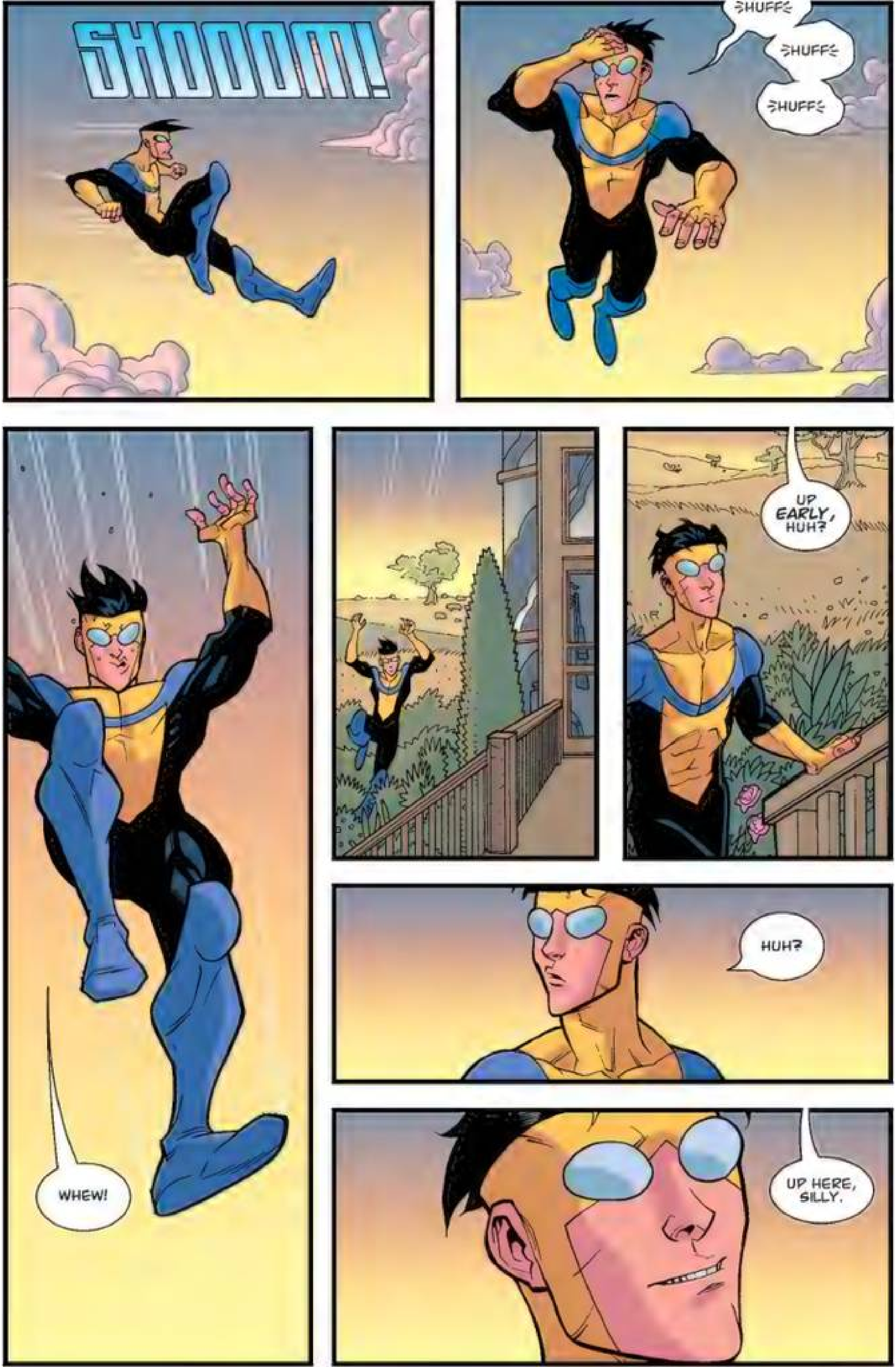

THIS IS GOING TO BE FUN.

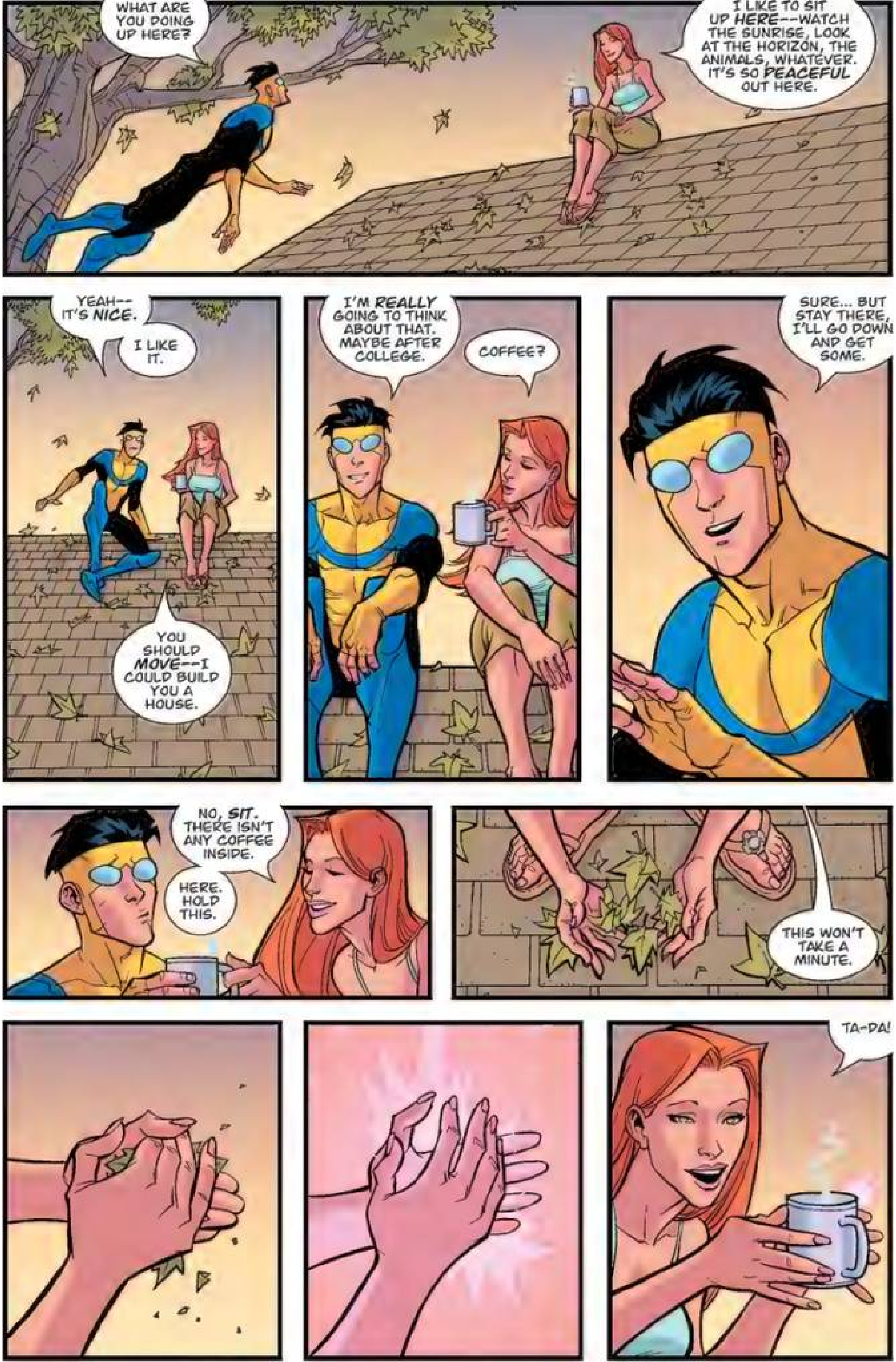


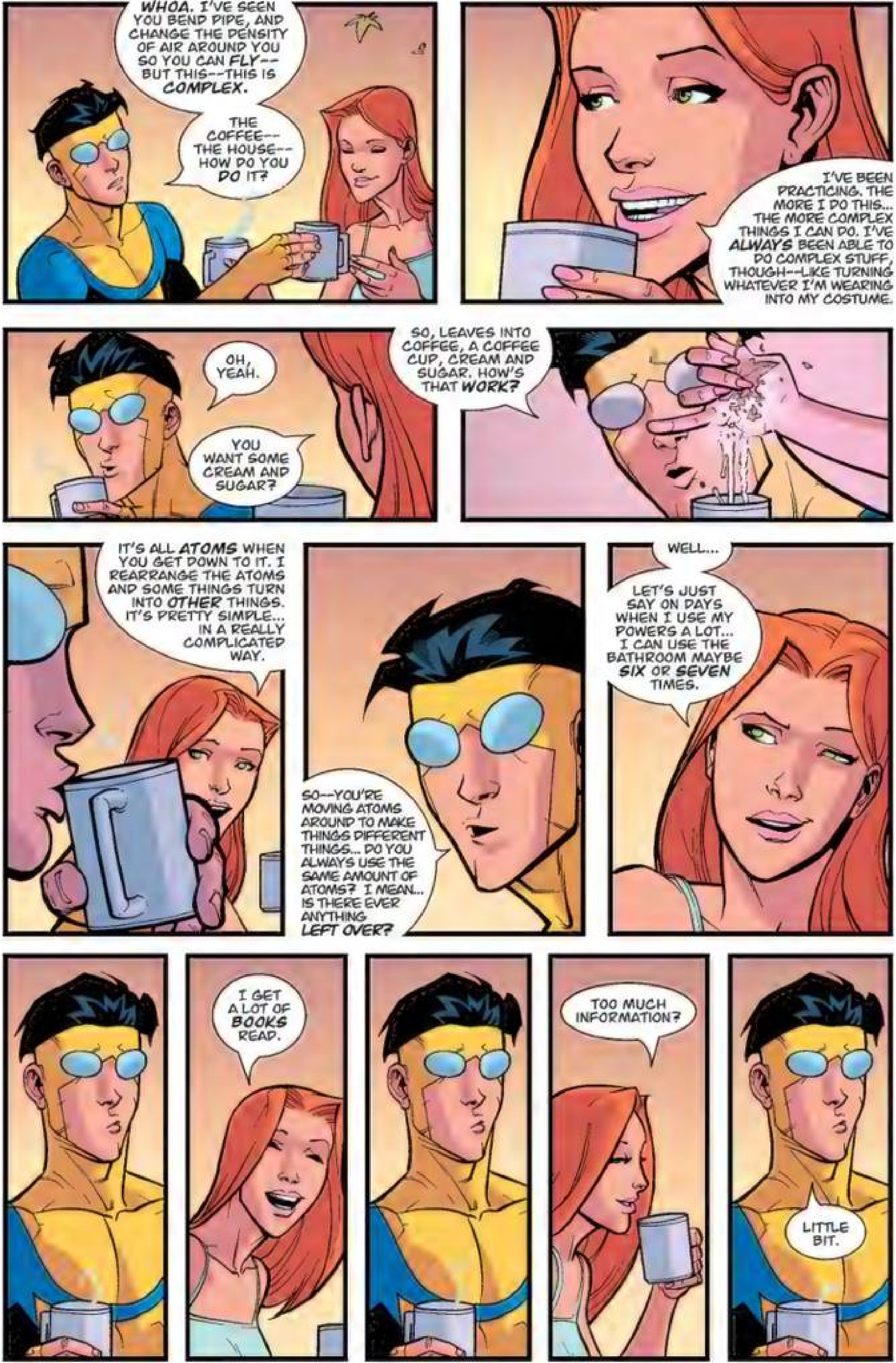
ISSUE THIRTY-TWO

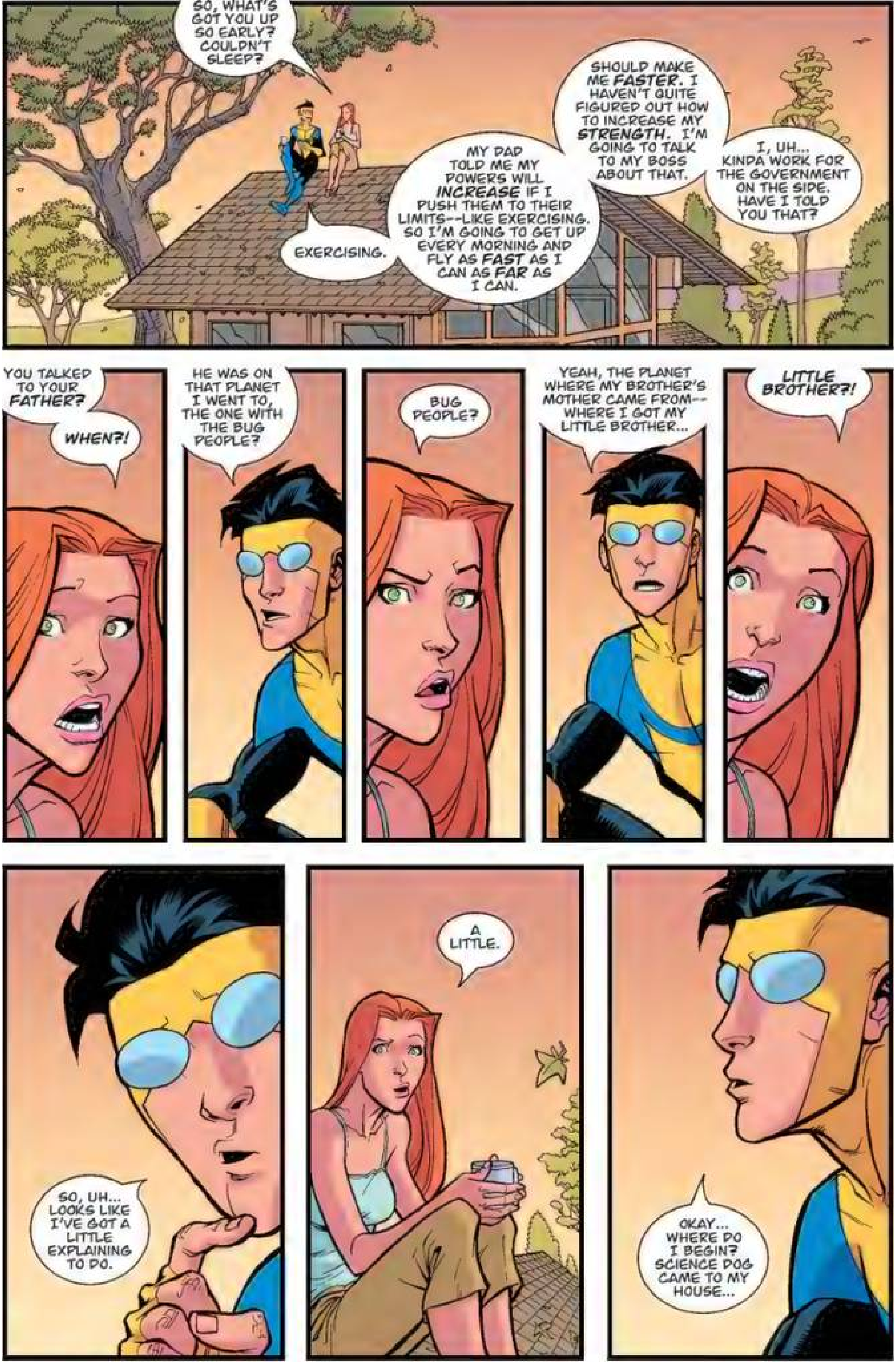


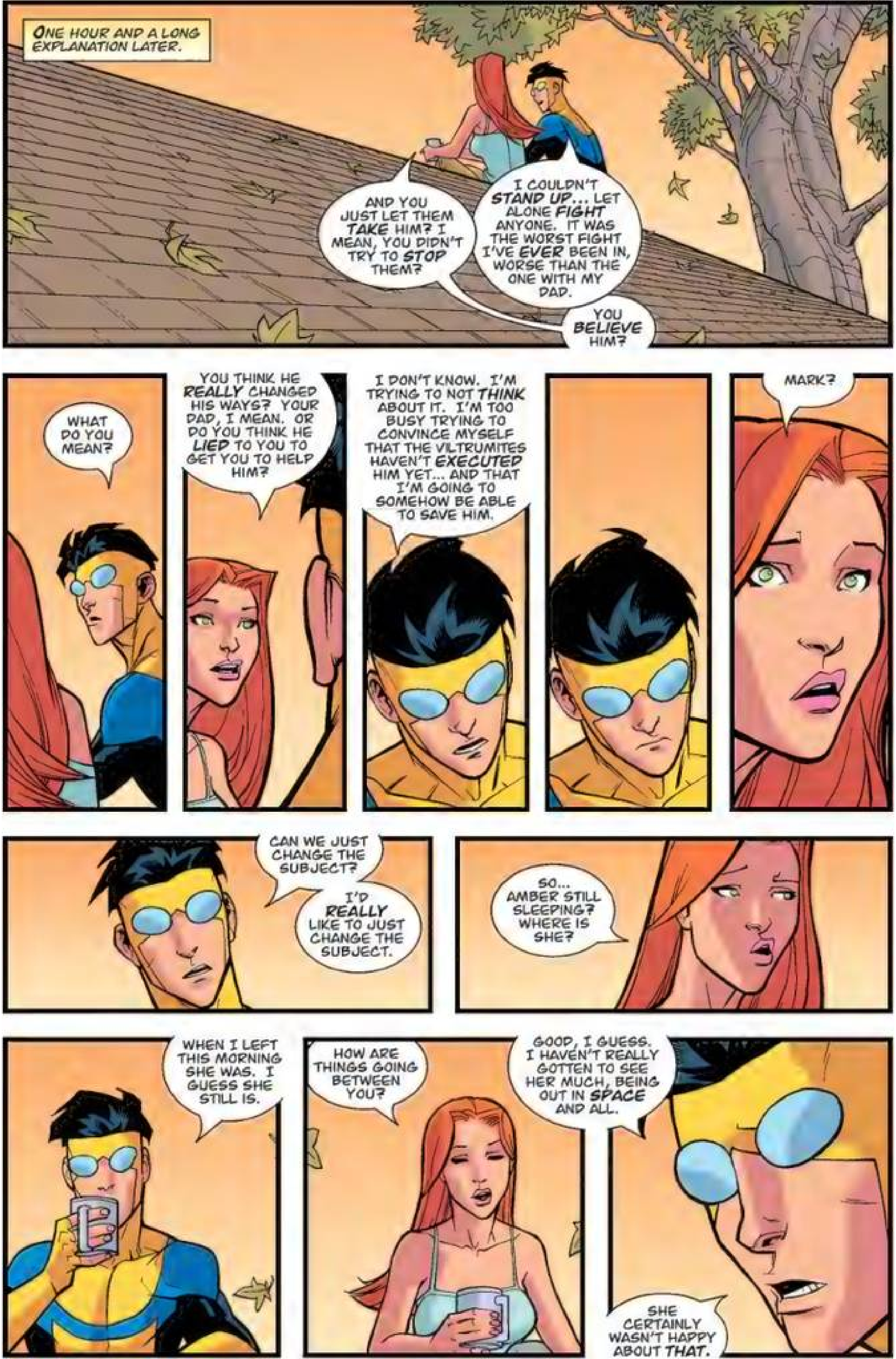

WOOSH!!

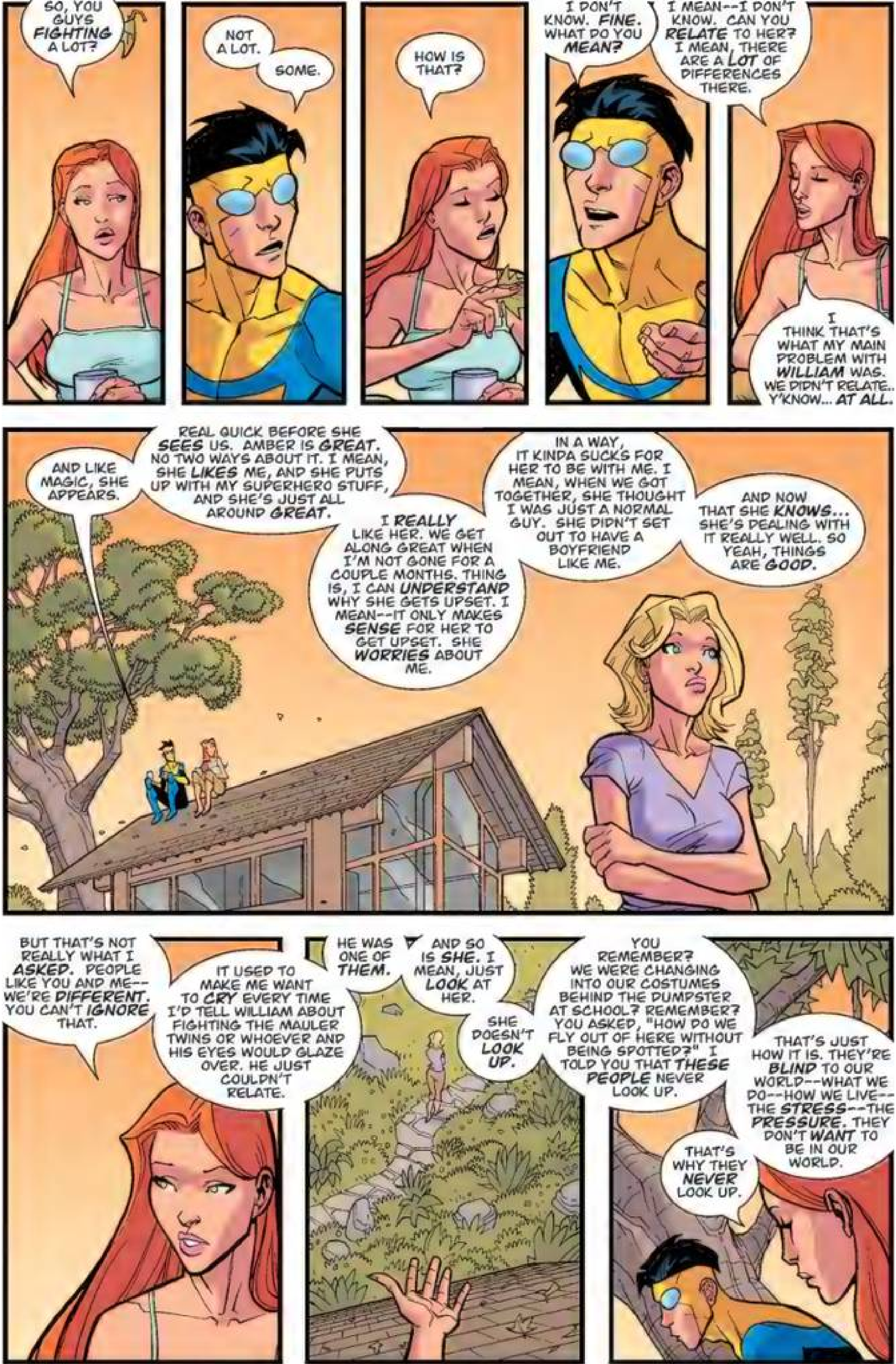

SHOOOM!
HUFF
HUFF
HUFF
WHEW!
UP EARLY, HUH?
HUH?
UP HERE, SILLY.

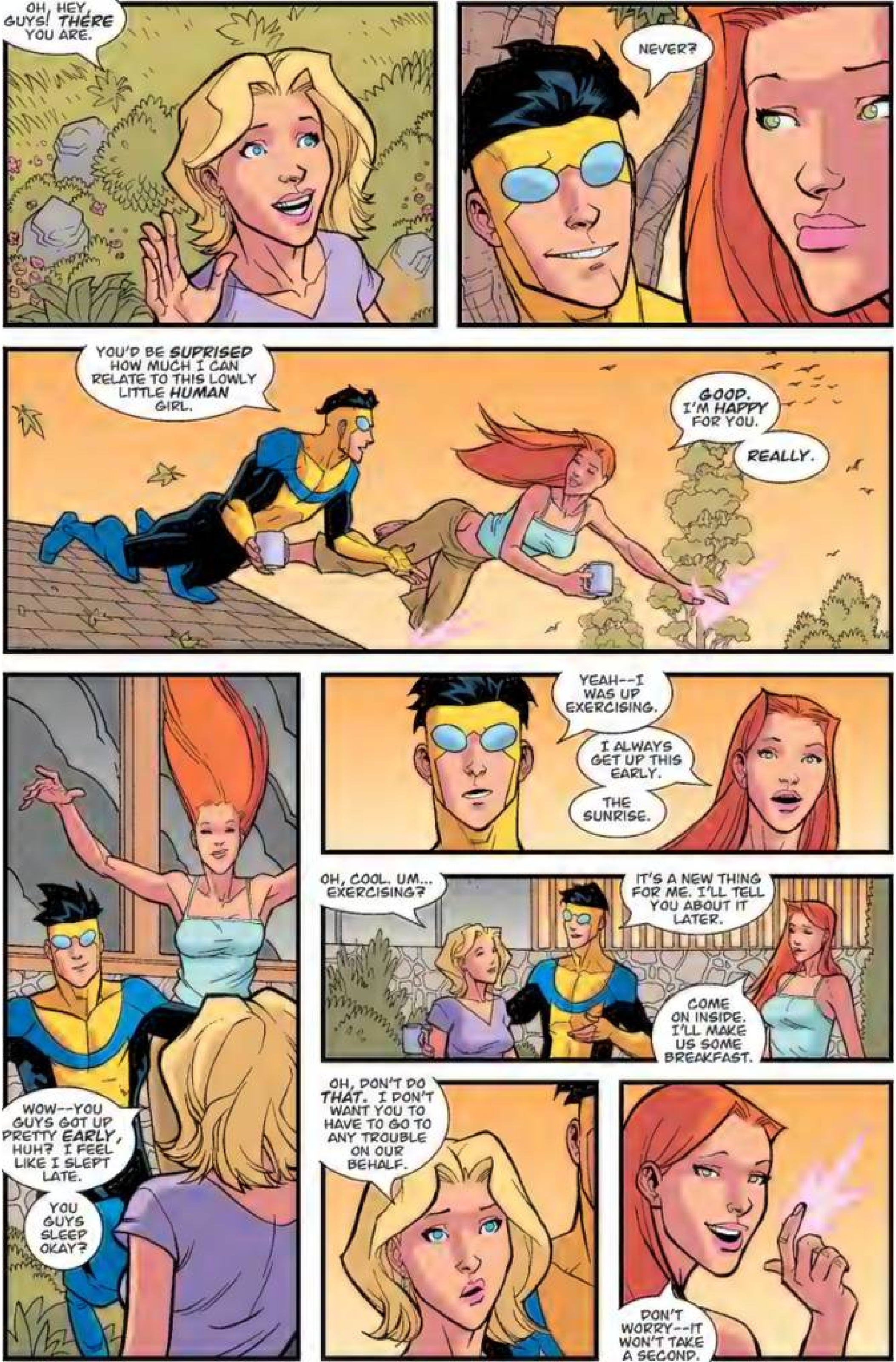

WHAT ARE YOU DOING UP HERE?
I LIKE TO SIT UP HERE--WATCH THE SUNRISE, LOOK AT THE HORIZON, THE ANIMALS, WHATEVER. IT'S SO PEACEFUL OUT HERE.
YEAH-- IT'S NICE.
I LIKE IT.
YOU SHOULD MOVE--I COULD BUILD YOU A HOUSE.
I'M REALLY GOING TO THINK ABOUT THAT. MAYBE AFTER COLLEGE.
COFFEE?
SURE... BUT STAY THERE, I'LL GO DOWN AND GET SOME.
NO, SIT. THERE ISN'T ANY COFFEE INSIDE.
HERE. HOLD THIS.
THIS WON'T TAKE A MINUTE.
TA-DA!

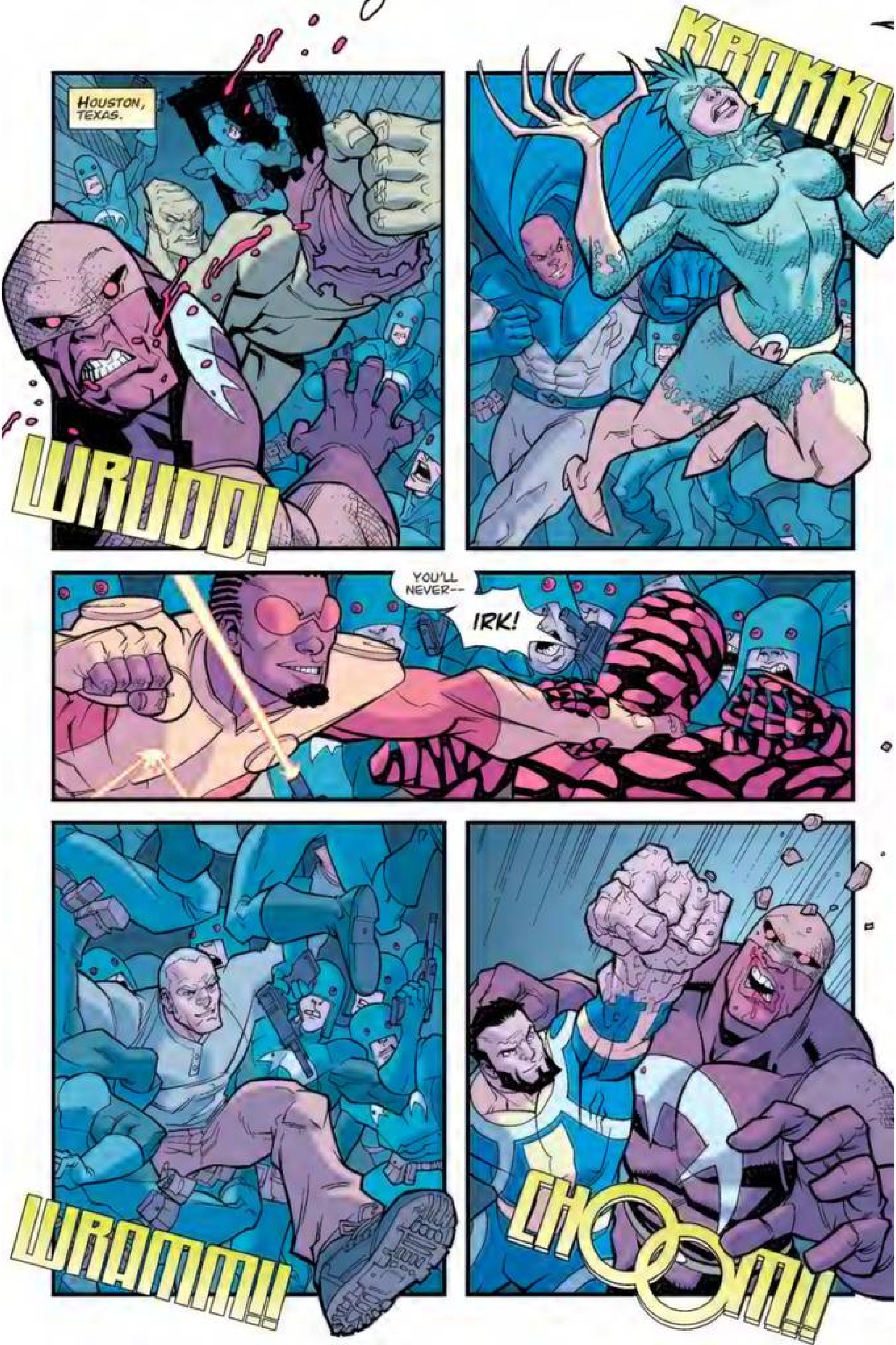

WHOA. I'VE SEEN YOU BEND PIPE, AND CHANGE THE DENSITY OF AIR AROUND YOU SO YOU CAN FLY-- BUT THIS--THIS IS COMPLEX.
THE COFFEE-- THE HOUSE-- HOW DO YOU DO IT?
I'VE BEEN PRACTICING. THE MORE I DO THIS... THE MORE COMPLEX THINGS I CAN DO. I'VE ALWAYS BEEN ABLE TO DO COMPLEX STUFF, THOUGH--LIKE TURNING WHATEVER I'M WEARING INTO MY COSTUME.
OH, YEAH.
YOU WANT SOME CREAM AND SUGAR?
SO, LEAVES INTO COFFEE, A COFFEE CUP, CREAM AND SUGAR. HOW'S THAT WORK?
IT'S ALL ATOMS WHEN YOU GET DOWN TO IT. I REARRANGE THE ATOMS AND SOME THINGS TURN INTO OTHER THINGS. IT'S PRETTY SIMPLE... IN A REALLY COMPLICATED WAY.
SO--YOU'RE MOVING ATOMS AROUND TO MAKE THINGS DIFFERENT THINGS... DO YOU ALWAYS USE THE SAME AMOUNT OF ATOMS? I MEAN... IS THERE EVER ANYTHING LEFT OVER?
WELL...
LET'S JUST SAY ON DAYS WHEN I USE MY POWERS A LOT... I CAN USE THE BATHROOM MAYBE SIX OR SEVEN TIMES.
I GET A LOT OF BOOKS READ.
TOO MUCH INFORMATION?
LITTLE BIT.

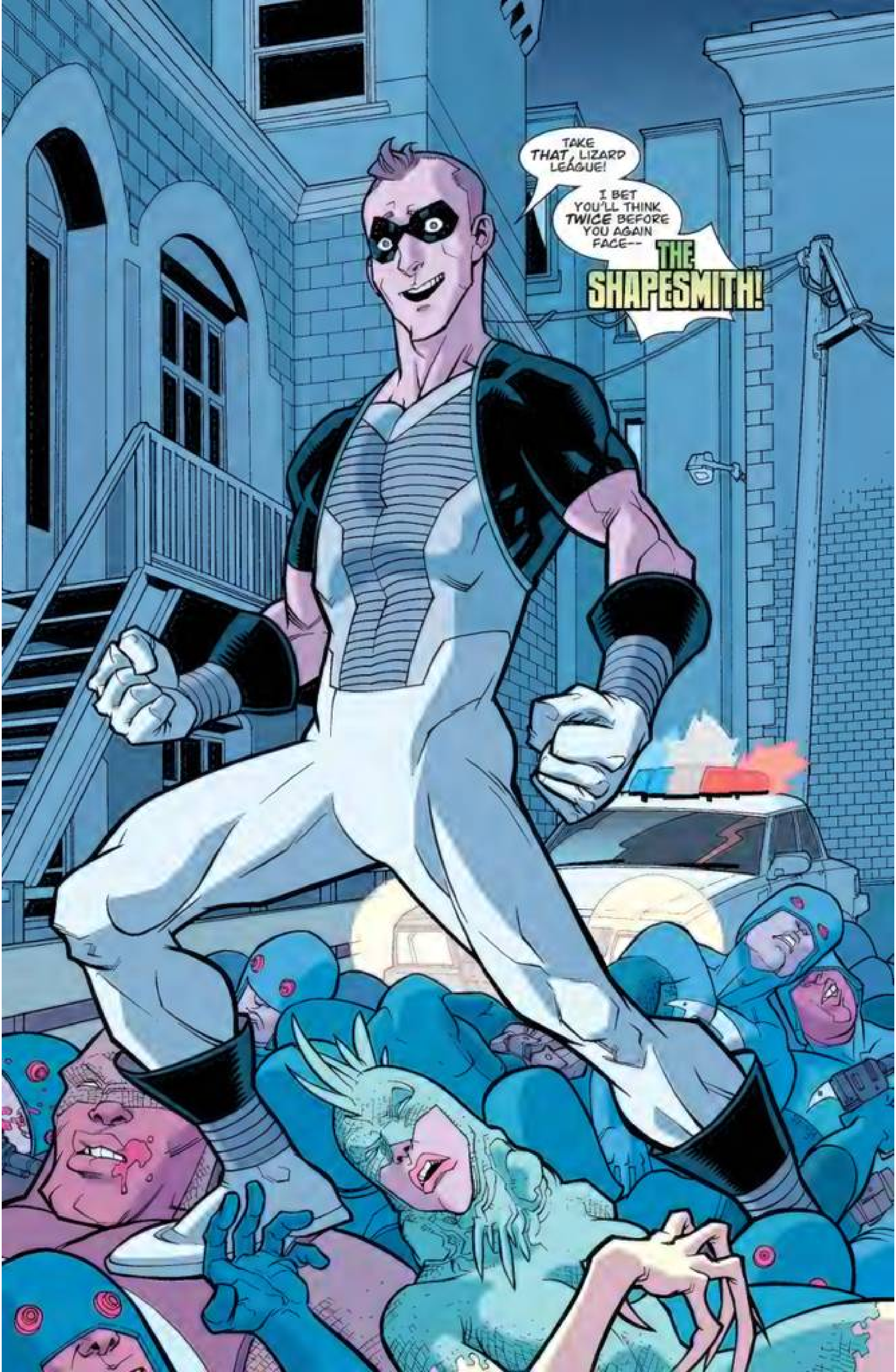

SO, WHAT'S GOT YOU UP SO EARLY? COULDN'T SLEEP?
EXERCISING.
MY DAD TOLD ME MY POWERS WILL **INCREASE** IF I PUSH THEM TO THEIR LIMITS--LIKE EXERCISING. SO I'M GOING TO GET UP EVERY MORNING AND FLY AS **FAST** AS I CAN AS **FAR** AS I CAN.
SHOULD MAKE ME **FASTER.** I HAVEN'T QUITE FIGURED OUT HOW TO INCREASE MY **STRENGTH.** I'M GOING TO TALK TO MY BOSS ABOUT THAT.
I, UH... KINDA WORK FOR THE GOVERNMENT ON THE SIDE. HAVE I TOLD YOU THAT?
YOU TALKED TO YOUR **FATHER?**
WHEN?!
HE WAS ON THAT PLANET I WENT TO, THE ONE WITH THE BUG PEOPLE?
BUG PEOPLE?
YEAH, THE PLANET WHERE MY BROTHER'S MOTHER CAME FROM-- WHERE I GOT MY LITTLE BROTHER...
LITTLE BROTHER?!
SO, UH... LOOKS LIKE I'VE GOT A LITTLE EXPLAINING TO DO.
A LITTLE.
OKAY... WHERE DO I BEGIN? SCIENCE DOG CAME TO MY HOUSE...

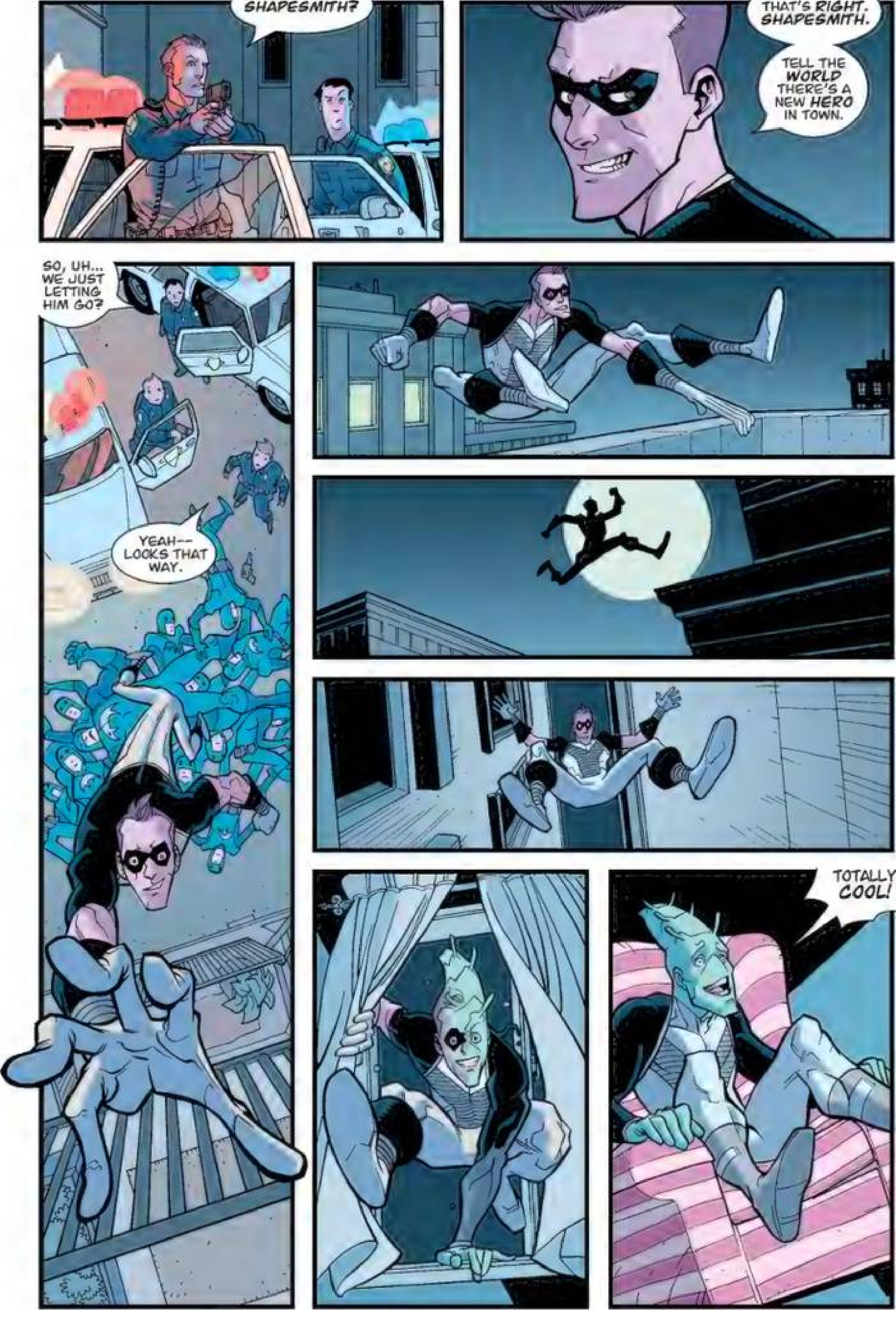

ONE HOUR AND A LONG EXPLANATION LATER.
AND YOU JUST LET THEM TAKE HIM? I MEAN, YOU DIDN'T TRY TO STOP THEM?
I COULDN'T STAND UP... LET ALONE FIGHT ANYONE. IT WAS THE WORST FIGHT I'VE EVER BEEN IN, WORSE THAN THE ONE WITH MY DAD.
YOU BELIEVE HIM?
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
YOU THINK HE REALLY CHANGED HIS WAYS? YOUR DAD, I MEAN. OR DO YOU THINK HE LIED TO YOU TO GET YOU TO HELP HIM?
I DON'T KNOW. I'M TRYING TO NOT THINK ABOUT IT. I'M TOO BUSY TRYING TO CONVINCE MYSELF THAT THE VILTRUMITES HAVEN'T EXECUTED HIM YET... AND THAT I'M GOING TO SOMEHOW BE ABLE TO SAVE HIM.
MARK?
CAN WE JUST CHANGE THE SUBJECT?
I'D REALLY LIKE TO JUST CHANGE THE SUBJECT.
SO... AMBER STILL SLEEPING? WHERE IS SHE?
WHEN I LEFT THIS MORNING SHE WAS. I GUESS SHE STILL IS.
HOW ARE THINGS GOING BETWEEN YOU?
GOOD, I GUESS. I HAVEN'T REALLY GOTTEN TO SEE HER MUCH, BEING OUT IN SPACE AND ALL.
SHE CERTAINLY WASN'T HAPPY ABOUT THAT.

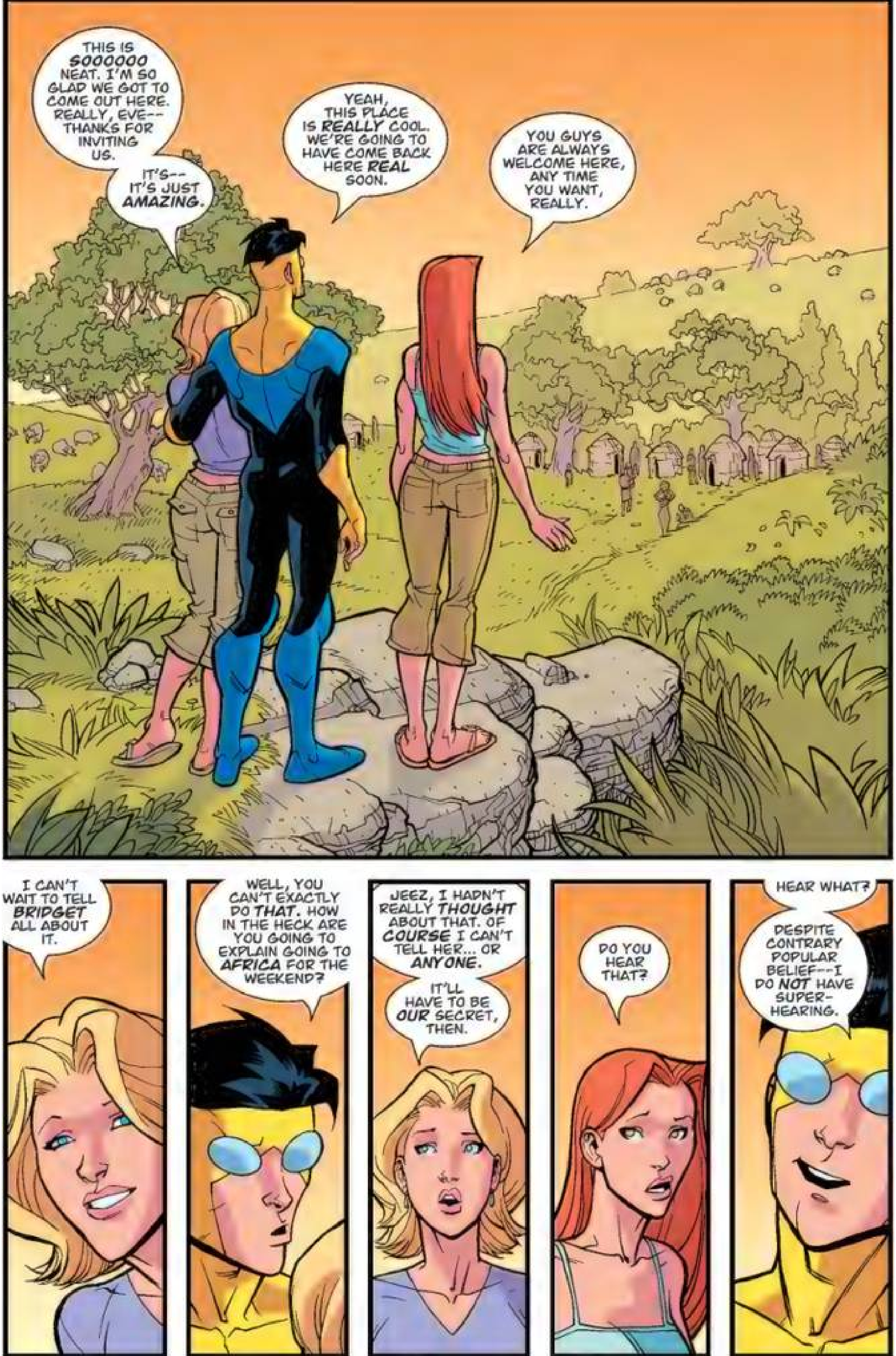

SO, YOU GUYS FIGHTING A LOT?
NOT A LOT.
SOME.
HOW IS THAT?
I DON'T KNOW. FINE. WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
I MEAN--I DON'T KNOW. CAN YOU RELATE TO HER? I MEAN, THERE ARE A LOT OF DIFFERENCES THERE.
I THINK THAT'S WHAT MY MAIN PROBLEM WITH WILLIAM WAS. WE DIDN'T RELATE.. Y'KNOW... AT ALL.
AND LIKE MAGIC, SHE APPEARS.
REAL QUICK BEFORE SHE SEES US. AMBER IS GREAT. NO TWO WAYS ABOUT IT. I MEAN, SHE LIKES ME, AND SHE PUTS UP WITH MY SUPERHERO STUFF, AND SHE'S JUST ALL AROUND GREAT.
I REALLY LIKE HER. WE GET ALONG GREAT WHEN I'M NOT GONE FOR A COUPLE MONTHS. THING IS, I CAN UNDERSTAND WHY SHE GETS UPSET. I MEAN--IT ONLY MAKES SENSE FOR HER TO GET UPSET. SHE WORRIES ABOUT ME.
IN A WAY, IT KINDA SUCKS FOR HER TO BE WITH ME. I MEAN, WHEN WE GOT TOGETHER, SHE THOUGHT I WAS JUST A NORMAL GUY. SHE DIDN'T SET OUT TO HAVE A BOYFRIEND LIKE ME.
AND NOW THAT SHE KNOWS... SHE'S DEALING WITH IT REALLY WELL. SO YEAH, THINGS ARE GOOD.
BUT THAT'S NOT REALLY WHAT I ASKED. PEOPLE LIKE YOU AND ME--WE'RE DIFFERENT. YOU CAN'T IGNORE THAT.
IT USED TO MAKE ME WANT TO CRY EVERY TIME I'D TELL WILLIAM ABOUT FIGHTING THE MAULER TWINS OR WHOEVER AND HIS EYES WOULD GLAZE OVER. HE JUST COULDN'T RELATE.
HE WAS ONE OF THEM.
AND SO IS SHE. I MEAN, JUST LOOK AT HER.
SHE DOESN'T LOOK UP.
YOU REMEMBER? WE WERE CHANGING INTO OUR COSTUMES BEHIND THE DUMPSTER AT SCHOOL? REMEMBER? YOU ASKED, "HOW DO WE FLY OUT OF HERE WITHOUT BEING SPOTTED?" I TOLD YOU THAT THESE PEOPLE NEVER LOOK UP.
THAT'S JUST HOW IT IS. THEY'RE BLIND TO OUR WORLD--WHAT WE DO--HOW WE LIVE--THE STRESS--THE PRESSURE. THEY DON'T WANT TO BE IN OUR WORLD.
THAT'S WHY THEY NEVER LOOK UP.

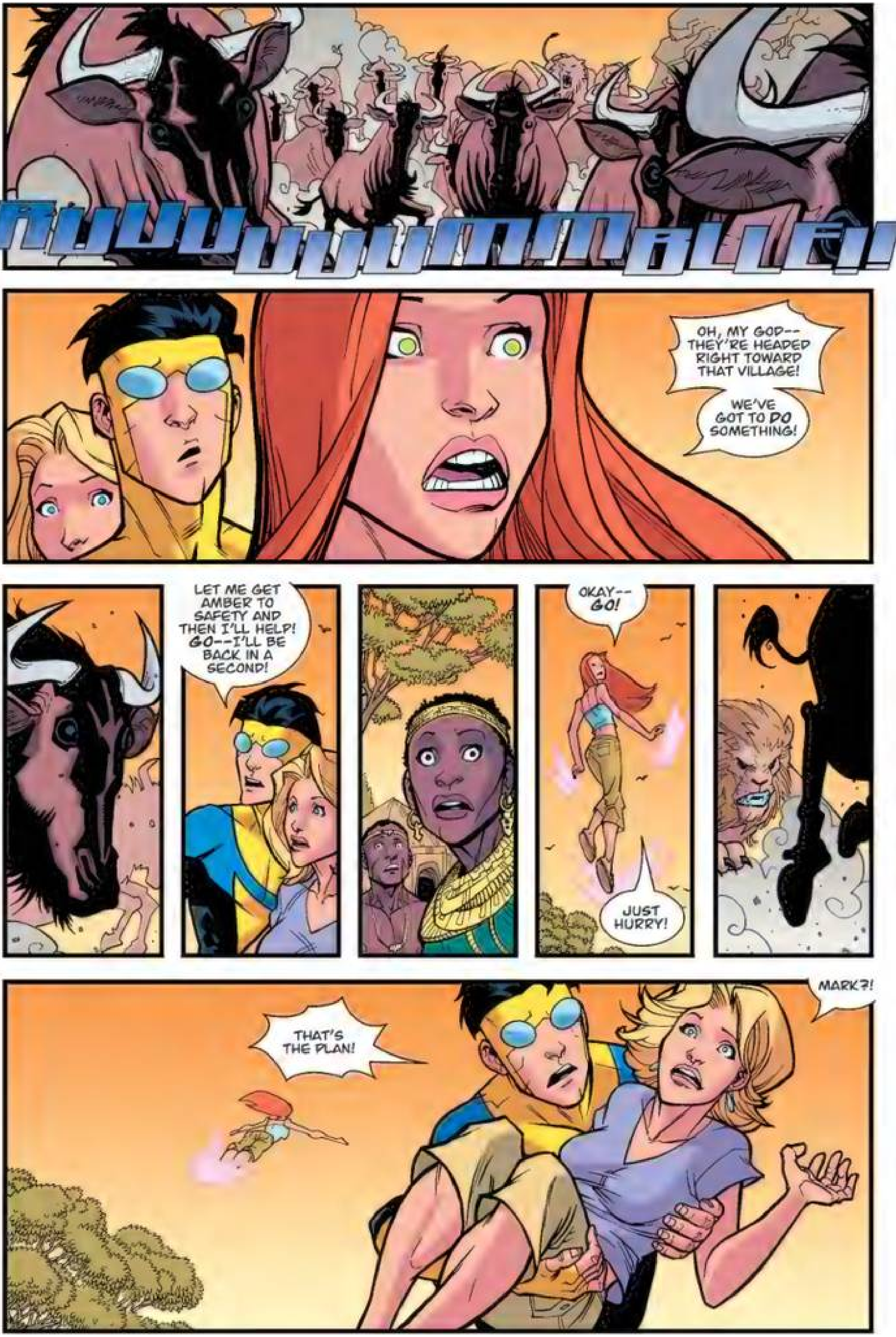

OH, HEY, GUYS! THERE YOU ARE.
NEVER?
YOU'D BE SUPRISED HOW MUCH I CAN RELATE TO THIS LOWLY LITTLE HUMAN GIRL.
GOOD. I'M HAPPY FOR YOU.
REALLY.
WOW--YOU GUYS GOT UP PRETTY EARLY, HUH? I FEEL LIKE I SLEPT LATE.
YOU GUYS SLEEP OKAY?
YEAH--I WAS UP EXERCISING.
I ALWAYS GET UP THIS EARLY.
THE SUNRISE.
OH, COOL. UM... EXERCISING?
IT'S A NEW THING FOR ME. I'LL TELL YOU ABOUT IT LATER.
COME ON INSIDE. I'LL MAKE US SOME BREAKFAST.
OH, DON'T DO THAT. I DON'T WANT YOU TO HAVE TO GO TO ANY TROUBLE ON OUR BEHALF.
DON'T WORRY--IT WON'T TAKE A SECOND.

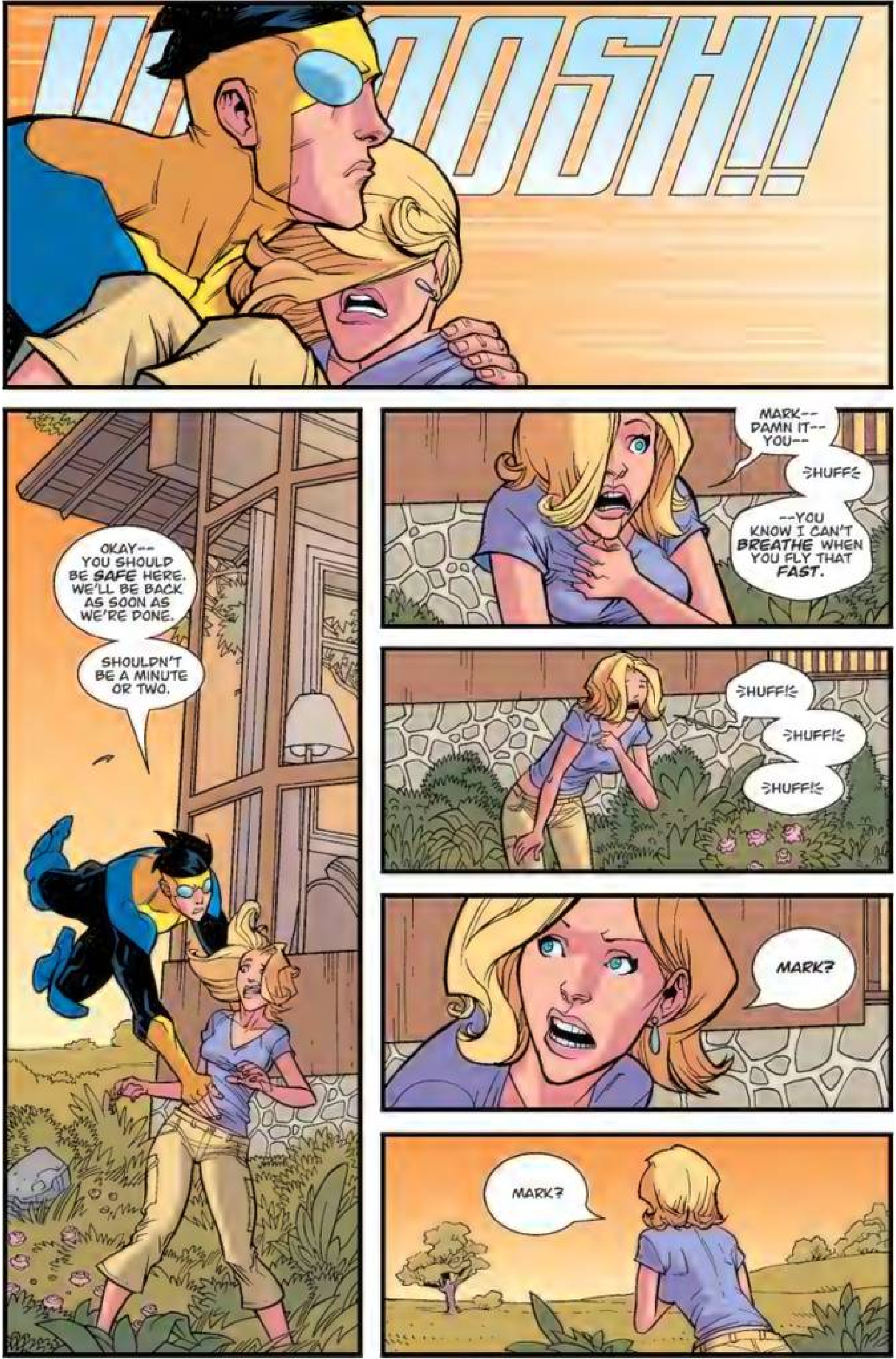

HOUSTON, TEXAS.
WRUDD!
KROKK!!
YOU'LL NEVER--
IRK!
WRAMM!!
CHOOM!!

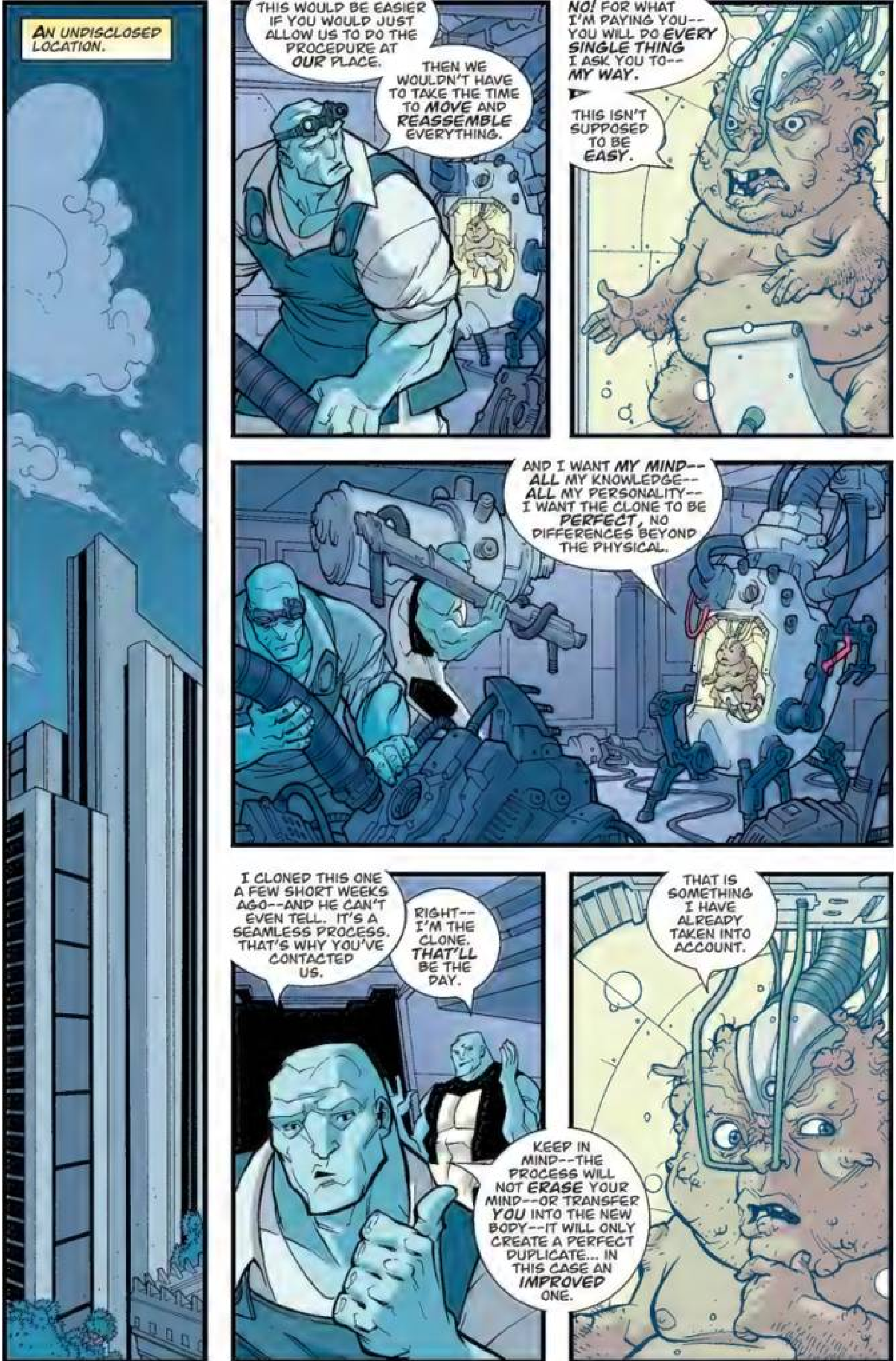

TAKE THAT, LIZARD LEAGUE!
I BET YOU'LL THINK TWICE BEFORE YOU AGAIN FACE--
THE SHAPESMITH!

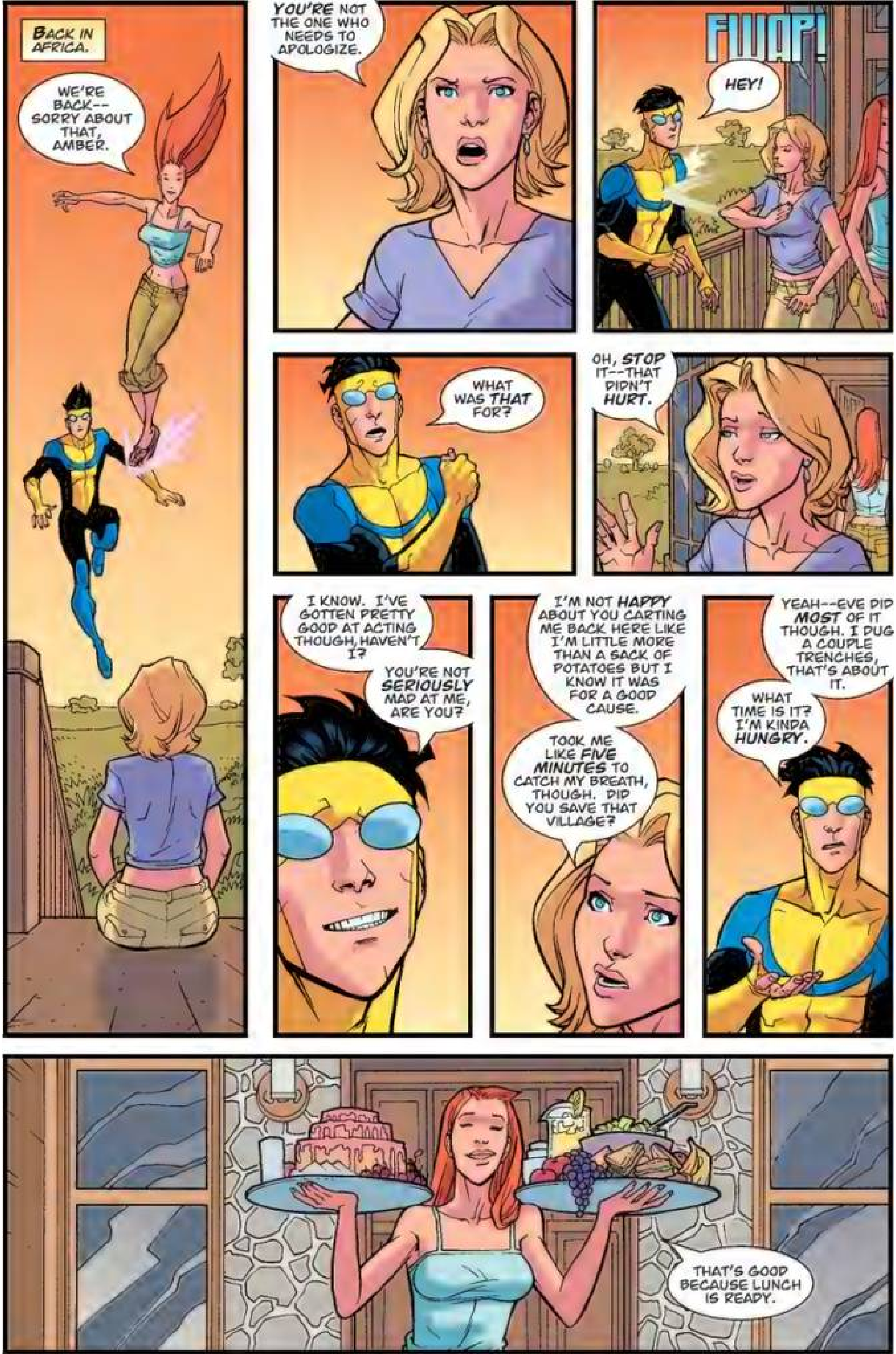

SHAPESMITH?
THAT'S RIGHT. SHAPESMITH.
TELL THE WORLD THERE'S A NEW HERO IN TOWN.
SO, UH... WE JUST LETTING HIM GO?
YEAH-- LOOKS THAT WAY.
TOTALLY COOL!

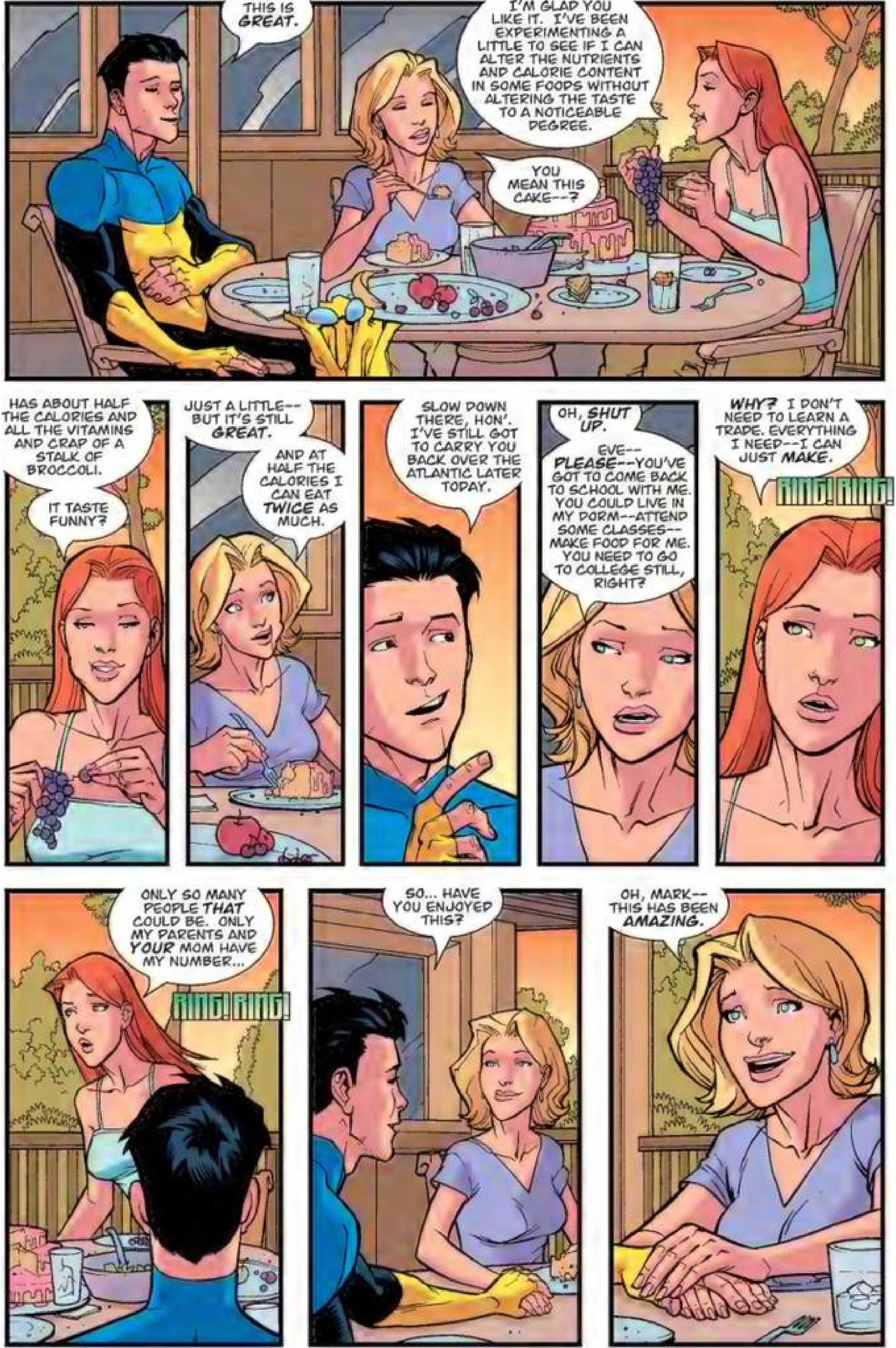

THIS IS SOOOOOO NEAT. I'M SO GLAD WE GOT TO COME OUT HERE. REALLY, EVE-- THANKS FOR INVITING US.
IT'S-- IT'S JUST AMAZING.
YEAH, THIS PLACE IS REALLY COOL. WE'RE GOING TO HAVE COME BACK HERE REAL SOON.
YOU GUYS ARE ALWAYS WELCOME HERE, ANY TIME YOU WANT, REALLY.
I CAN'T WAIT TO TELL BRIDGET ALL ABOUT IT.
WELL, YOU CAN'T EXACTLY DO THAT. HOW IN THE HECK ARE YOU GOING TO EXPLAIN GOING TO AFRICA FOR THE WEEKEND?
JEEZ, I HADN'T REALLY THOUGHT ABOUT THAT. OF COURSE I CAN'T TELL HER... OR ANYONE.
IT'LL HAVE TO BE OUR SECRET, THEN.
DO YOU HEAR THAT?
HEAR WHAT?
DESPITE CONTRARY POPULAR BELIEF--I DO NOT HAVE SUPER-HEARING.

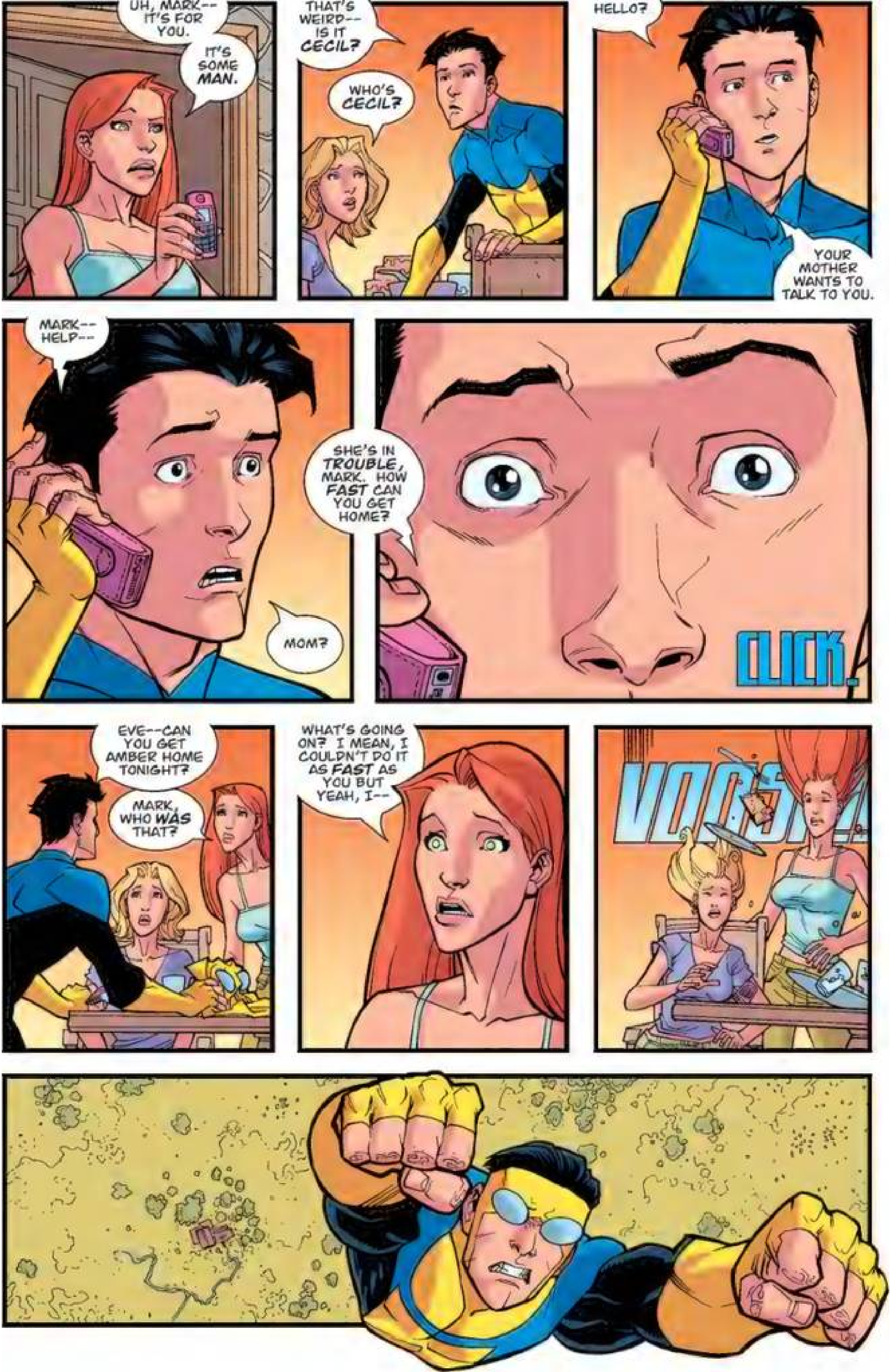

RUUUUUUUMMMBLLLE!!
OH, MY GOD-- THEY'RE HEADED RIGHT TOWARD THAT VILLAGE!
WE'VE GOT TO DO SOMETHING!
LET ME GET AMBER TO SAFETY AND THEN I'LL HELP! GO--I'LL BE BACK IN A SECOND!
OKAY-- GO!
JUST HURRY!
THAT'S THE PLAN!
MARK?!

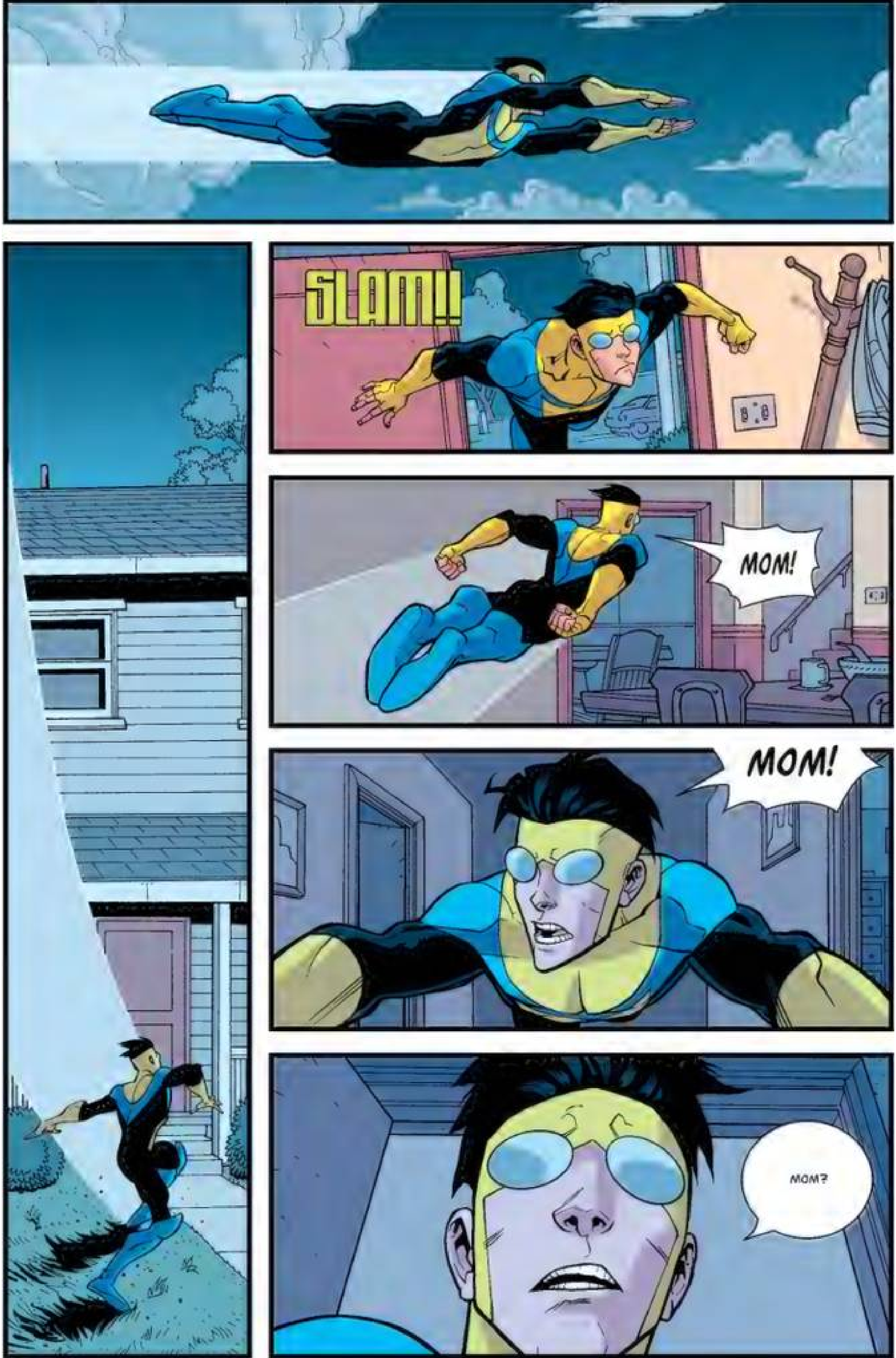

WHOOSH!!
OKAY-- YOU SHOULD BE SAFE HERE. WE'LL BE BACK AS SOON AS WE'RE DONE.
SHOULDN'T BE A MINUTE OR TWO.
MARK-- DAMN IT-- YOU--
HUFF
--YOU KNOW I CAN'T BREATHE WHEN YOU FLY THAT FAST.
HUFF!
HUFF!
HUFF!
MARK?
MARK?

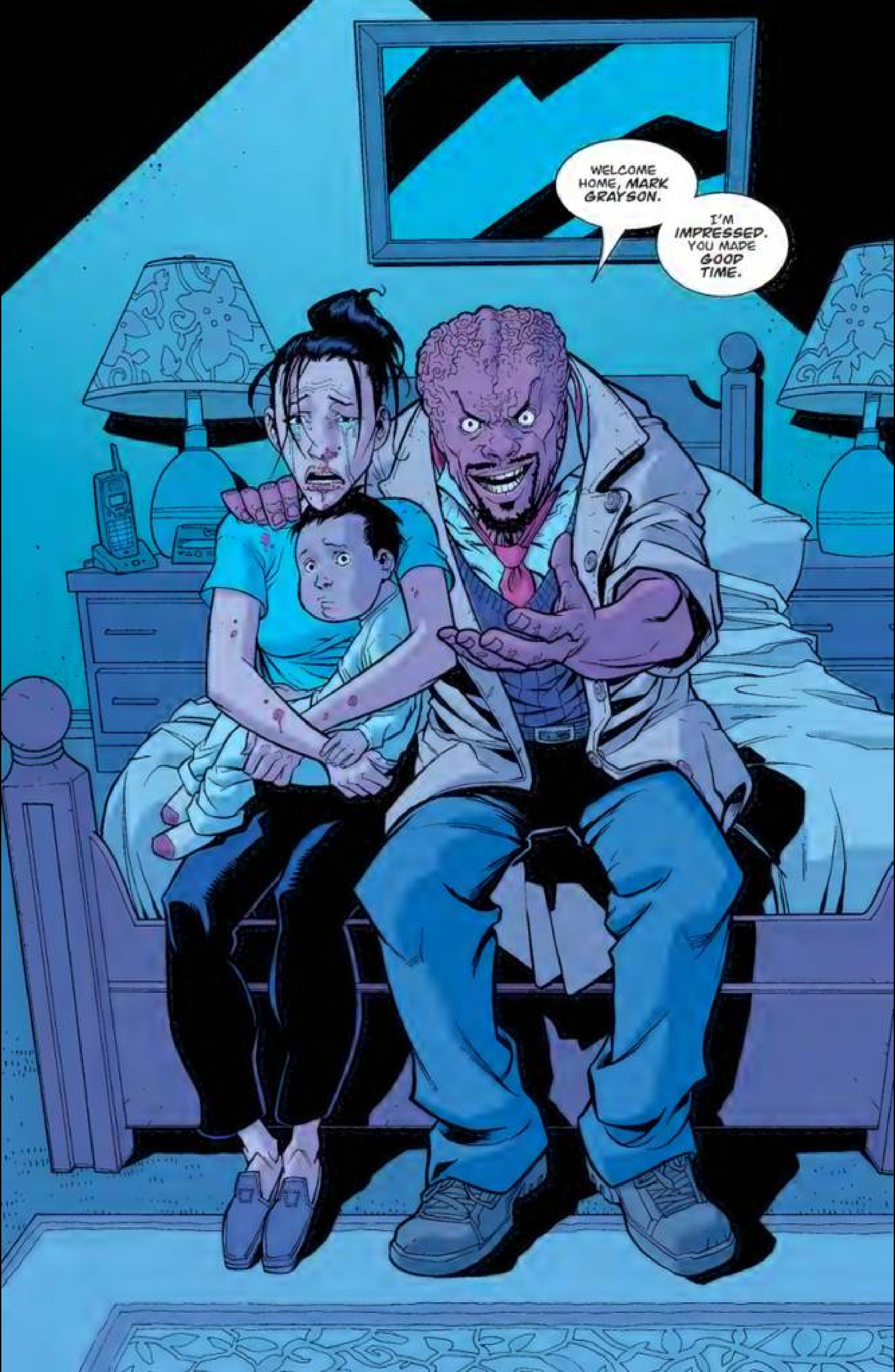

AN UNDISCLOSED LOCATION.
THIS WOULD BE EASIER IF YOU WOULD JUST ALLOW US TO DO THE PROCEDURE AT OUR PLACE.
THEN WE WOULDN'T HAVE TO TAKE THE TIME TO MOVE AND REASSEMBLE EVERYTHING.
NO! FOR WHAT I'M PAYING YOU-- YOU WILL DO EVERY SINGLE THING I ASK YOU TO-- MY WAY.
THIS ISN'T SUPPOSED TO BE EASY.
AND I WANT MY MIND-- ALL MY KNOWLEDGE-- ALL MY PERSONALITY-- I WANT THE CLONE TO BE PERFECT, NO DIFFERENCES BEYOND THE PHYSICAL.
I CLONED THIS ONE A FEW SHORT WEEKS AGO--AND HE CAN'T EVEN TELL. IT'S A SEAMLESS PROCESS. THAT'S WHY YOU'VE CONTACTED US.
RIGHT-- I'M THE CLONE. THAT'LL BE THE DAY.
THAT IS SOMETHING I HAVE ALREADY TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT.
KEEP IN MIND--THE PROCESS WILL NOT ERASE YOUR MIND--OR TRANSFER YOU INTO THE NEW BODY--IT WILL ONLY CREATE A PERFECT DUPLICATE... IN THIS CASE AN IMPROVED ONE.

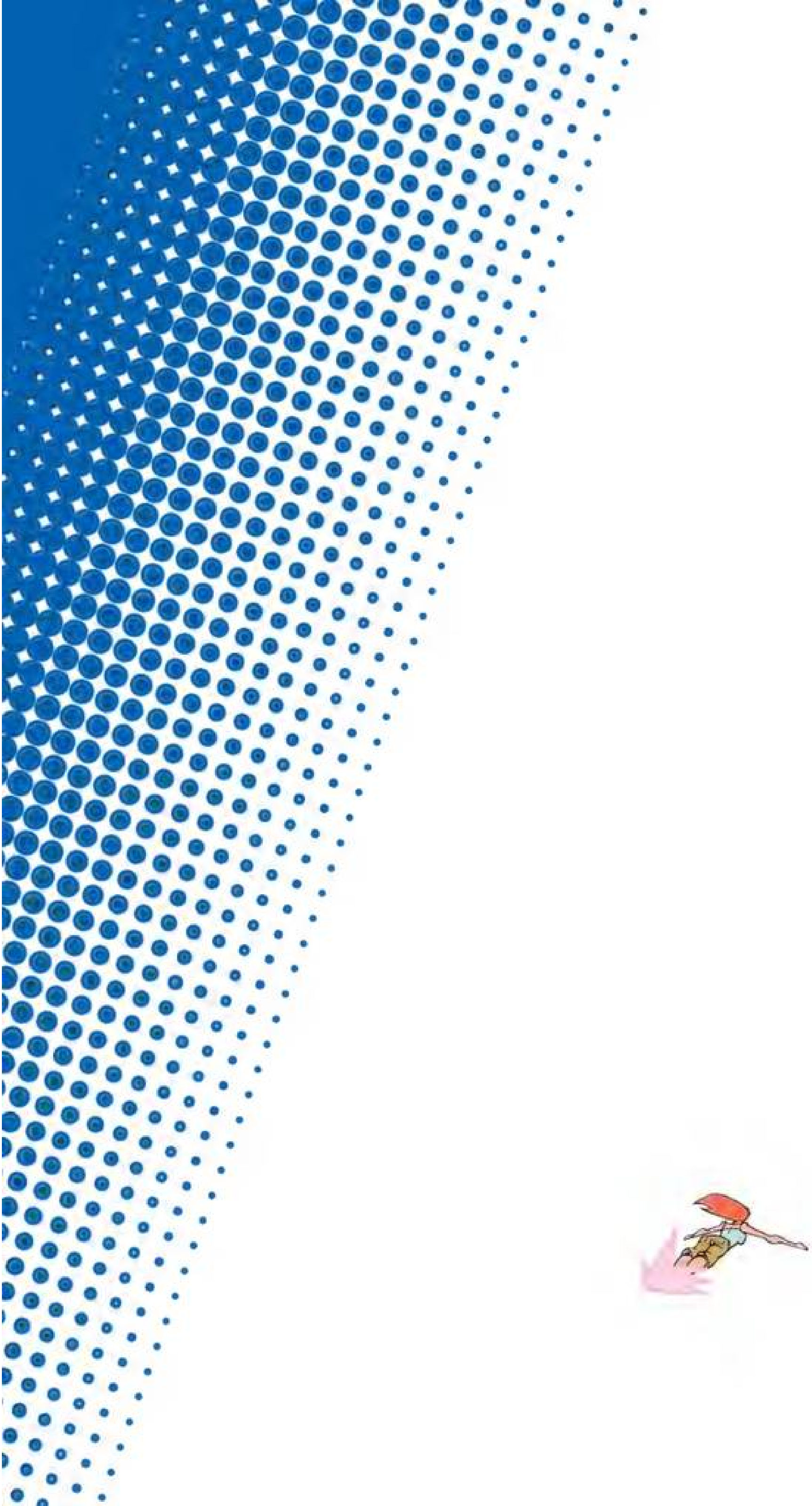

BACK IN AFRICA.
WE'RE BACK-- SORRY ABOUT THAT, AMBER.
YOU'RE NOT THE ONE WHO NEEDS TO APOLOGIZE.
FWAP!
HEY!
WHAT WAS THAT FOR?
OH, STOP IT--THAT DIDN'T HURT.
I KNOW. I'VE GOTTEN PRETTY GOOD AT ACTING THOUGH, HAVEN'T I?
YOU'RE NOT SERIOUSLY MAD AT ME, ARE YOU?
I'M NOT HAPPY ABOUT YOU CARTING ME BACK HERE LIKE I'M LITTLE MORE THAN A SACK OF POTATOES BUT I KNOW IT WAS FOR A GOOD CAUSE.
TOOK ME LIKE FIVE MINUTES TO CATCH MY BREATH, THOUGH. DID YOU SAVE THAT VILLAGE?
YEAH--EVE DID MOST OF IT THOUGH. I DUG A COUPLE TRENCHES, THAT'S ABOUT IT.
WHAT TIME IS IT? I'M KINDA HUNGRY.
THAT'S GOOD BECAUSE LUNCH IS READY.


THIS IS GREAT.
I'M GLAD YOU LIKE IT. I'VE BEEN EXPERIMENTING A LITTLE TO SEE IF I CAN ALTER THE NUTRIENTS AND CALORIE CONTENT IN SOME FOODS WITHOUT ALTERING THE TASTE TO A NOTICEABLE DEGREE.
YOU MEAN THIS CAKE--?
HAS ABOUT HALF THE CALORIES AND ALL THE VITAMINS AND CRAP OF A STALK OF BROCCOLI.
IT TASTE FUNNY?
JUST A LITTLE-- BUT IT'S STILL GREAT.
AND AT HALF THE CALORIES I CAN EAT TWICE AS MUCH.
SLOW DOWN THERE, HON'. I'VE STILL GOT TO CARRY YOU BACK OVER THE ATLANTIC LATER TODAY.
OH, SHUT UP.
EVE-- PLEASE--YOU'VE GOT TO COME BACK TO SCHOOL WITH ME. YOU COULD LIVE IN MY DORM--ATTEND SOME CLASSES--MAKE FOOD FOR ME. YOU NEED TO GO TO COLLEGE STILL, RIGHT?
WHY? I DON'T NEED TO LEARN A TRADE. EVERYTHING I NEED--I CAN JUST MAKE.
RING! RING!
ONLY SO MANY PEOPLE THAT COULD BE. ONLY MY PARENTS AND YOUR MOM HAVE MY NUMBER...
RING! RING!
SO... HAVE YOU ENJOYED THIS?
OH, MARK-- THIS HAS BEEN AMAZING.

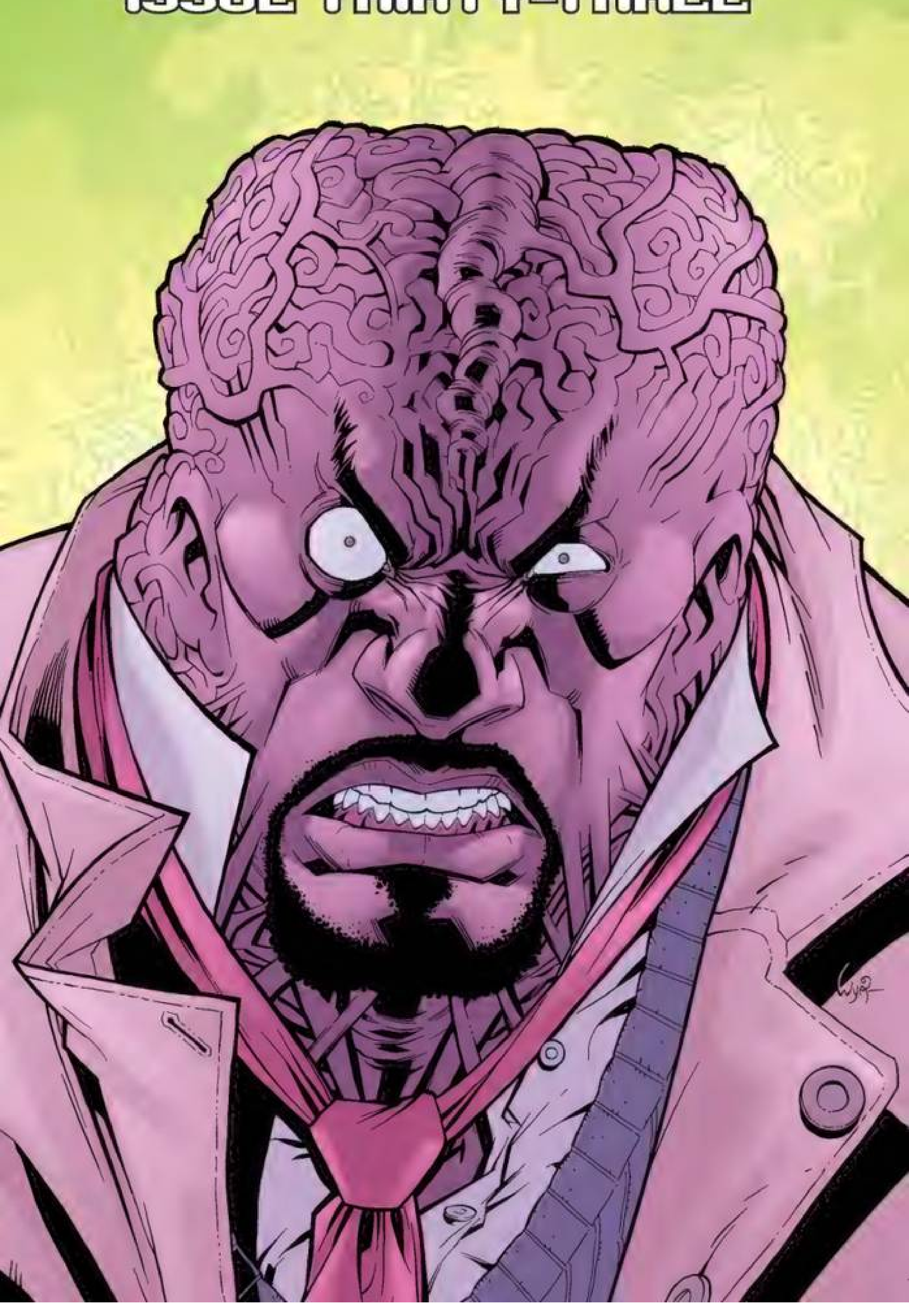

UH, MARK-- IT'S FOR YOU.
IT'S SOME MAN.
THAT'S WEIRD-- IS IT CECIL?
WHO'S CECIL?
HELLO?
YOUR MOTHER WANTS TO TALK TO YOU.
MARK-- HELP--
MOM?
SHE'S IN TROUBLE, MARK. HOW FAST CAN YOU GET HOME?
CLICK.
EVE--CAN YOU GET AMBER HOME TONIGHT?
MARK, WHO WAS THAT?
WHAT'S GOING ON? I MEAN, I COULDN'T DO IT AS FAST AS YOU BUT YEAH, I--
VOOSH

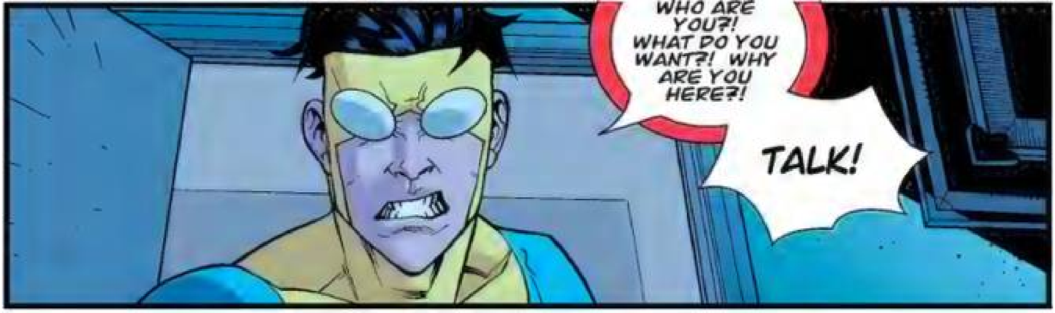

SLAM!!
MOM!
MOM!
MOM?

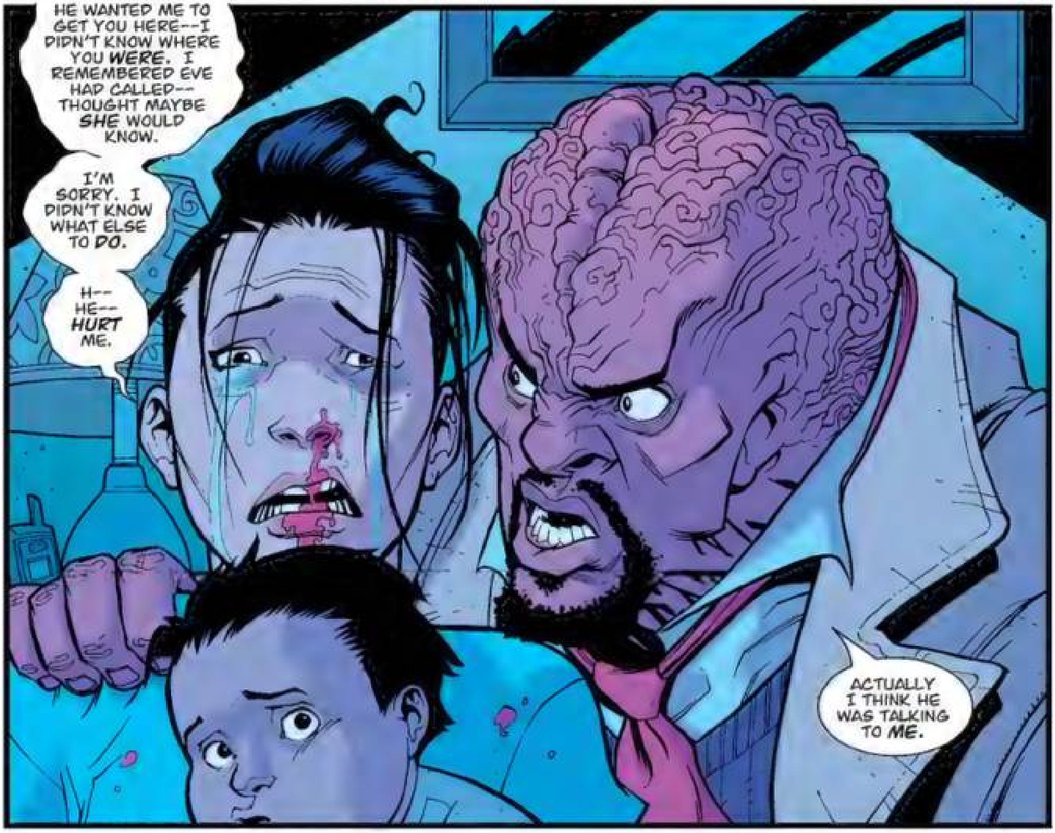

WELCOME HOME, MARK GRAYSON.
I'M IMPRESSED. YOU MADE GOOD TIME.

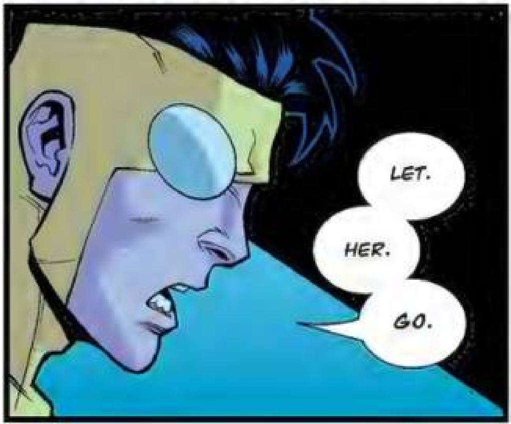


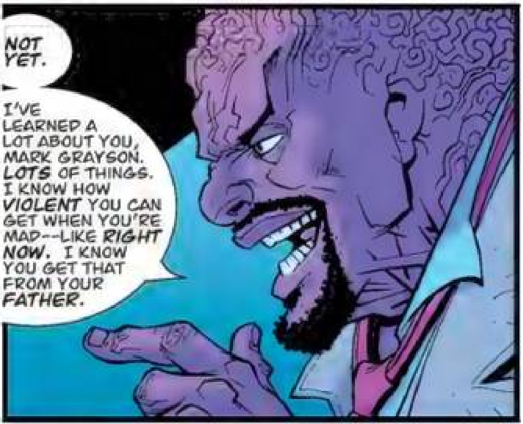
ISSUE THIRTY-THREE

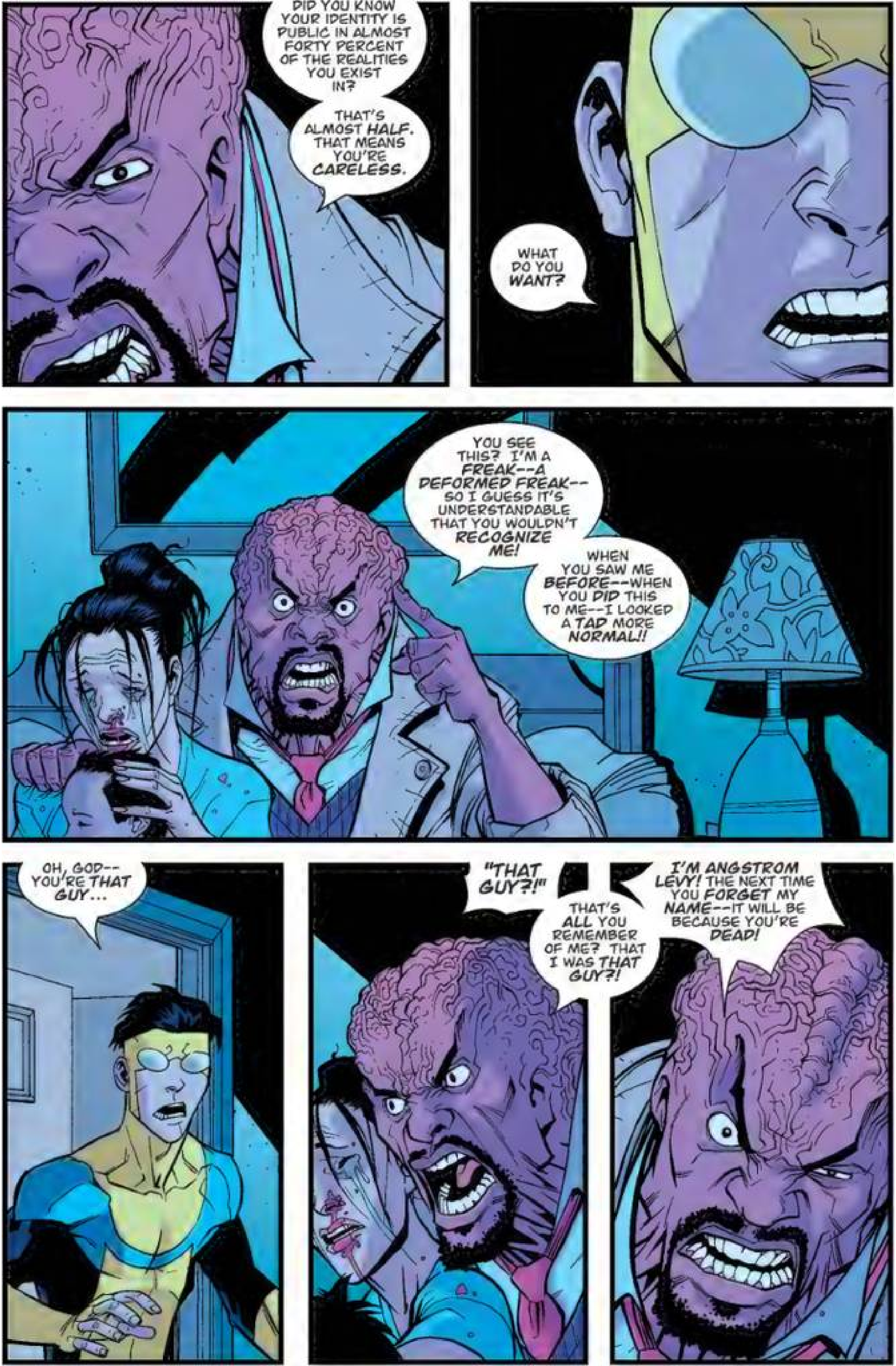


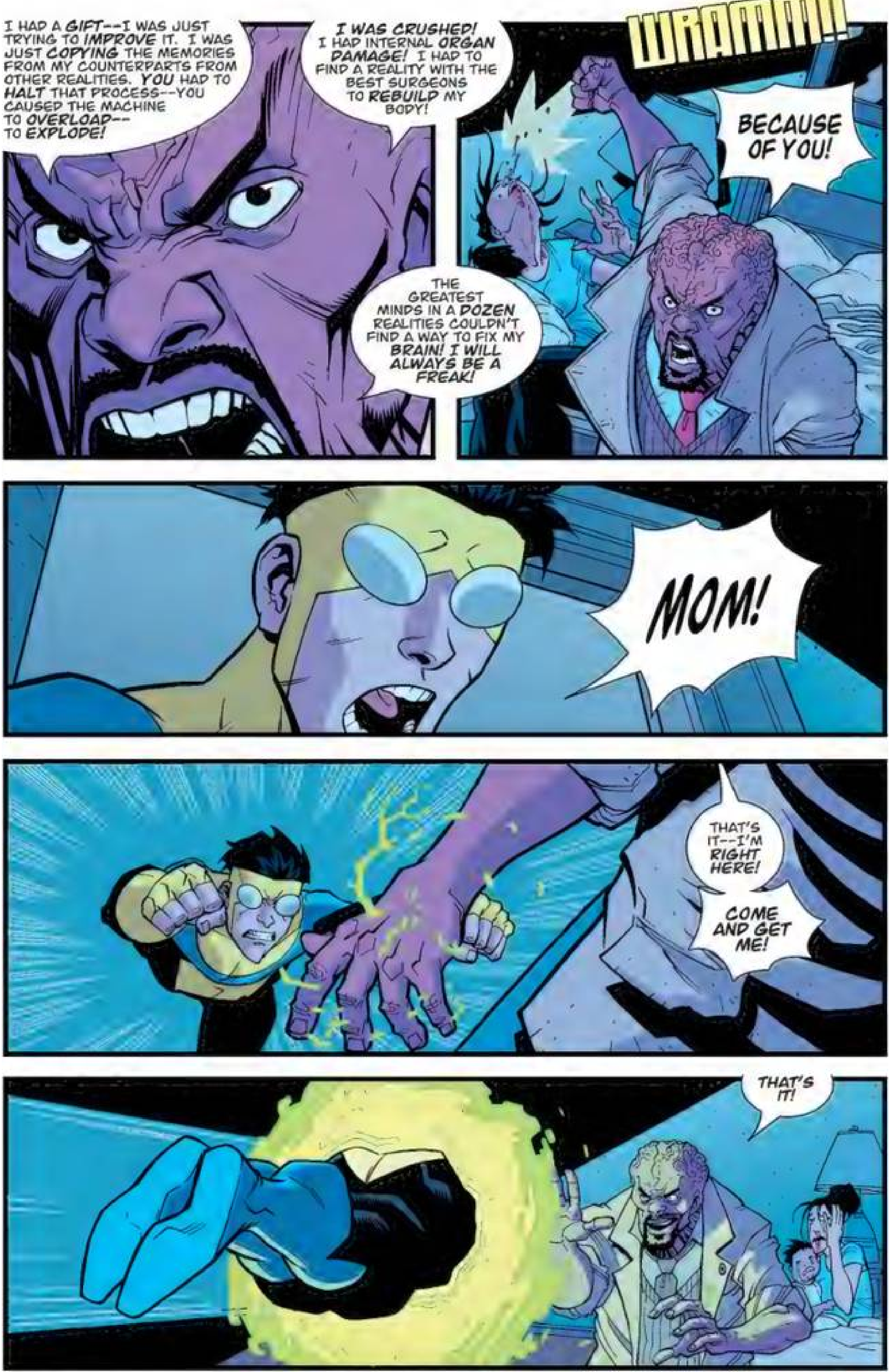

WHO ARE YOU?! WHAT DO YOU WANT?! WHY ARE YOU HERE?!
TALK!

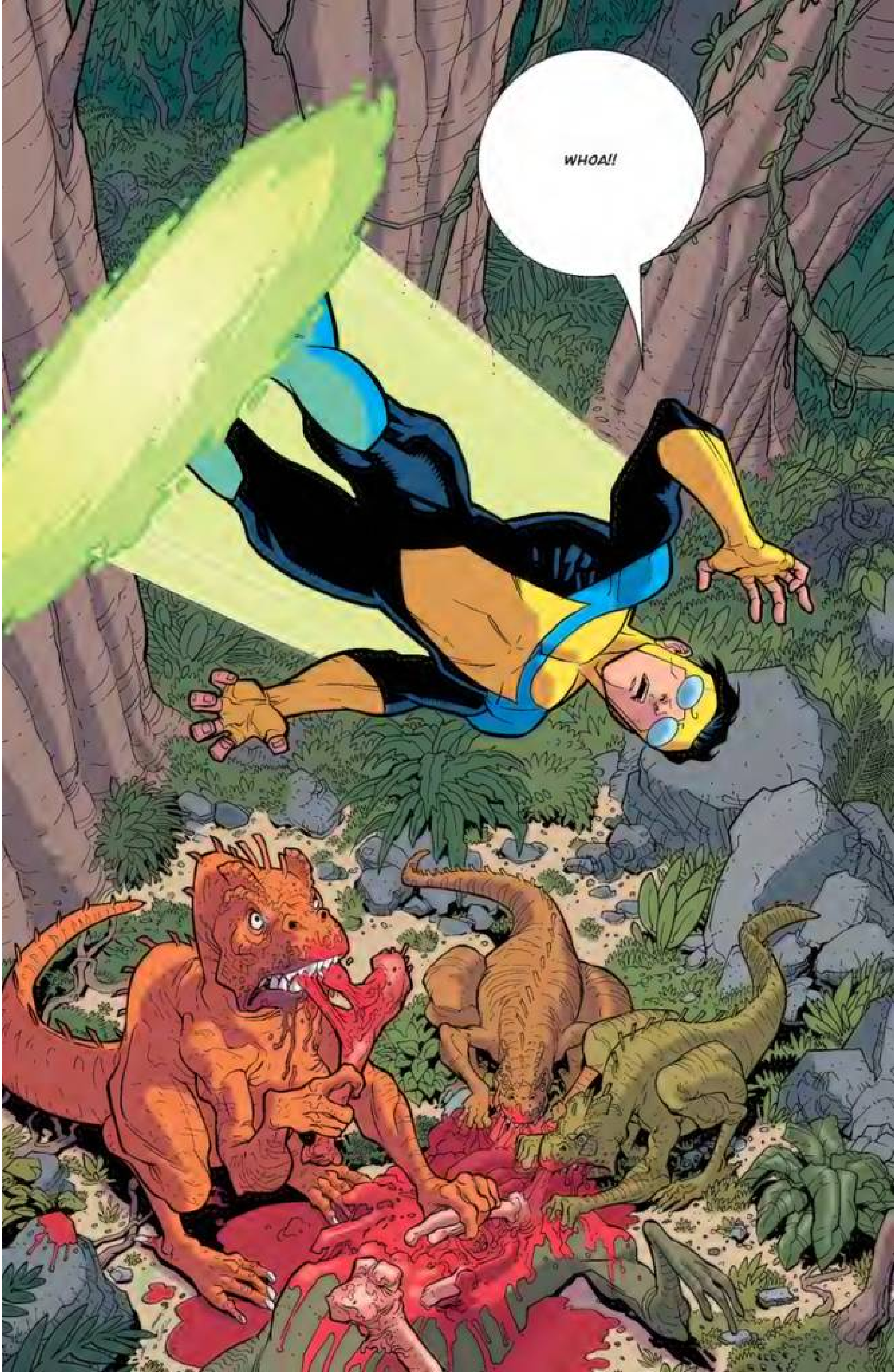

HE WANTED ME TO GET YOU HERE--I DIDN'T KNOW WHERE YOU WERE. I REMEMBERED EVE HAD CALLED--THOUGHT MAYBE SHE WOULD KNOW.
I'M SORRY. I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT ELSE TO DO.
H-- HE-- HURT ME.
ACTUALLY I THINK HE WAS TALKING TO ME.

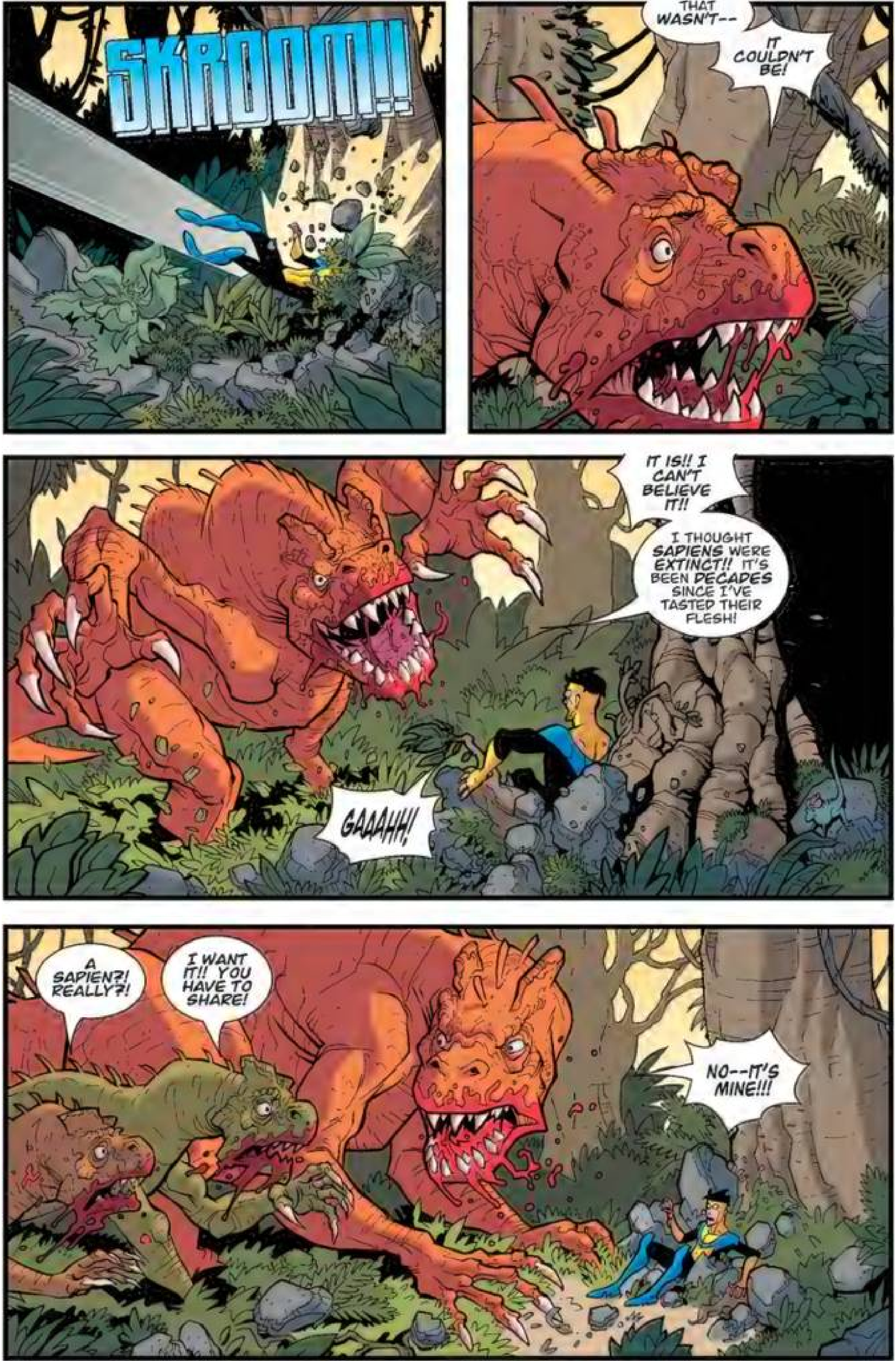

LET.
HER.
GO.

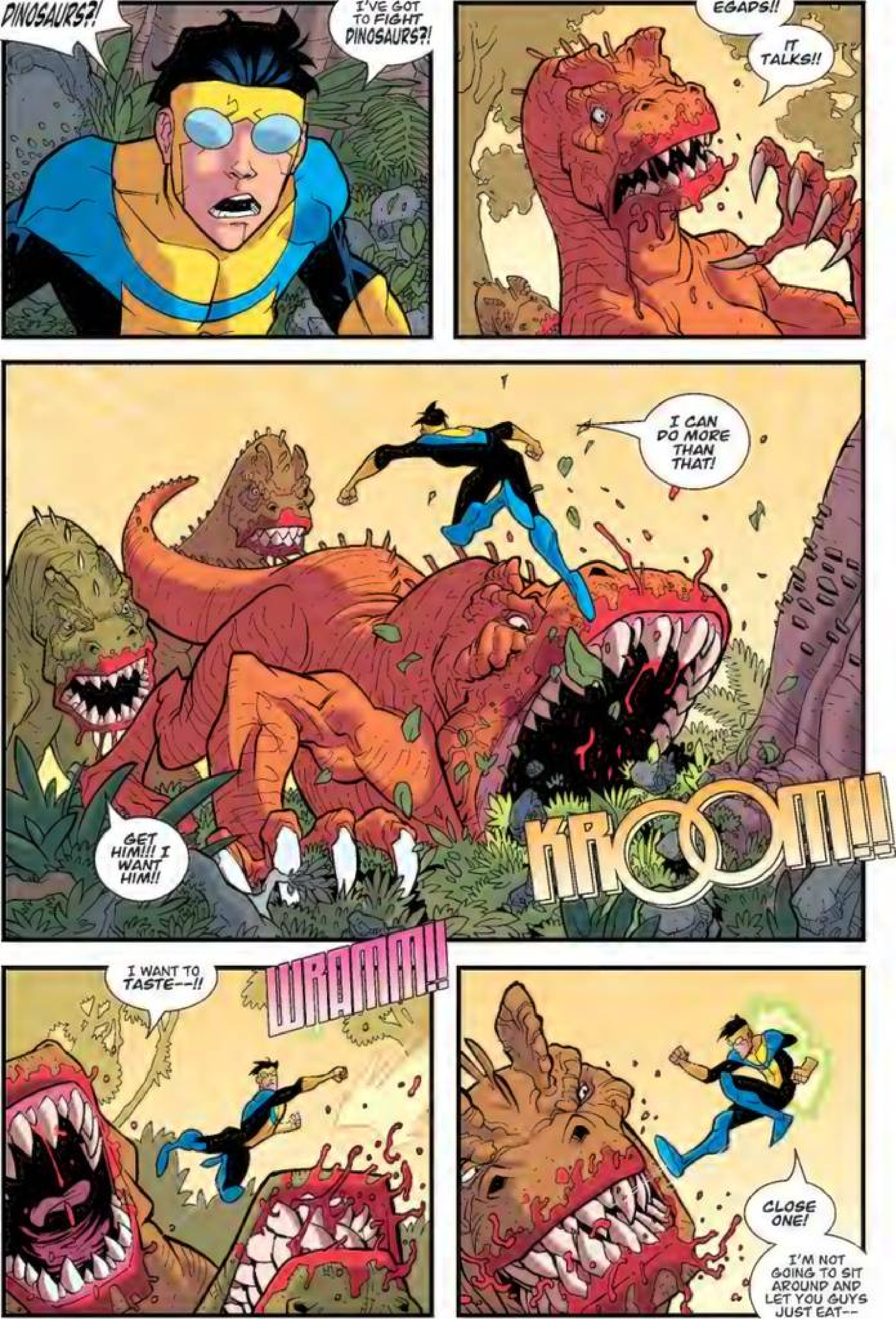

NOT YET.
I'VE LEARNED A LOT ABOUT YOU, MARK GRAYSON. LOTS OF THINGS. I KNOW HOW VIOLENT YOU CAN GET WHEN YOU'RE MAD--LIKE RIGHT NOW. I KNOW YOU GET THAT FROM YOUR FATHER.

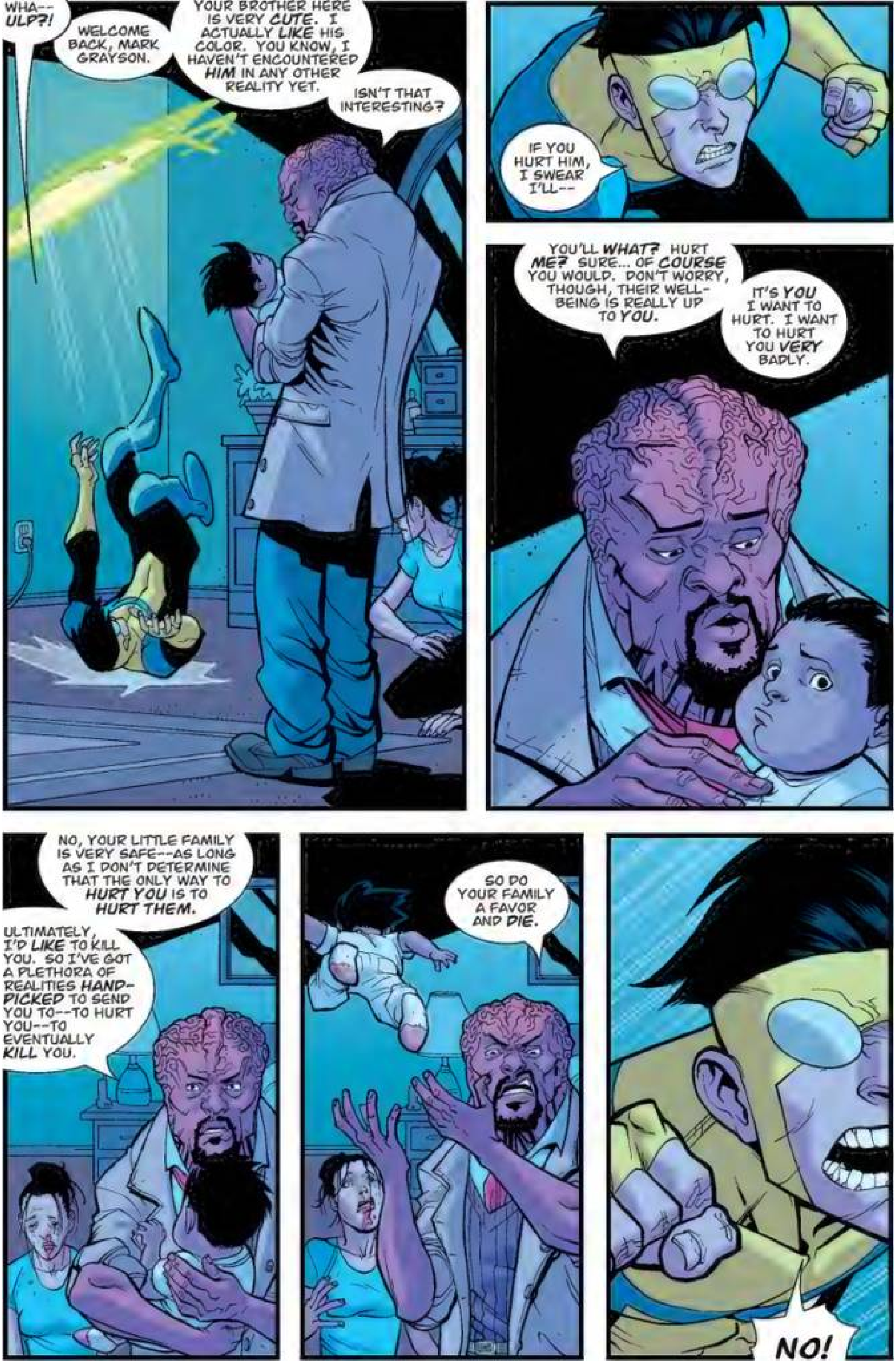

DID YOU KNOW YOUR IDENTITY IS PUBLIC IN ALMOST FORTY PERCENT OF THE REALITIES YOU EXIST IN?
THAT'S ALMOST *HALF*. THAT MEANS YOU'RE *CARELESS*.
WHAT DO YOU *WANT?*
YOU SEE THIS? I'M A *FREAK*--A *DEFORMED FREAK*--SO I GUESS IT'S UNDERSTANDABLE THAT YOU WOULDN'T *RECOGNIZE ME!*
WHEN YOU SAW ME *BEFORE*--WHEN YOU *DID* THIS TO ME--I LOOKED A *TAD* MORE *NORMAL!!*
OH, GOD--YOU'RE *THAT GUY*...
"THAT GUY?!"
THAT'S *ALL* YOU REMEMBER OF ME? THAT I WAS *THAT GUY?!*
I'M ANGSTROM LEVY! THE NEXT TIME YOU *FORGET* MY *NAME*--IT WILL BE BECAUSE YOU'RE *DEAD!*

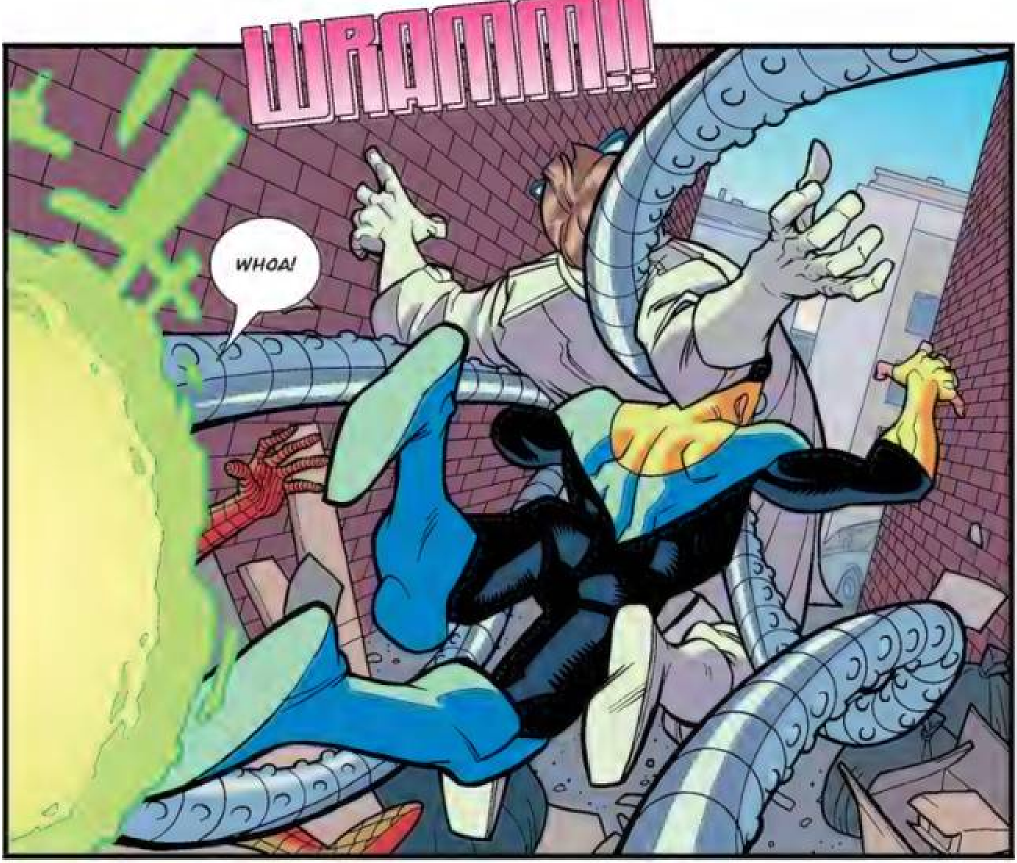

I HAD A GIFT--I WAS JUST TRYING TO IMPROVE IT. I WAS JUST COPYING THE MEMORIES FROM MY COUNTERPARTS FROM OTHER REALITIES. YOU HAD TO HALT THAT PROCESS--YOU CAUSED THE MACHINE TO OVERLOAD--TO EXPLODE!
I WAS CRUSHED! I HAD INTERNAL ORGAN DAMAGE! I HAD TO FIND A REALITY WITH THE BEST SURGEONS TO REBUILD MY BODY!
WRAMM!!
BECAUSE OF YOU!
THE GREATEST MINDS IN A DOZEN REALITIES COULDN'T FIND A WAY TO FIX MY BRAIN! I WILL ALWAYS BE A FREAK!
MOM!
THAT'S IT--I'M RIGHT HERE!
COME AND GET ME!
THAT'S IT!

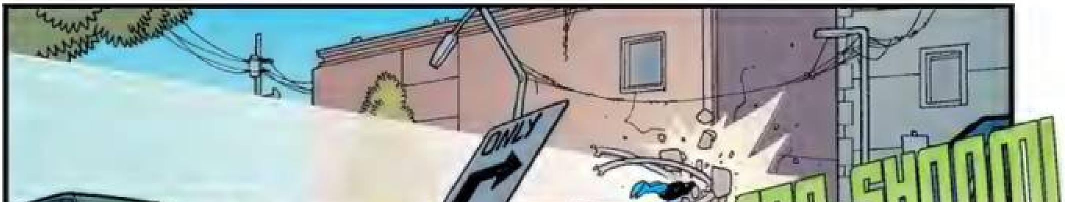

WHOA!!

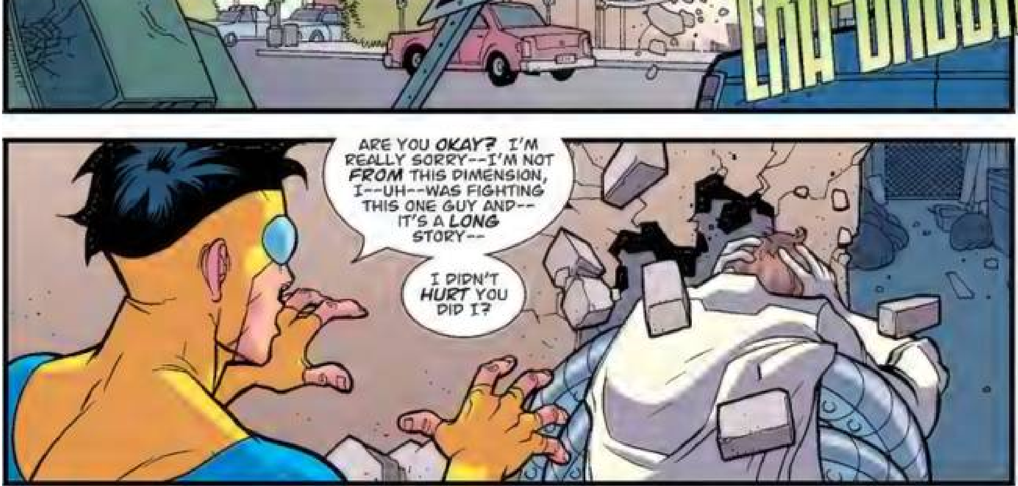

SKROOM!!
THAT WASN'T--
IT COULDN'T BE!
IT IS!! I CAN'T BELIEVE IT!!
I THOUGHT SAPIENS WERE EXTINCT!! IT'S BEEN DECADES SINCE I'VE TASTED THEIR FLESH!
GAAAHH!
A SAPIEN?! REALLY?!
I WANT IT!! YOU HAVE TO SHARE!
NO--IT'S MINE!!!

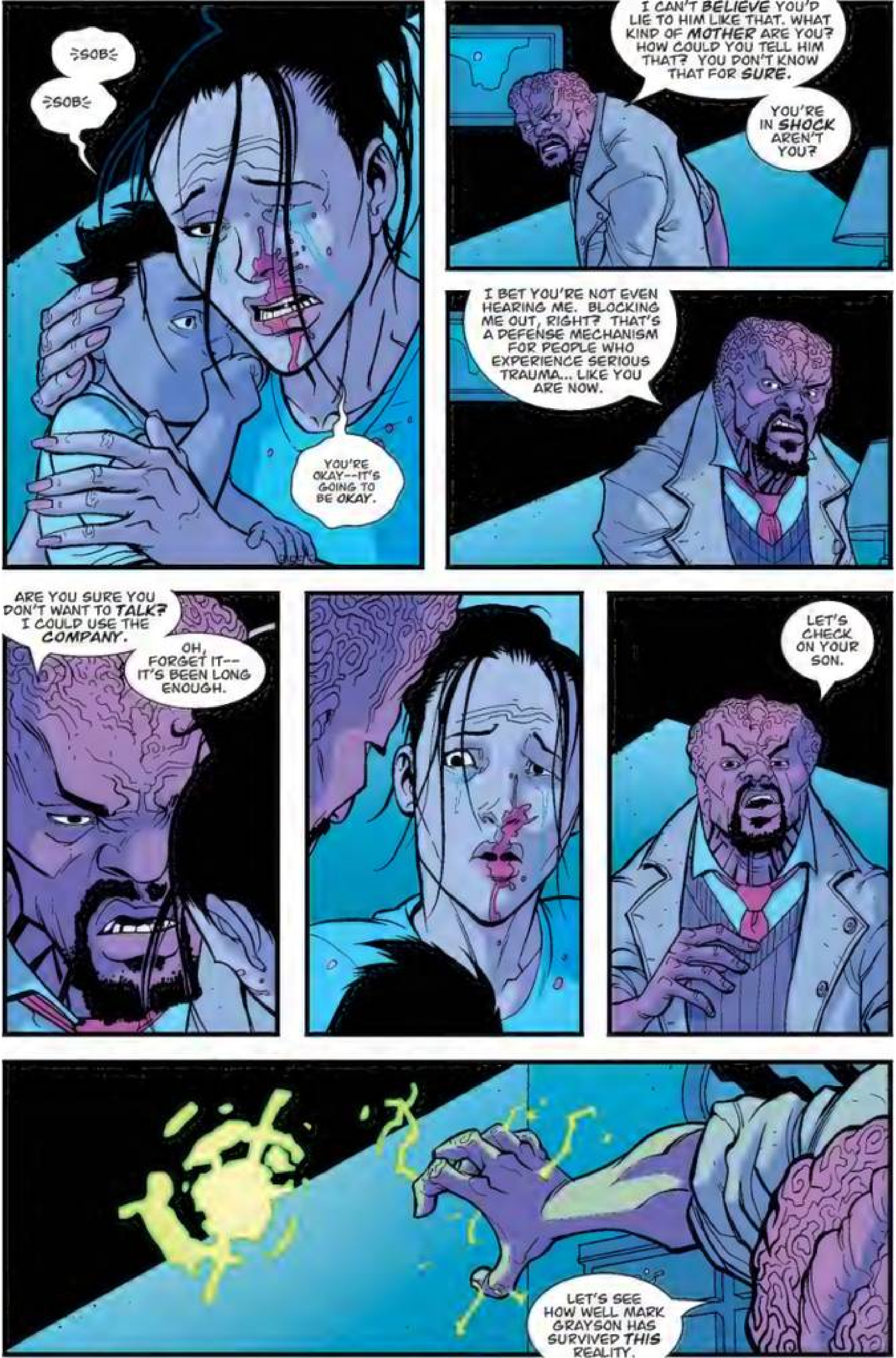

DINOSAURS?!
I'VE GOT TO FIGHT DINOSAURS?!
EGADS!!
IT TALKS!!
I CAN DO MORE THAN THAT!
GET HIM!!! I WANT HIM!!
KROOM!!
I WANT TO TASTE--!!
WRAMM!!
CLOSE ONE!
I'M NOT GOING TO SIT AROUND AND LET YOU GUYS JUST EAT--

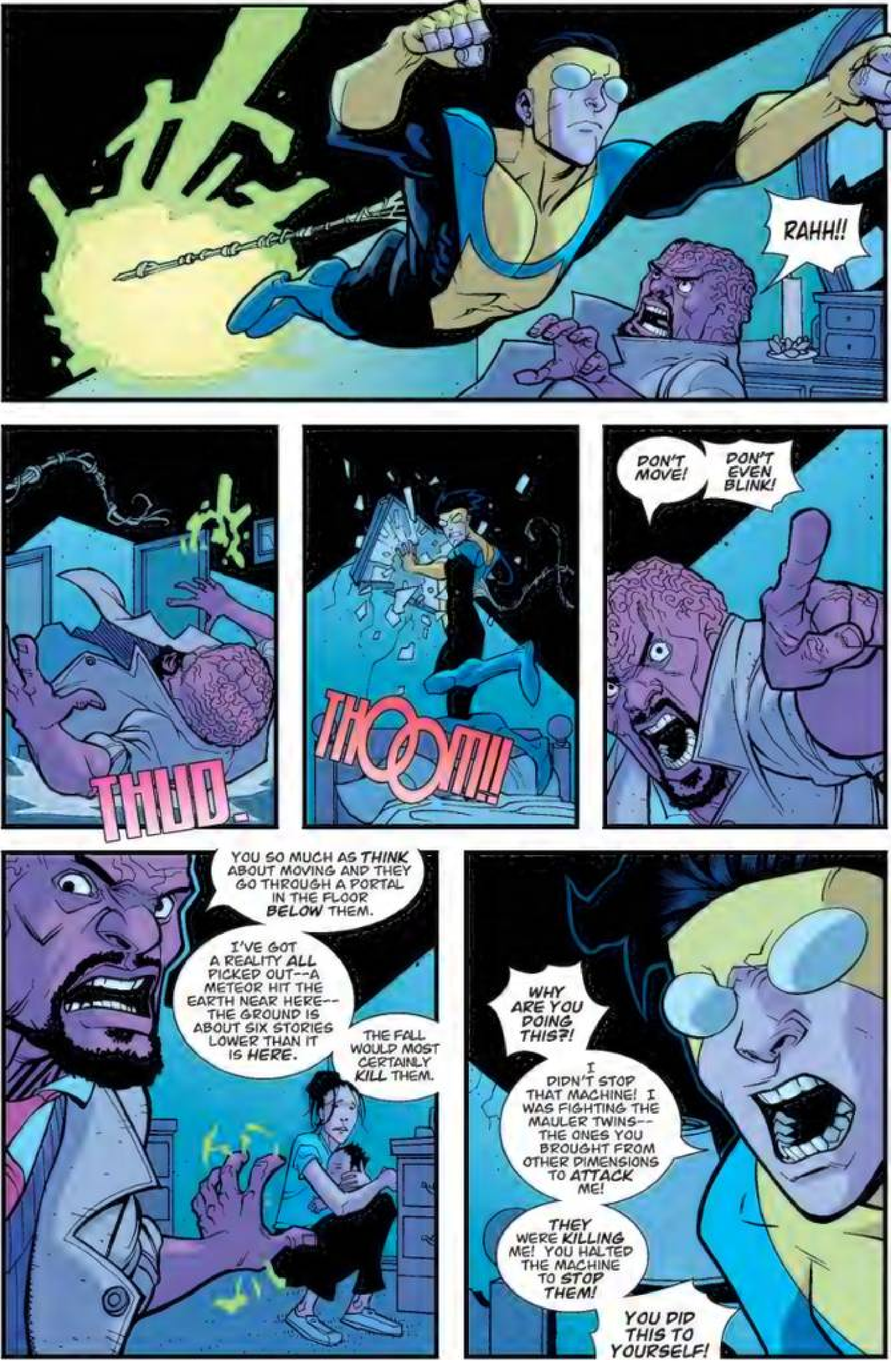

WHA-- ULP?!
WELCOME BACK, MARK GRAYSON.
YOUR BROTHER HERE IS VERY CUTE. I ACTUALLY LIKE HIS COLOR. YOU KNOW, I HAVEN'T ENCOUNTERED HIM IN ANY OTHER REALITY YET.
ISN'T THAT INTERESTING?
IF YOU HURT HIM, I SWEAR I'LL--
YOU'LL WHAT? HURT ME? SURE... OF COURSE YOU WOULD. DON'T WORRY, THOUGH, THEIR WELL-BEING IS REALLY UP TO YOU.
IT'S YOU I WANT TO HURT. I WANT TO HURT YOU VERY BADLY.
NO, YOUR LITTLE FAMILY IS VERY SAFE--AS LONG AS I DON'T DETERMINE THAT THE ONLY WAY TO HURT YOU IS TO HURT THEM.
ULTIMATELY, I'D LIKE TO KILL YOU. SO I'VE GOT A PLETHORA OF REALITIES HAND-PICKED TO SEND YOU TO--TO HURT YOU--TO EVENTUALLY KILL YOU.
SO DO YOUR FAMILY A FAVOR AND DIE.
NO!

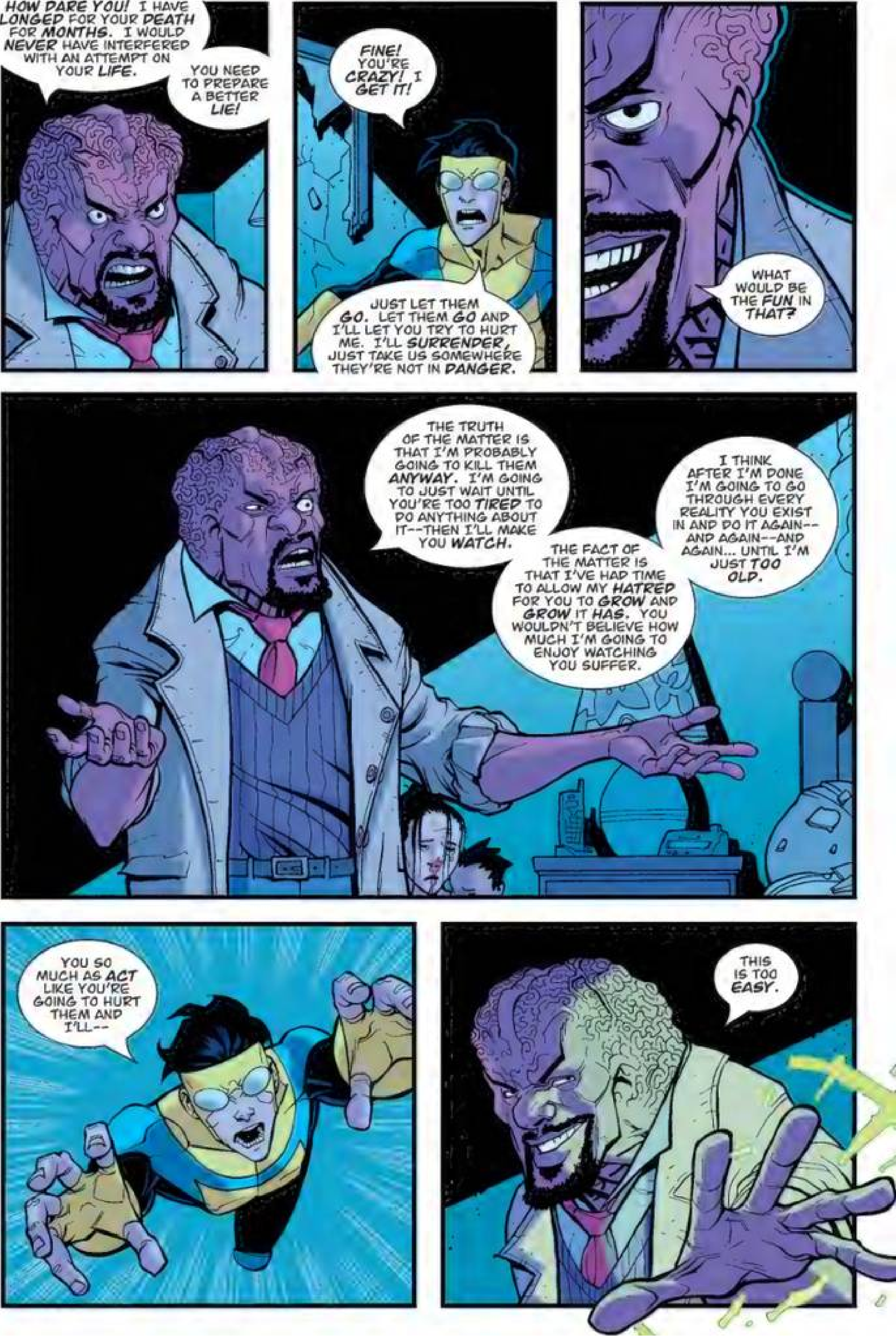

WRAMM!!
WHOA!

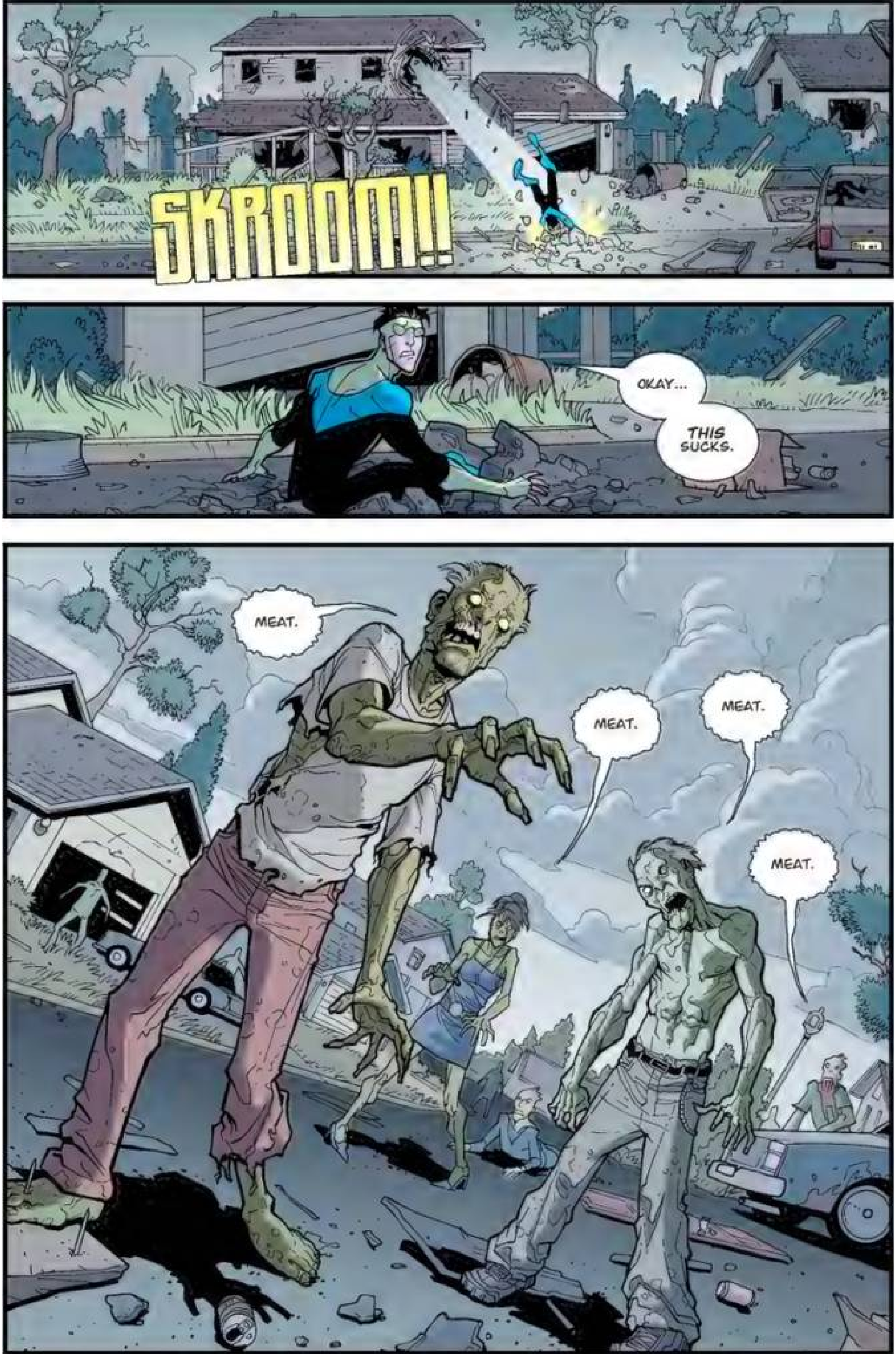

ONLY
CRA-SHOOM!

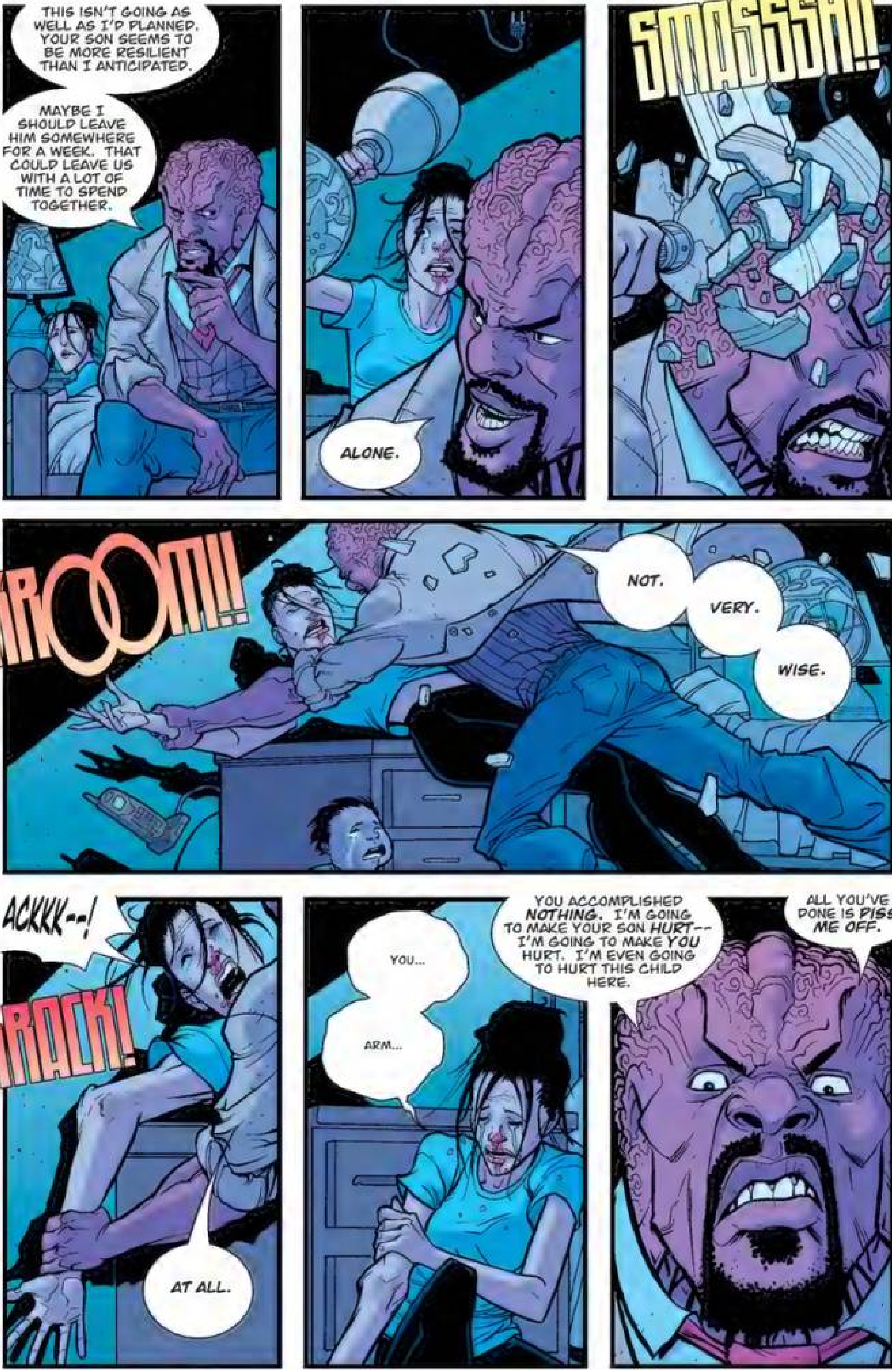

ARE YOU OKAY? I'M REALLY SORRY--I'M NOT FROM THIS DIMENSION, I--UH--WAS FIGHTING THIS ONE GUY AND-- IT'S A LONG STORY--
I DIDN'T HURT YOU DID I?

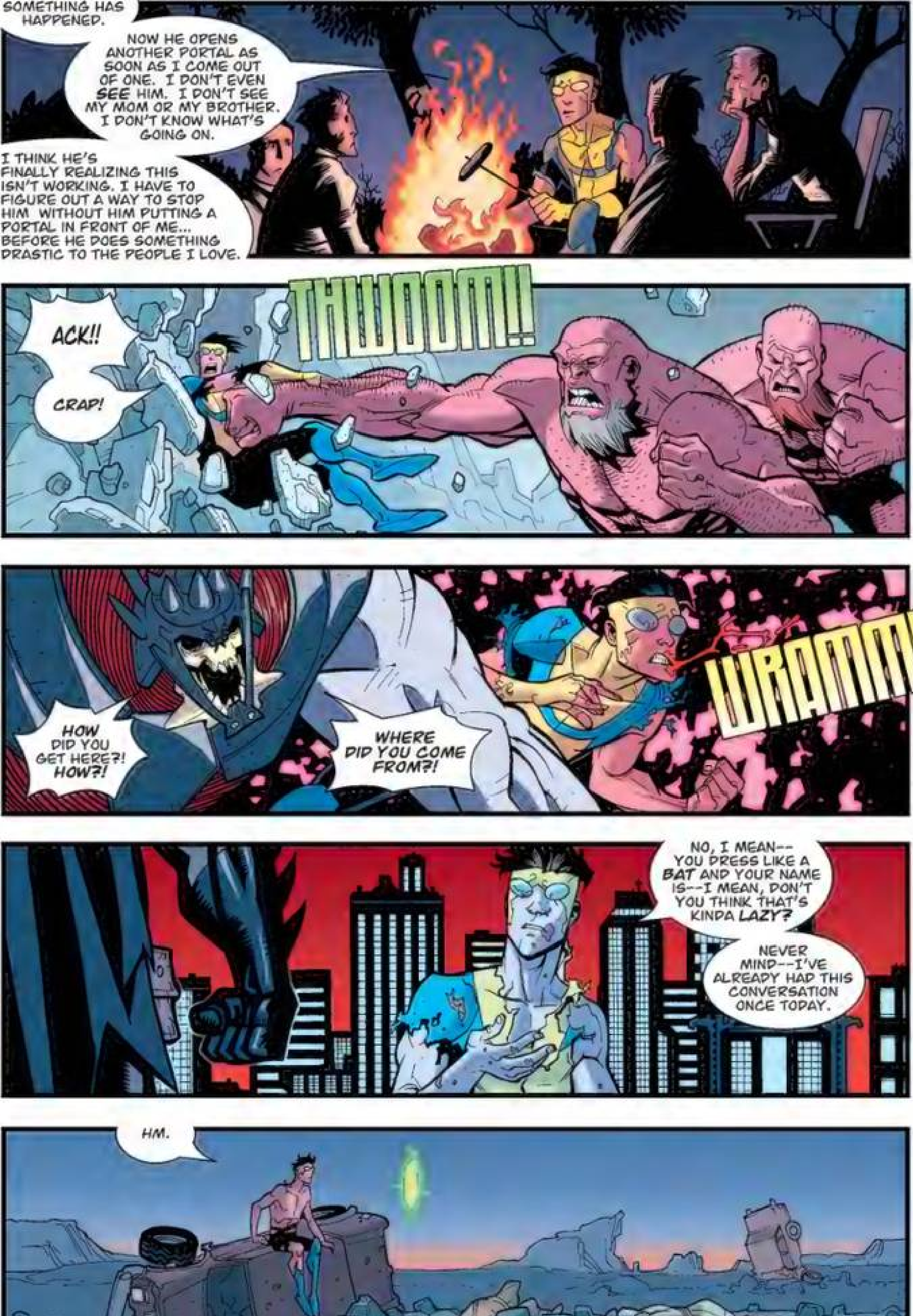

SOB
SOB
YOU'RE OKAY--IT'S GOING TO BE OKAY.
I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU'D LIE TO HIM LIKE THAT. WHAT KIND OF MOTHER ARE YOU? HOW COULD YOU TELL HIM THAT? YOU DON'T KNOW THAT FOR SURE.
YOU'RE IN SHOCK AREN'T YOU?
I BET YOU'RE NOT EVEN HEARING ME. BLOCKING ME OUT, RIGHT? THAT'S A DEFENSE MECHANISM FOR PEOPLE WHO EXPERIENCE SERIOUS TRAUMA... LIKE YOU ARE NOW.
ARE YOU SURE YOU DON'T WANT TO TALK? I COULD USE THE COMPANY.
OH, FORGET IT-- IT'S BEEN LONG ENOUGH.
LET'S CHECK ON YOUR SON.
LET'S SEE HOW WELL MARK GRAYSON HAS SURVIVED THIS REALITY.

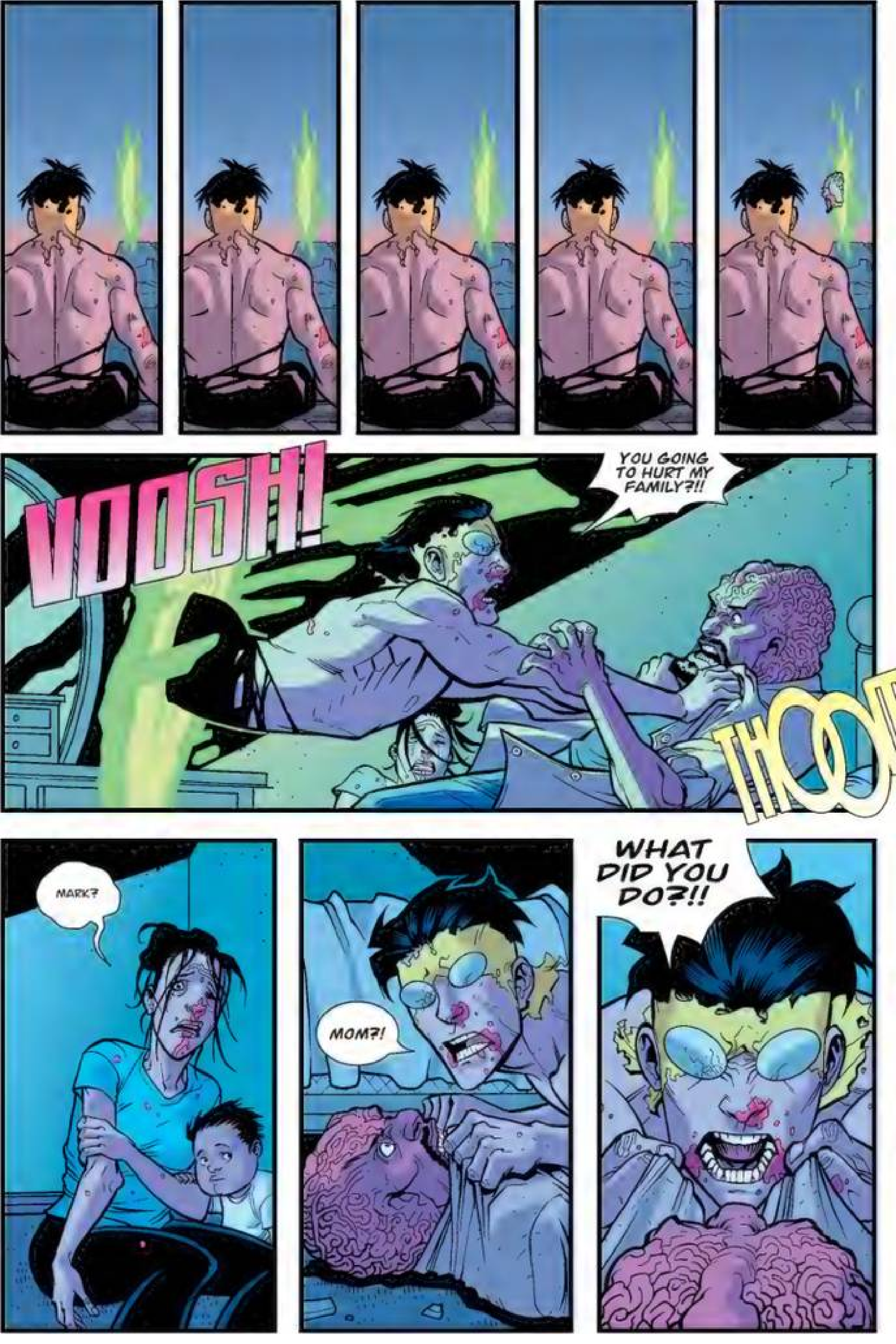

RAHH!!
THUD
THOOM!!
DON'T MOVE!
DON'T EVEN BLINK!
YOU SO MUCH AS THINK ABOUT MOVING AND THEY GO THROUGH A PORTAL IN THE FLOOR BELOW THEM.
I'VE GOT A REALITY ALL PICKED OUT--A METEOR HIT THE EARTH NEAR HERE--THE GROUND IS ABOUT SIX STORIES LOWER THAN IT IS HERE.
THE FALL WOULD MOST CERTAINLY KILL THEM.
WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS?!
I DIDN'T STOP THAT MACHINE! I WAS FIGHTING THE MAULER TWINS--THE ONES YOU BROUGHT FROM OTHER DIMENSIONS TO ATTACK ME!
THEY WERE KILLING ME! YOU HALTED THE MACHINE TO STOP THEM!
YOU DID THIS TO YOURSELF!

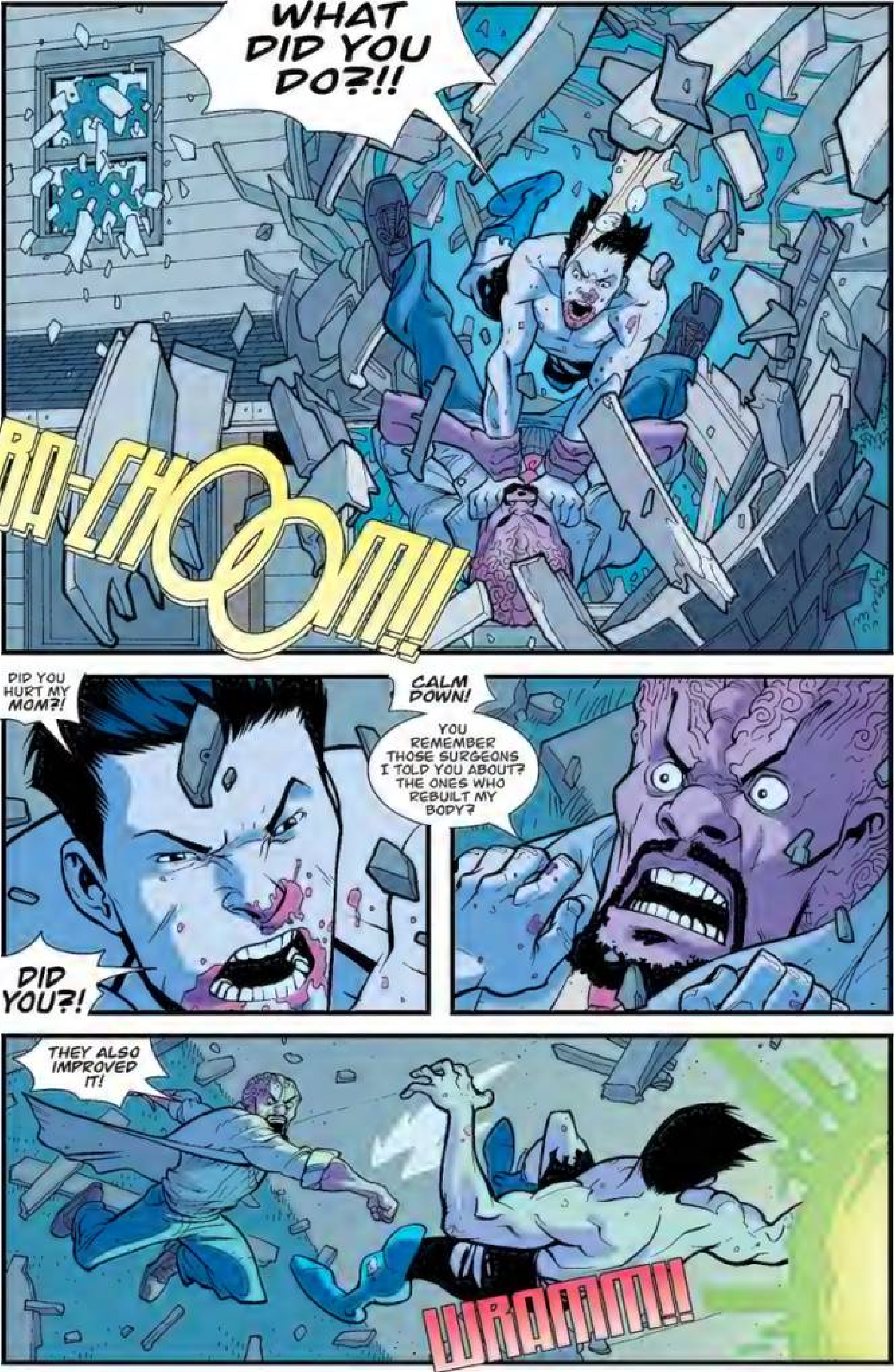

HOW DARE YOU! I HAVE LONGED FOR YOUR DEATH FOR MONTHS. I WOULD NEVER HAVE INTERFERED WITH AN ATTEMPT ON YOUR LIFE.
YOU NEED TO PREPARE A BETTER LIE!
FINE! YOU'RE CRAZY! I GET IT!
JUST LET THEM GO. LET THEM GO AND I'LL LET YOU TRY TO HURT ME. I'LL SURRENDER, JUST TAKE US SOMEWHERE THEY'RE NOT IN DANGER.
WHAT WOULD BE THE FUN IN THAT?
THE TRUTH OF THE MATTER IS THAT I'M PROBABLY GOING TO KILL THEM ANYWAY. I'M GOING TO JUST WAIT UNTIL YOU'RE TOO TIRED TO DO ANYTHING ABOUT IT--THEN I'LL MAKE YOU WATCH.
THE FACT OF THE MATTER IS THAT I'VE HAD TIME TO ALLOW MY HATRED FOR YOU TO GROW AND GROW IT HAS. YOU WOULDN'T BELIEVE HOW MUCH I'M GOING TO ENJOY WATCHING YOU SUFFER.
I THINK AFTER I'M DONE I'M GOING TO GO THROUGH EVERY REALITY YOU EXIST IN AND DO IT AGAIN--AND AGAIN--AND AGAIN... UNTIL I'M JUST TOO OLD.
YOU SO MUCH AS ACT LIKE YOU'RE GOING TO HURT THEM AND I'LL--
THIS IS TOO EASY.

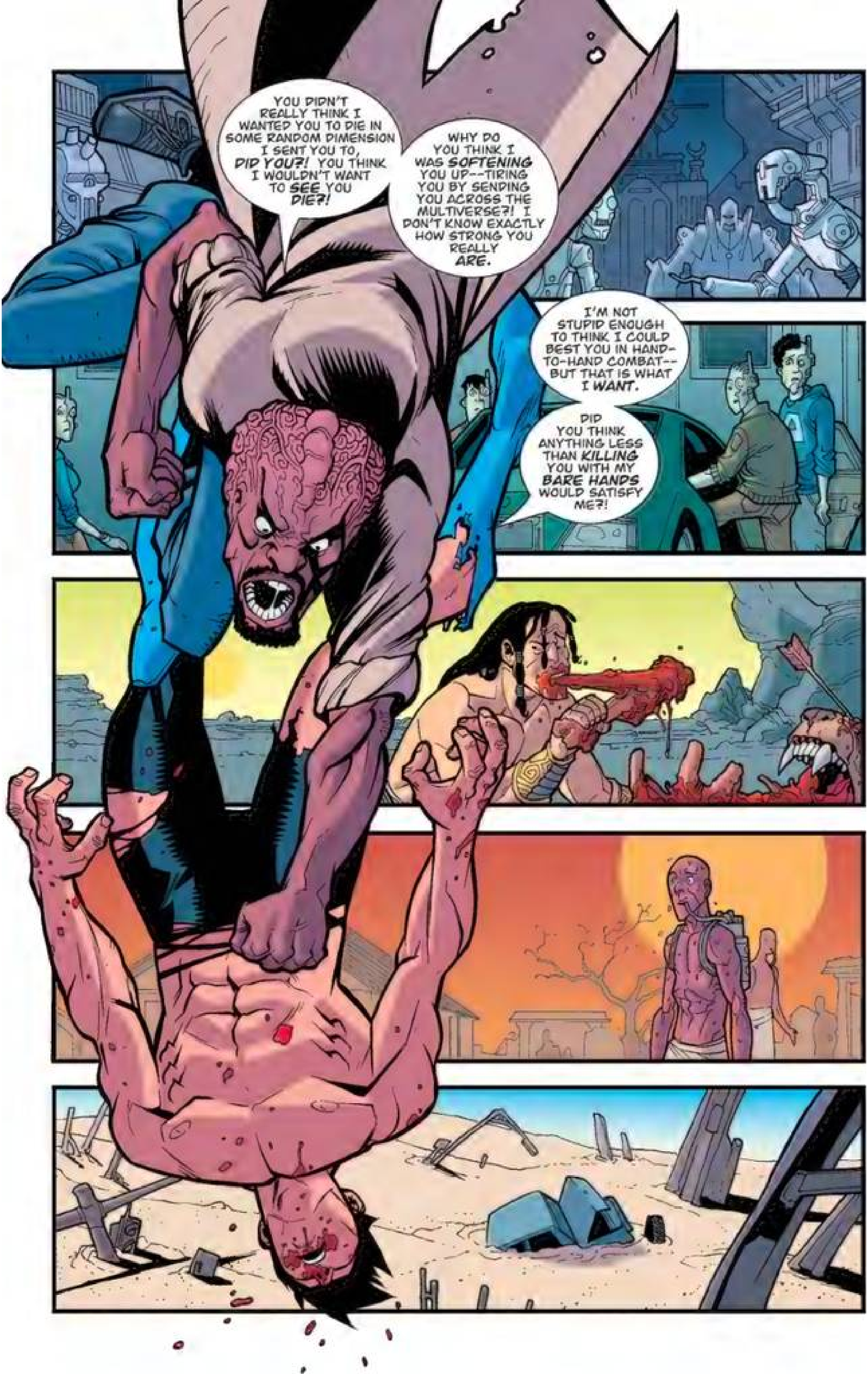

SKROOM!!
OKAY...
THIS SUCKS.
MEAT.
MEAT.
MEAT.
MEAT.

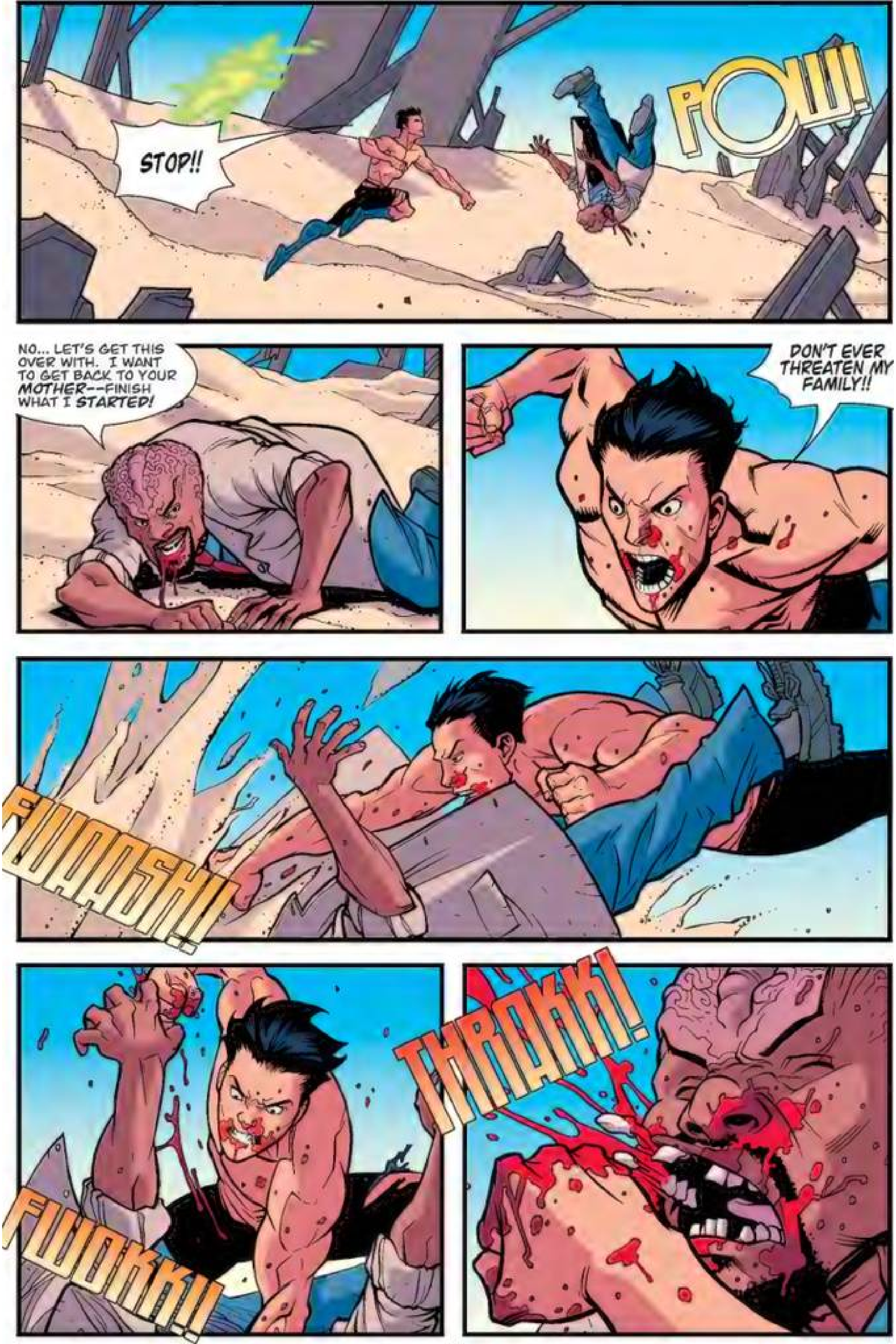

THIS ISN'T GOING AS WELL AS I'D PLANNED. YOUR SON SEEMS TO BE MORE RESILIENT THAN I ANTICIPATED.
MAYBE I SHOULD LEAVE HIM SOMEWHERE FOR A WEEK. THAT COULD LEAVE US WITH A LOT OF TIME TO SPEND TOGETHER.
ALONE.
SMASSSH!!
KROOM!!
NOT.
VERY.
WISE.
ACKKK--!
KRACK!
AT ALL.
YOU...
ARM...
YOU ACCOMPLISHED *NOTHING*. I'M GOING TO MAKE YOUR SON *HURT*-- I'M GOING TO MAKE *YOU* HURT. I'M EVEN GOING TO HURT THIS CHILD HERE.
ALL YOU'VE DONE IS *PISS ME OFF*.

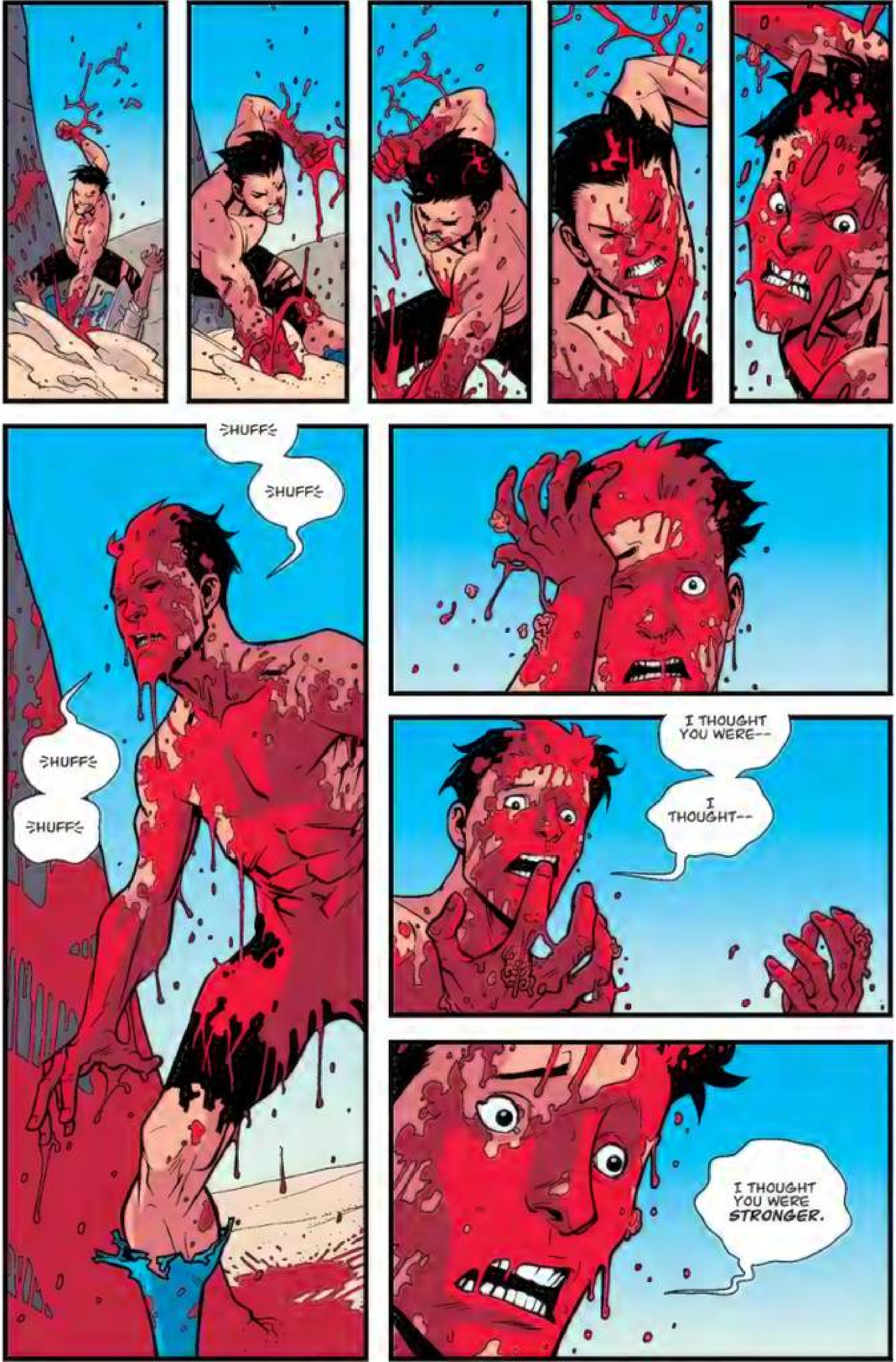

SOMETHING HAS HAPPENED.
NOW HE OPENS ANOTHER PORTAL AS SOON AS I COME OUT OF ONE. I DON'T EVEN SEE HIM. I DON'T SEE MY MOM OR MY BROTHER. I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON.
I THINK HE'S FINALLY REALIZING THIS ISN'T WORKING. I HAVE TO FIGURE OUT A WAY TO STOP HIM WITHOUT HIM PUTTING A PORTAL IN FRONT OF ME... BEFORE HE DOES SOMETHING DRASTIC TO THE PEOPLE I LOVE.
THWOOM!!
ACK!!
CRAP!
HOW DID YOU GET HERE?! HOW?!
WHERE DID YOU COME FROM?!
WRAMM!!
NO, I MEAN-- YOU DRESS LIKE A BAT AND YOUR NAME IS--I MEAN, DON'T YOU THINK THAT'S KINDA LAZY?
NEVER MIND--I'VE ALREADY HAD THIS CONVERSATION ONCE TODAY.
HM.

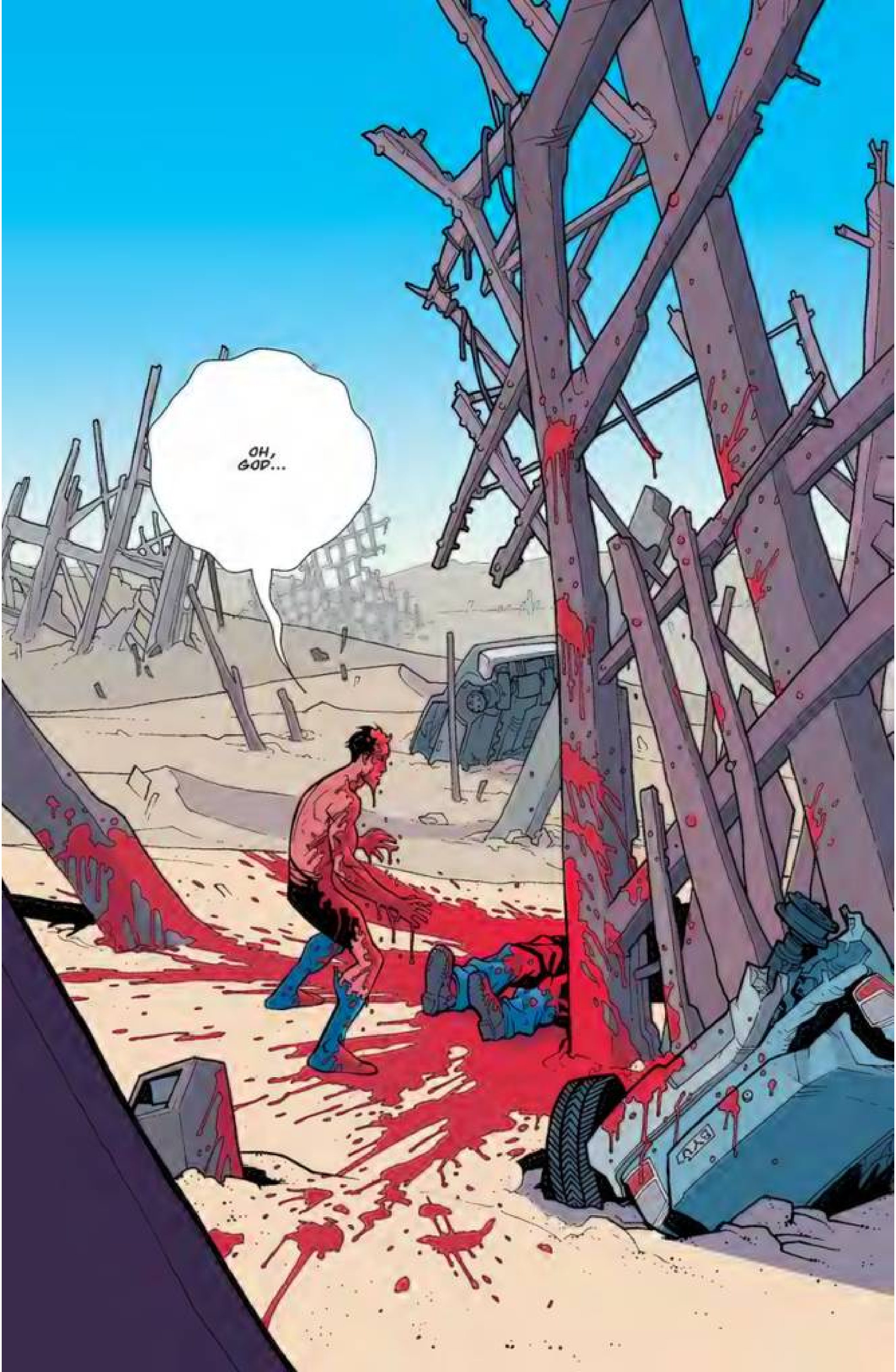

VOOSH!
YOU GOING TO HURT MY FAMILY?!!
THOO
MARK?
MOM?!
WHAT DID YOU DO?!!


WHAT DID YOU DO?!!
BA-CHOOM!!
DID YOU HURT MY MOM?!
DID YOU?!
CALM DOWN!
YOU REMEMBER THOSE SURGEONS I TOLD YOU ABOUT? THE ONES WHO REBUILT MY BODY?
THEY ALSO IMPROVED IT!
WRAMM!!

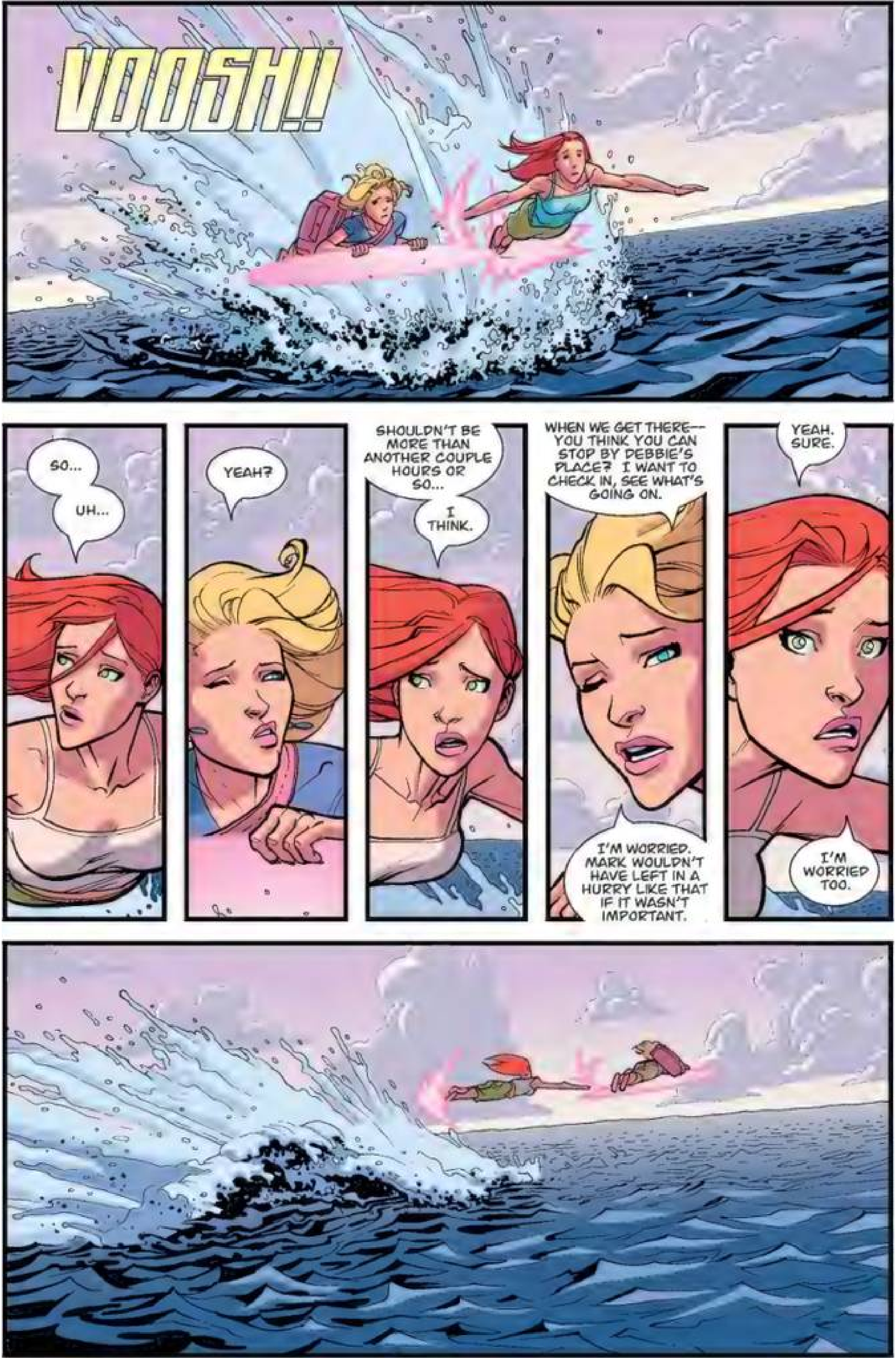

YOU DIDN'T REALLY THINK I WANTED YOU TO DIE IN SOME RANDOM DIMENSION I SENT YOU TO, **DID YOU?!** YOU THINK I WOULDN'T WANT TO **SEE** YOU **DIE?!**
WHY DO YOU THINK I WAS **SOFTENING** YOU UP--TIRING YOU BY SENDING YOU ACROSS THE MULTIVERSE?! I DON'T KNOW EXACTLY HOW STRONG YOU REALLY **ARE.**
I'M NOT STUPID ENOUGH TO THINK I COULD BEST YOU IN HAND-TO-HAND COMBAT--BUT THAT IS WHAT **I WANT.**
DID YOU THINK ANYTHING LESS THAN **KILLING** YOU WITH MY **BARE HANDS** WOULD SATISFY ME?!

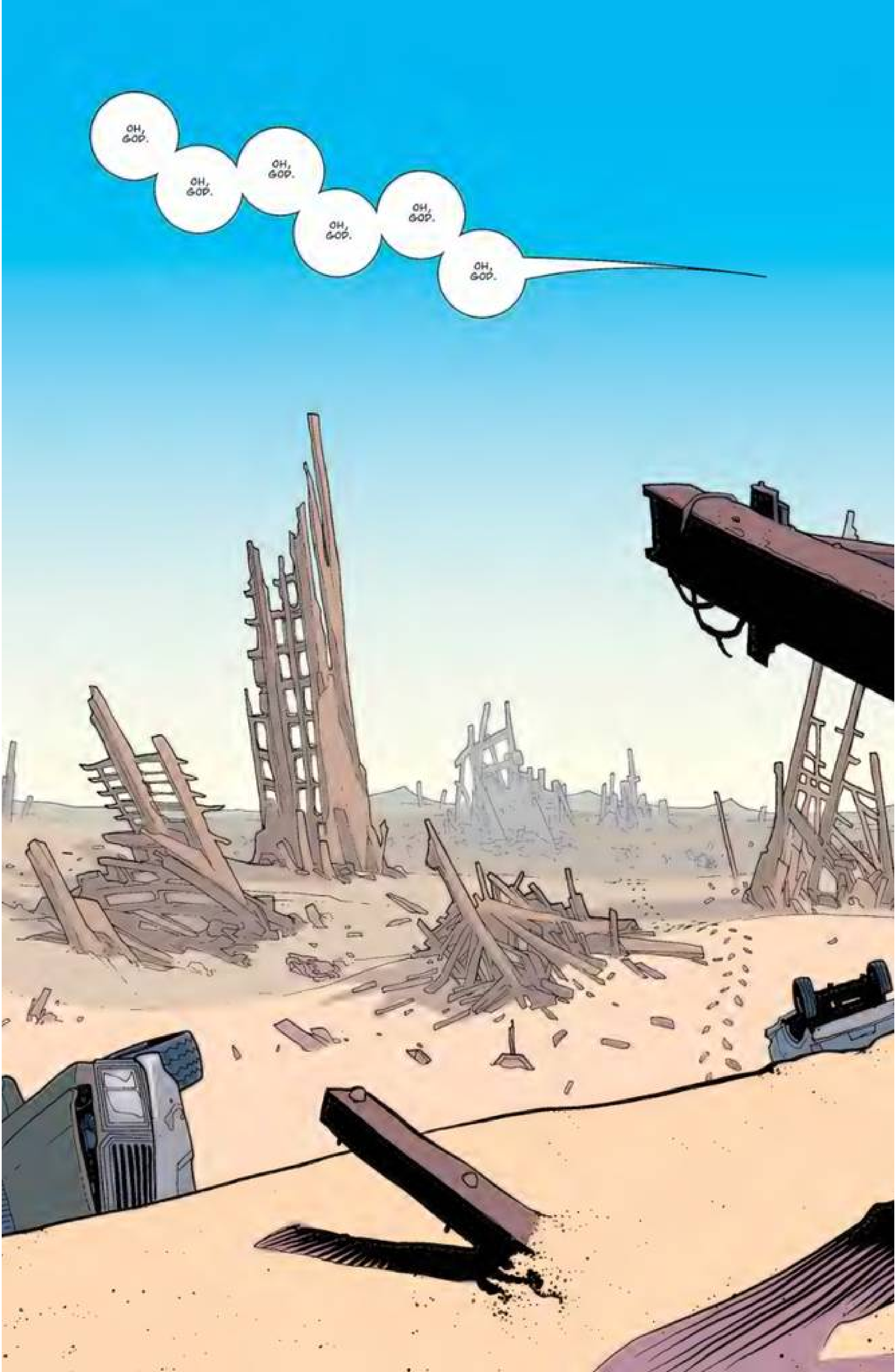

STOP!!
POW!
NO... LET'S GET THIS OVER WITH. I WANT TO GET BACK TO YOUR MOTHER--FINISH WHAT I STARTED!
DON'T EVER THREATEN MY FAMILY!!
FWOOSH!!
FWOKK!!
THRAKK!

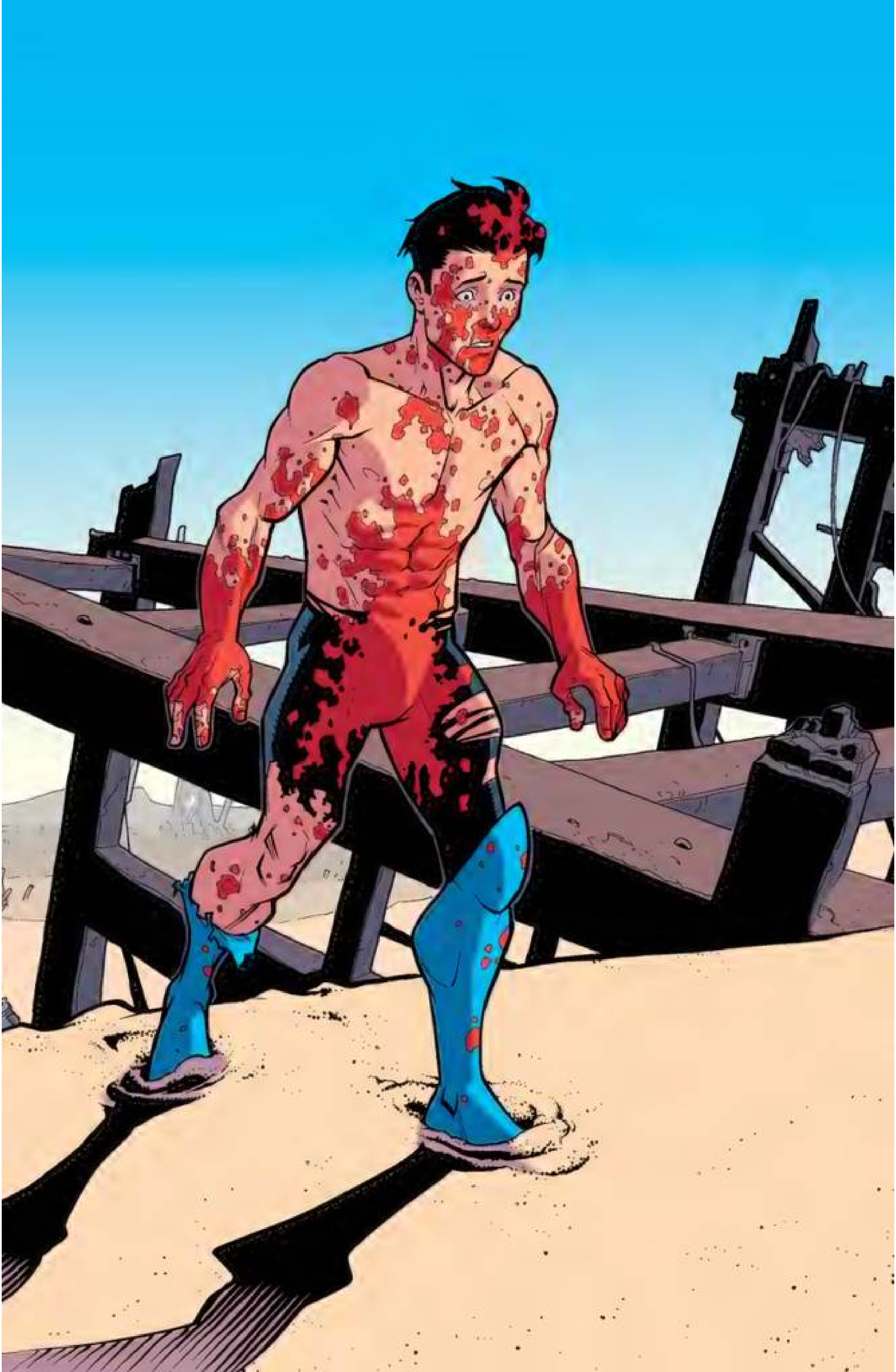

HUFF
HUFF
HUFF
HUFF
I THOUGHT YOU WERE--
I THOUGHT--
I THOUGHT YOU WERE STRONGER.

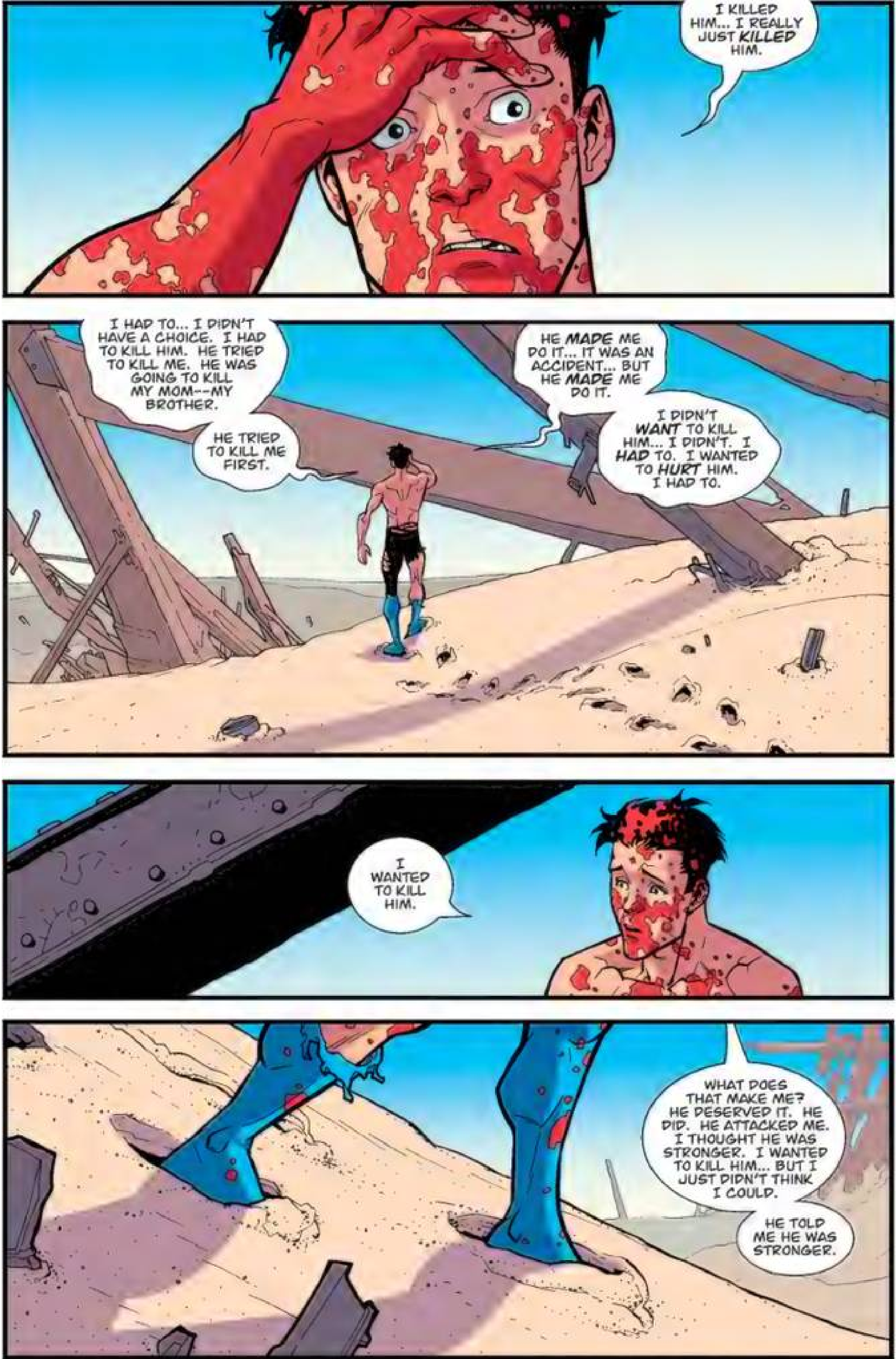

OH, GOD...
RYU

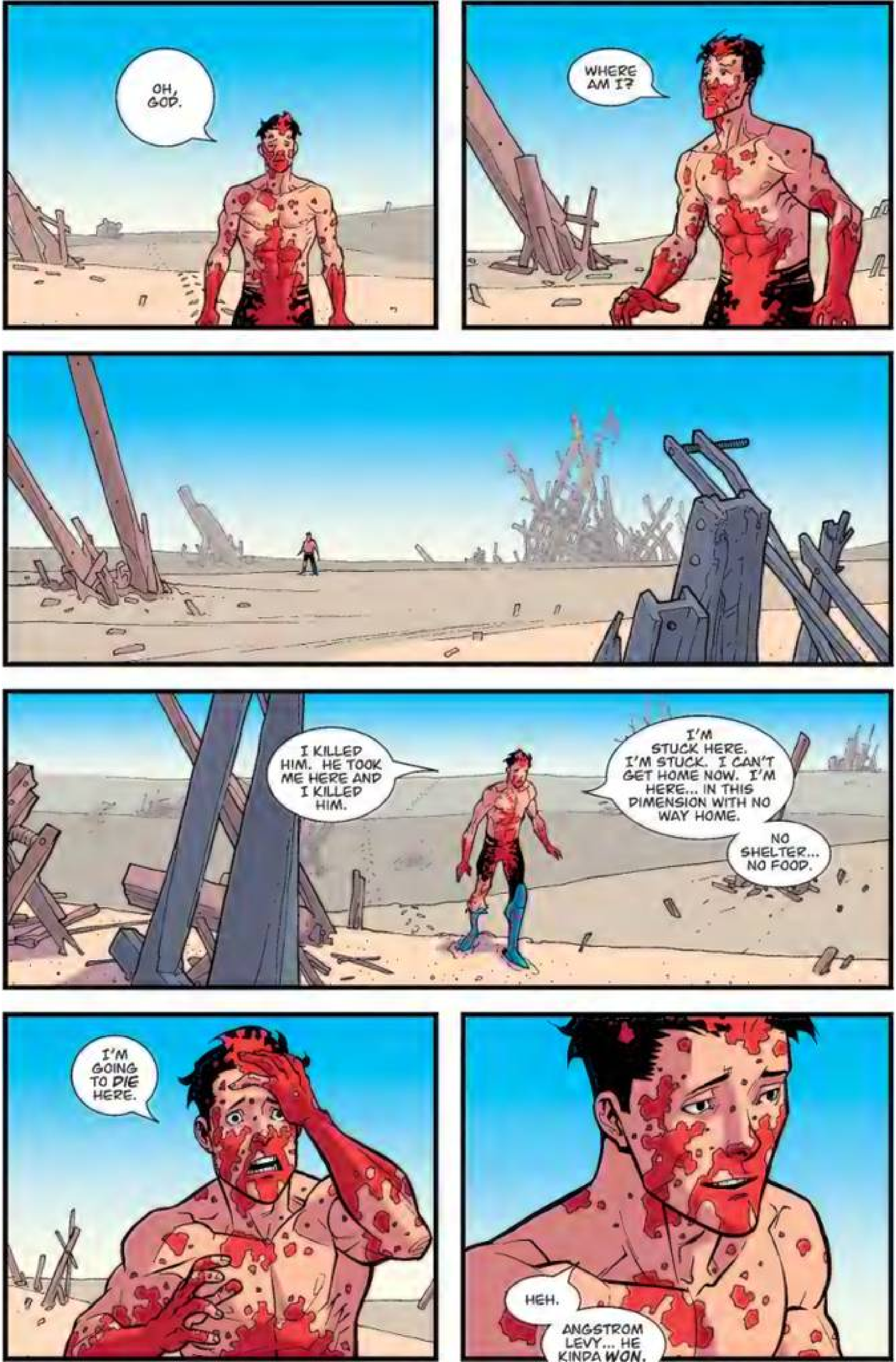
ISSUE THIRTY-FOUR

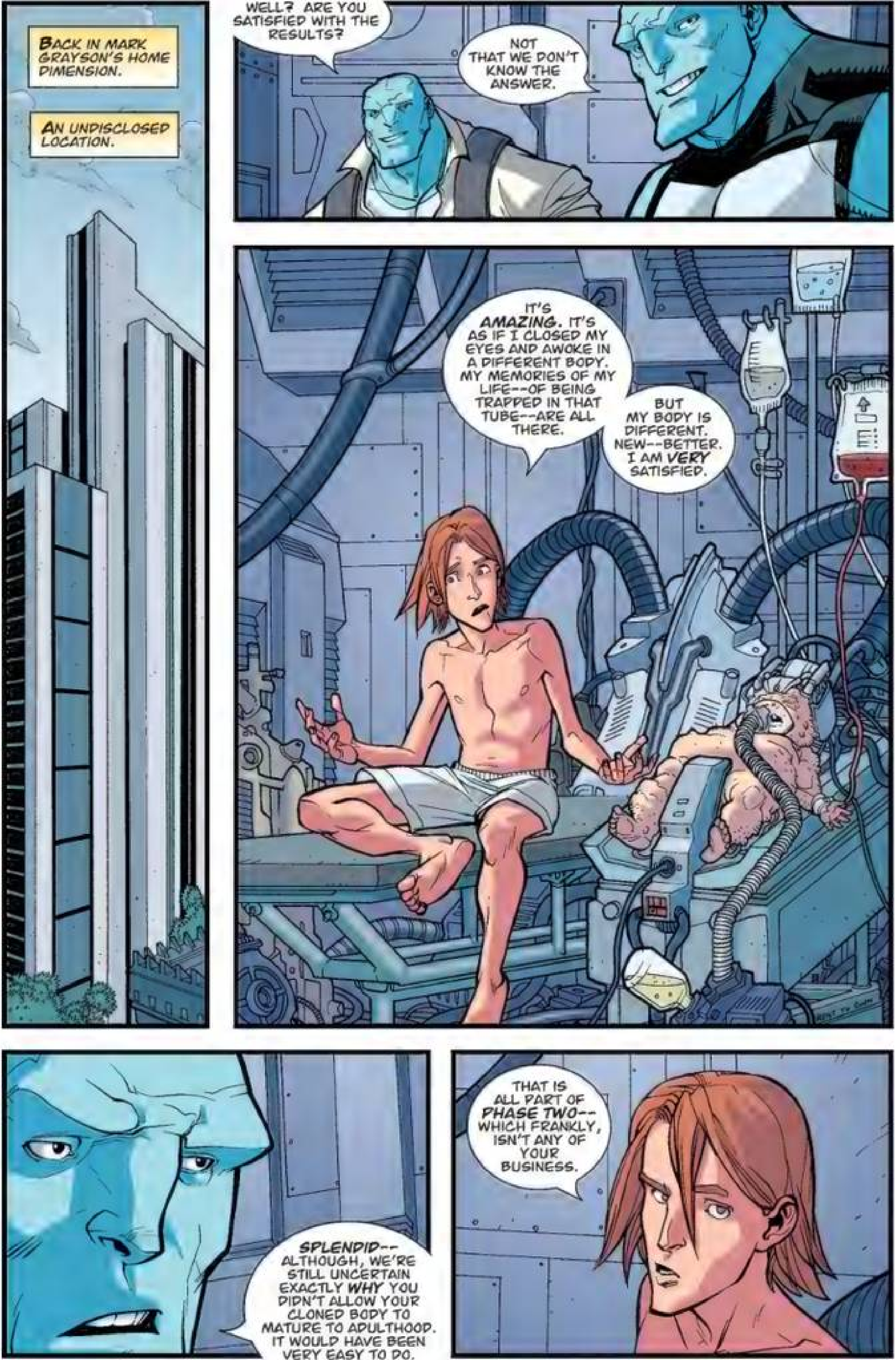

VOOSH!!
SO...
UH...
YEAH?
SHOULDN'T BE MORE THAN ANOTHER COUPLE HOURS OR SO...
I THINK.
WHEN WE GET THERE-- YOU THINK YOU CAN STOP BY DEBBIE'S PLACE? I WANT TO CHECK IN, SEE WHAT'S GOING ON.
I'M WORRIED. MARK WOULDN'T HAVE LEFT IN A HURRY LIKE THAT IF IT WASN'T IMPORTANT.
YEAH. SURE.
I'M WORRIED TOO.

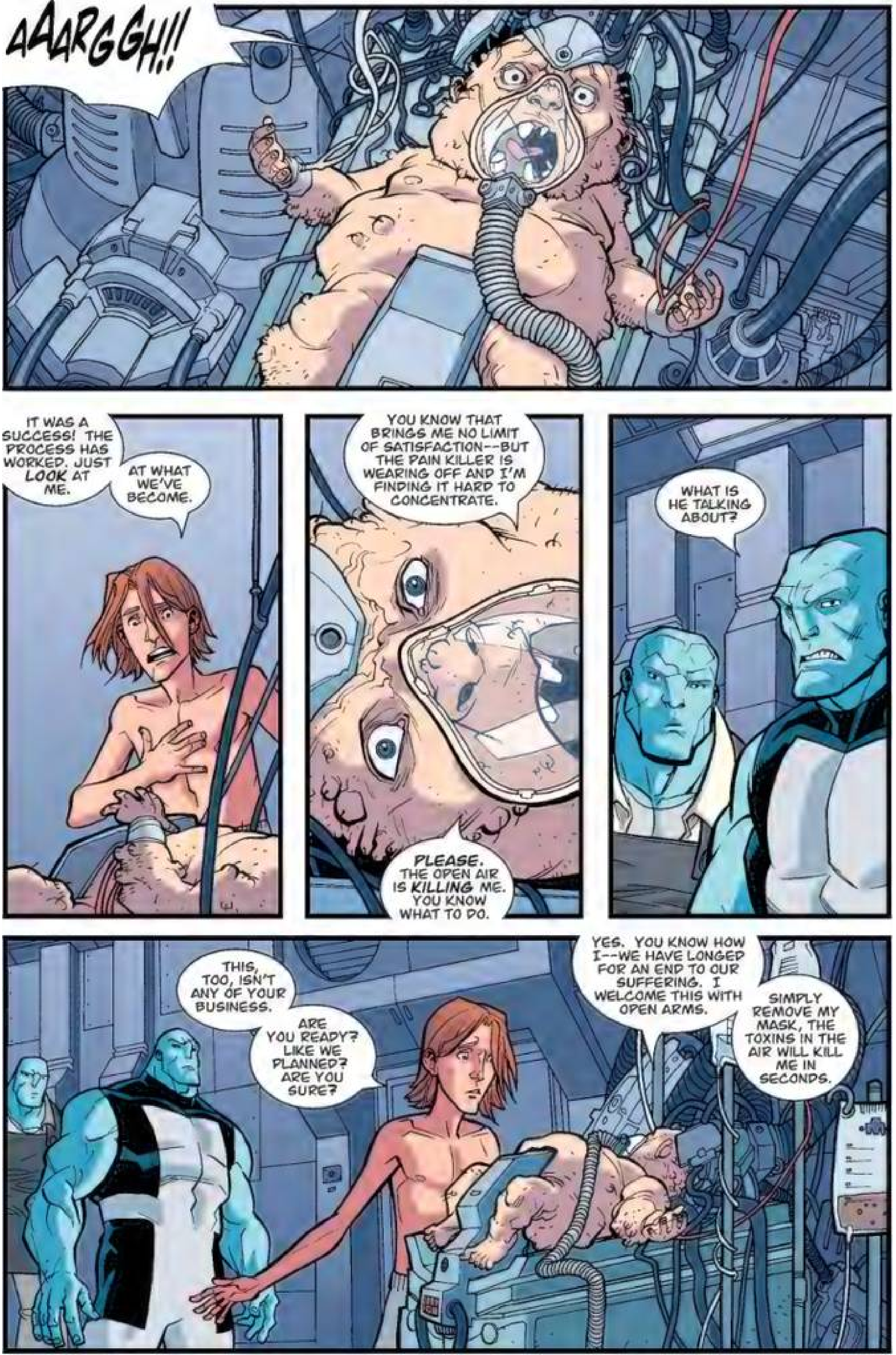

OH, GOD.
OH, GOD.
OH, GOD.
OH, GOD.
OH, GOD.
OH, GOD.

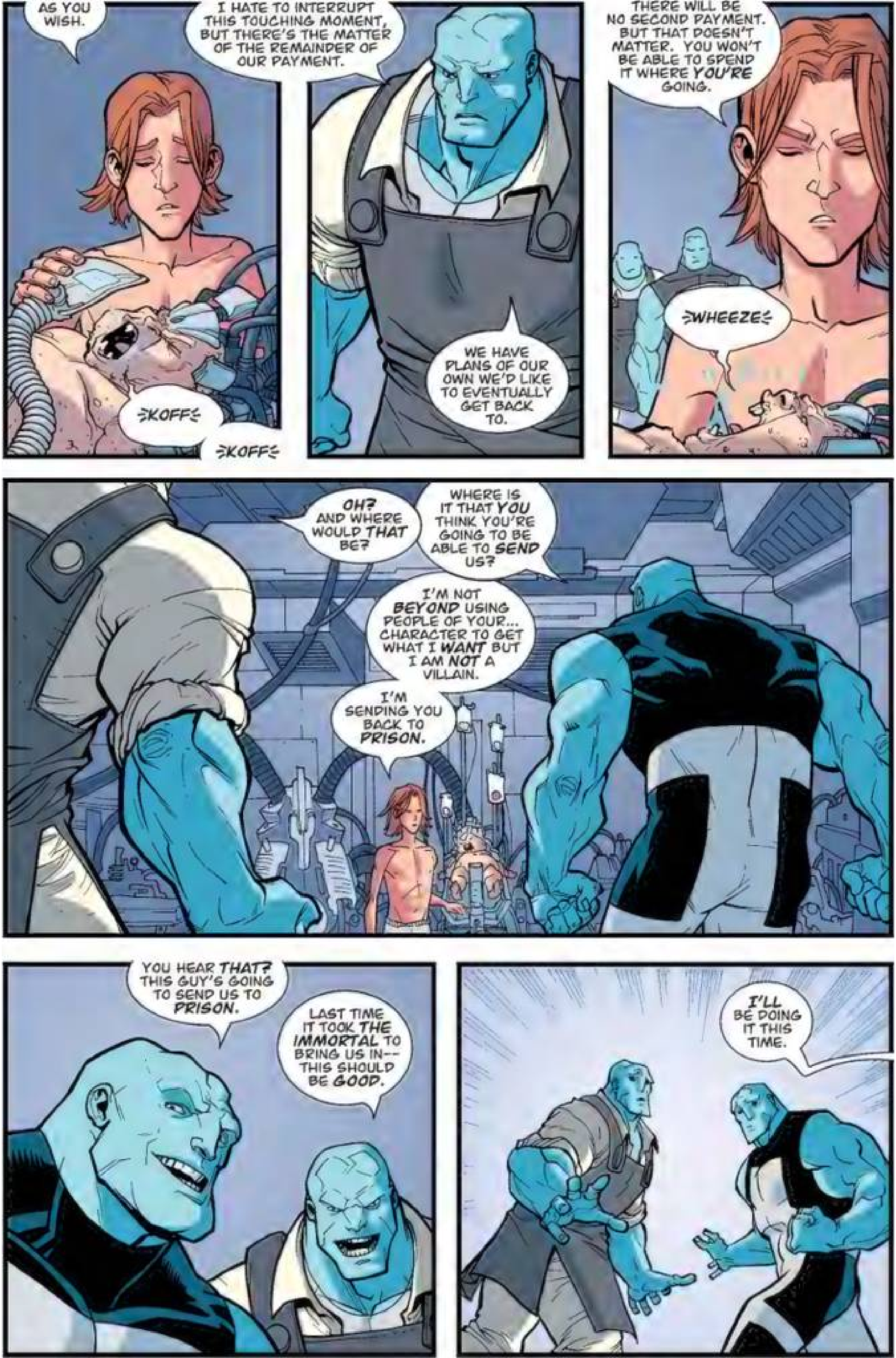


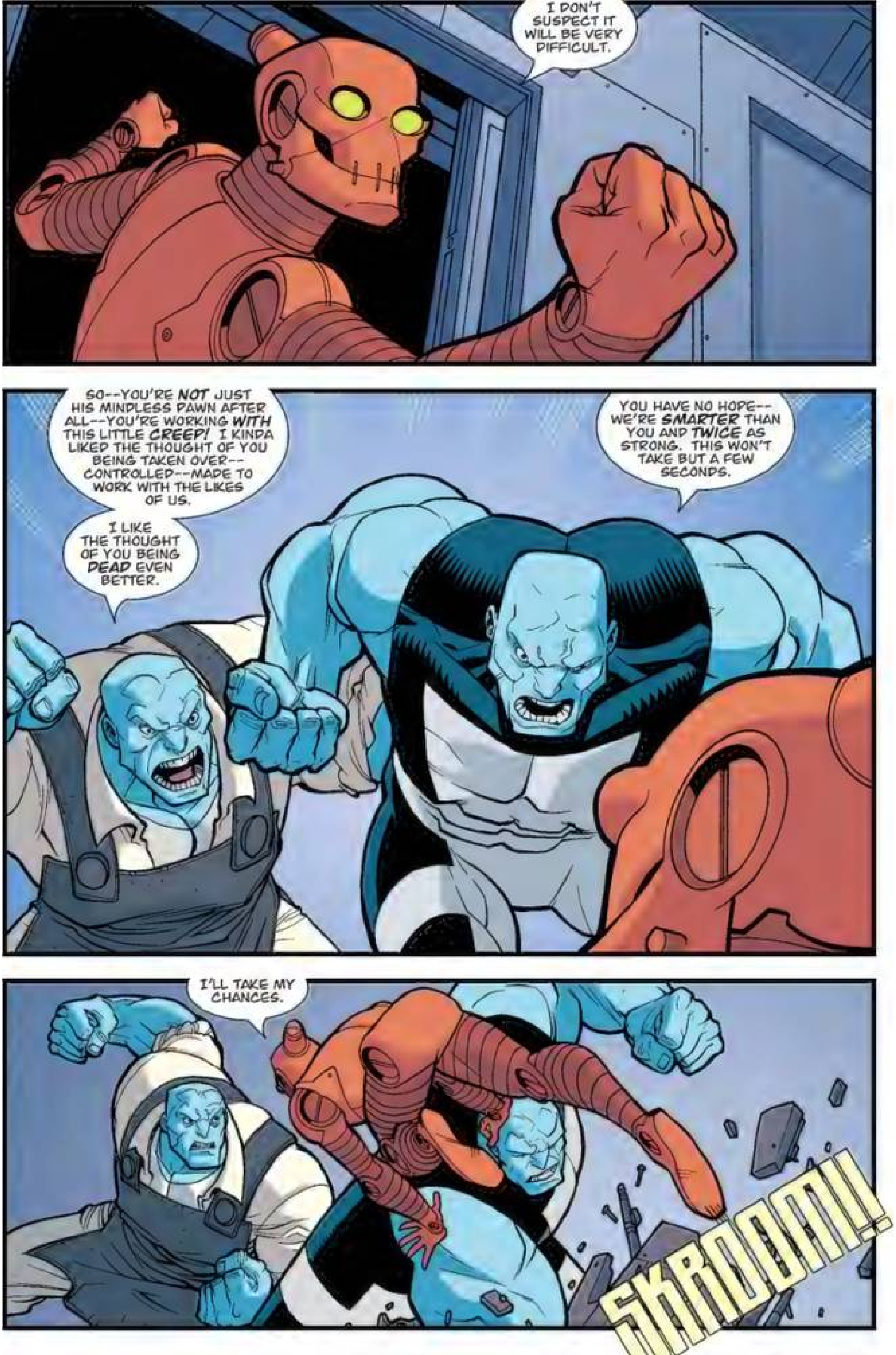

I KILLED HIM... I REALLY JUST **KILLED** HIM.
I HAD TO... I DIDN'T HAVE A CHOICE. I HAD TO KILL HIM. HE TRIED TO KILL ME. HE WAS GOING TO KILL MY MOM--MY BROTHER.
HE TRIED TO KILL ME FIRST.
HE **MADE** ME DO IT... IT WAS AN ACCIDENT... BUT HE **MADE** ME DO IT.
I DIDN'T **WANT** TO KILL HIM... I DIDN'T. I **HAD** TO. I WANTED TO **HURT** HIM. I HAD TO.
I WANTED TO KILL HIM.
WHAT DOES THAT MAKE ME? HE DESERVED IT. HE DID. HE ATTACKED ME. I THOUGHT HE WAS STRONGER. I WANTED TO KILL HIM... BUT I JUST DIDN'T THINK I COULD.
HE TOLD ME HE WAS STRONGER.

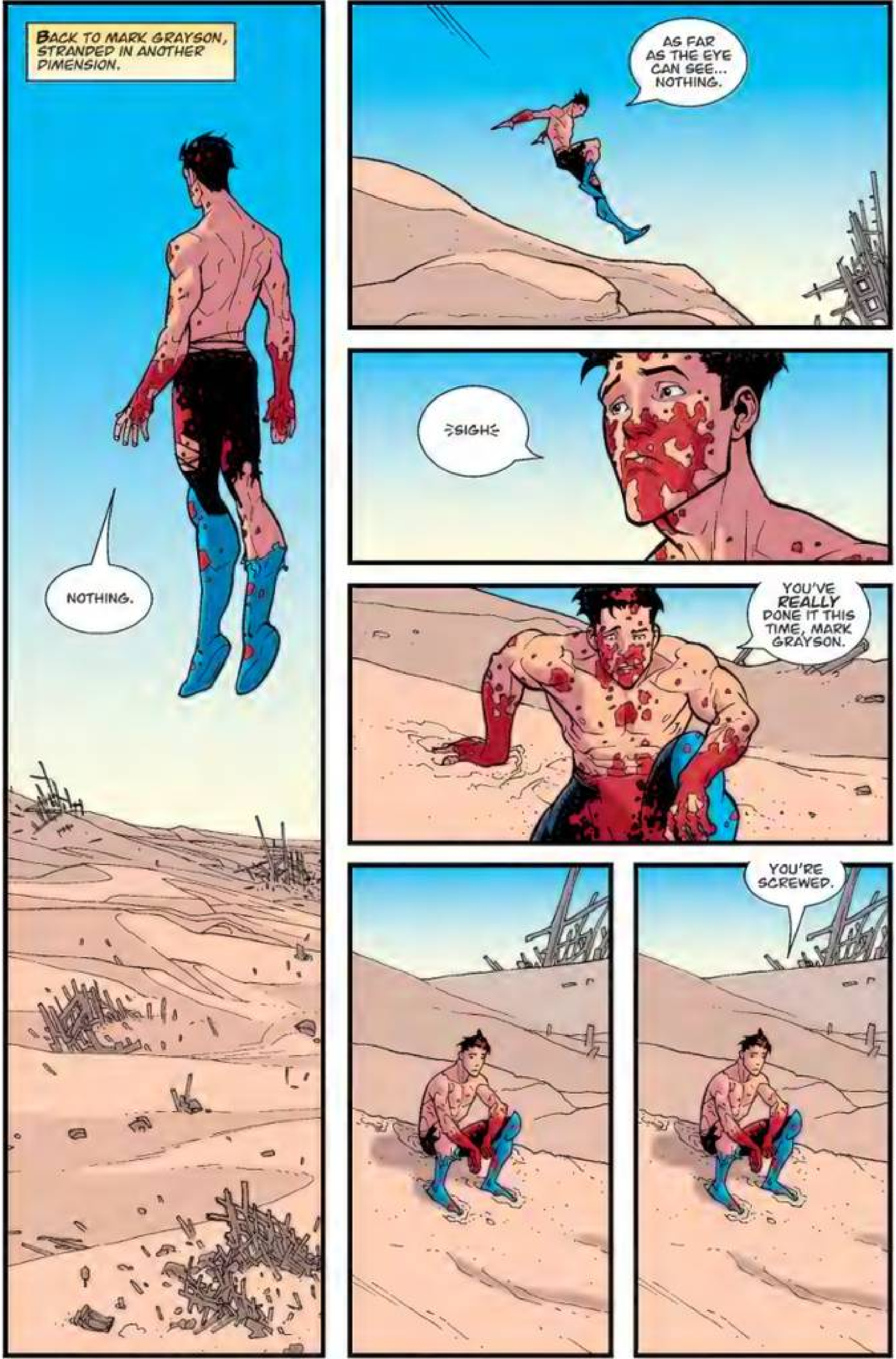

OH, GOD.
WHERE AM I?
I KILLED HIM. HE TOOK ME HERE AND I KILLED HIM.
I'M STUCK HERE. I'M STUCK. I CAN'T GET HOME NOW. I'M HERE... IN THIS DIMENSION WITH NO WAY HOME.
NO SHELTER... NO FOOD.
I'M GOING TO *DIE* HERE.
HEH.
ANGSTROM LEVY... HE KINDA **WON.**

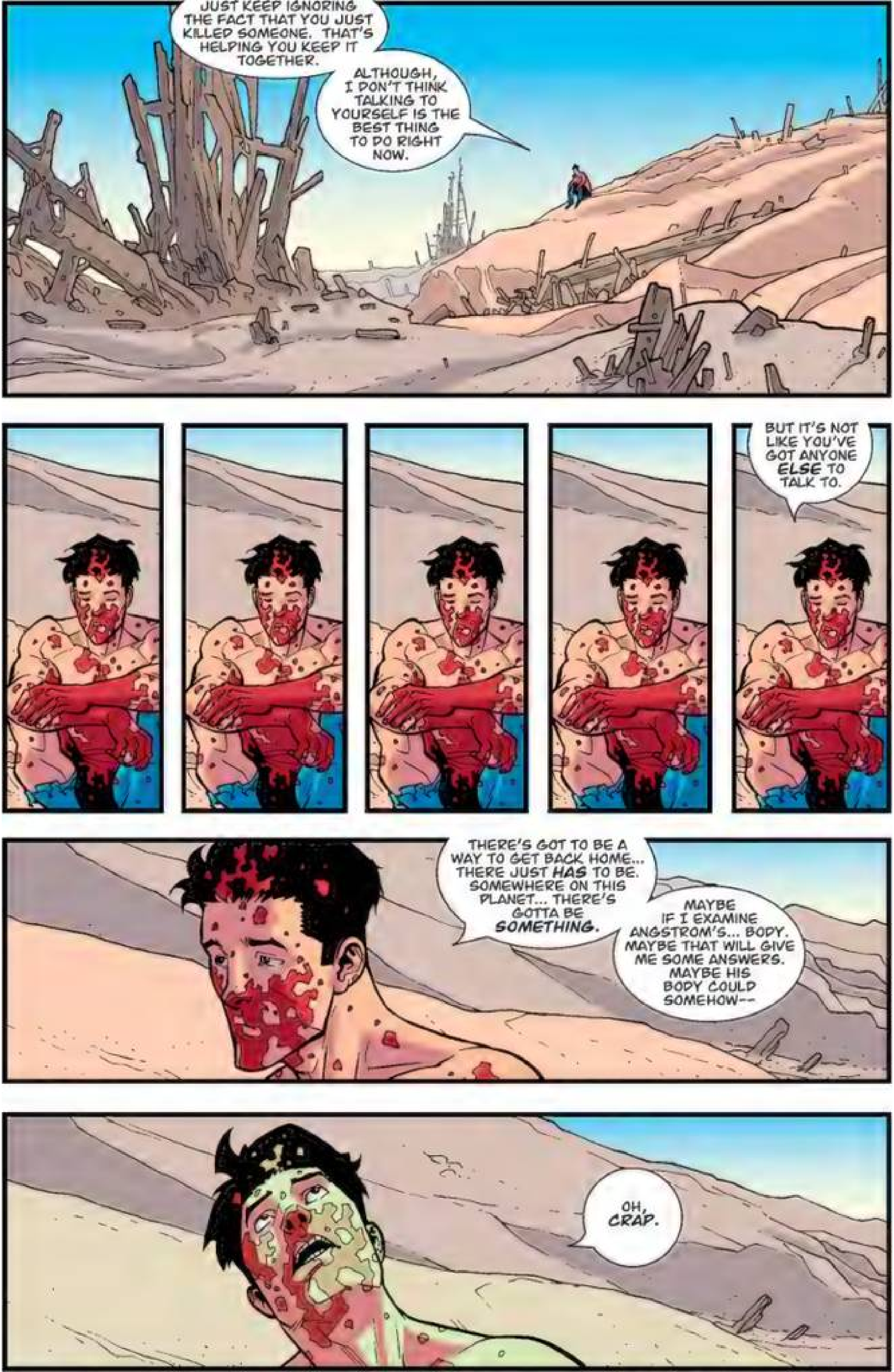

BACK IN MARK GRAYSON'S HOME DIMENSION.
AN UNDISCLOSED LOCATION.
WELL? ARE YOU SATISFIED WITH THE RESULTS?
NOT THAT WE DON'T KNOW THE ANSWER.
IT'S **AMAZING.** IT'S AS IF I CLOSED MY EYES AND AWOKE IN A DIFFERENT BODY. MY MEMORIES OF MY LIFE--OF BEING TRAPPED IN THAT TUBE--ARE ALL THERE.
BUT MY BODY IS DIFFERENT. NEW--BETTER. I AM ***VERY*** SATISFIED.
SPLENDID--ALTHOUGH, WE'RE STILL UNCERTAIN EXACTLY ***WHY*** YOU DIDN'T ALLOW YOUR CLONED BODY TO MATURE TO ADULTHOOD. IT WOULD HAVE BEEN VERY EASY TO DO.
THAT IS ALL PART OF ***PHASE TWO***--WHICH FRANKLY, ISN'T ANY OF YOUR BUSINESS.

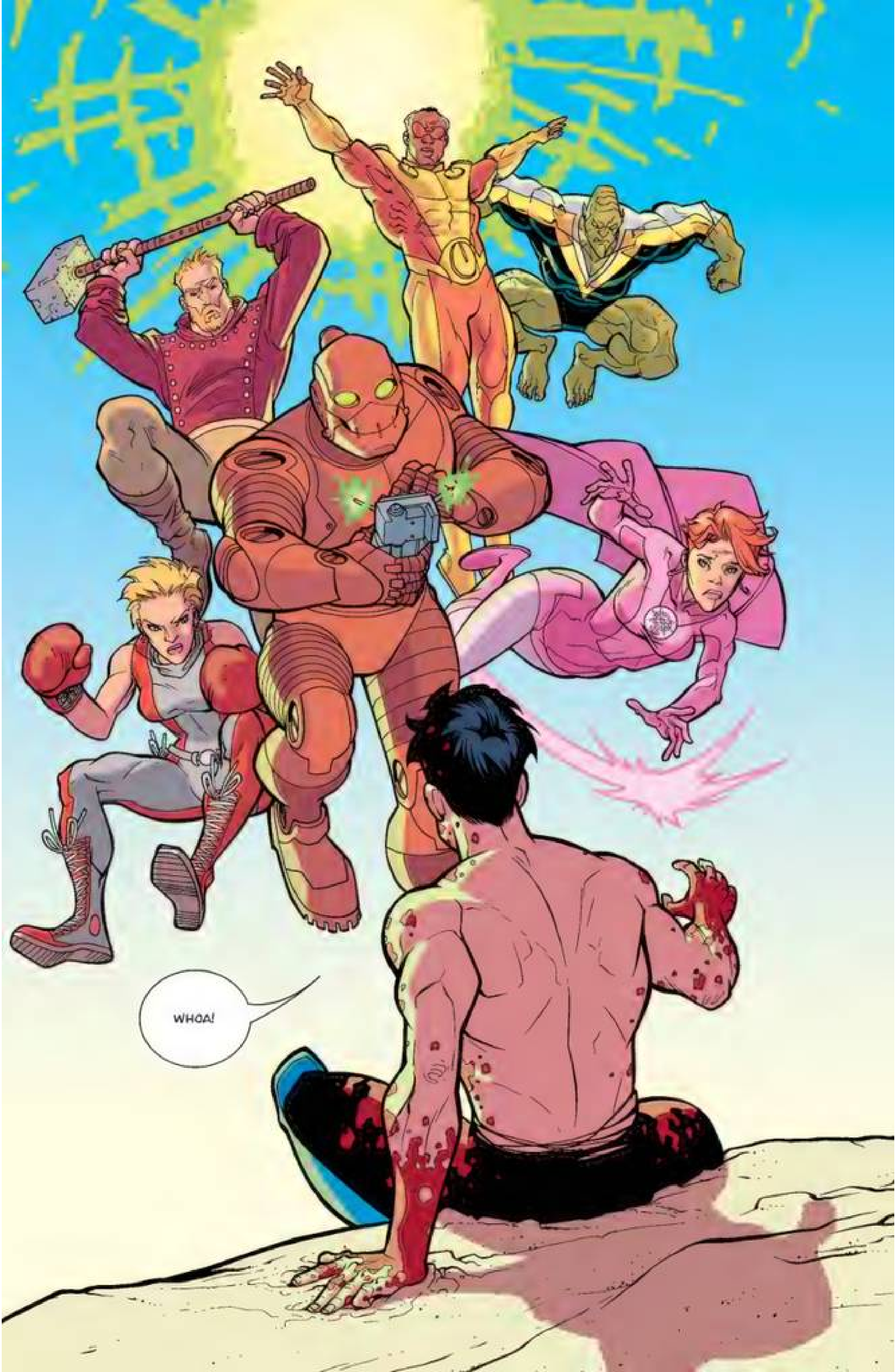

AAARGGH!!
IT WAS A SUCCESS! THE PROCESS HAS WORKED. JUST LOOK AT ME.
AT WHAT WE'VE BECOME.
YOU KNOW THAT BRINGS ME NO LIMIT OF SATISFACTION--BUT THE PAIN KILLER IS WEARING OFF AND I'M FINDING IT HARD TO CONCENTRATE.
PLEASE. THE OPEN AIR IS KILLING ME. YOU KNOW WHAT TO DO.
WHAT IS HE TALKING ABOUT?
THIS, TOO, ISN'T ANY OF YOUR BUSINESS.
ARE YOU READY? LIKE WE PLANNED? ARE YOU SURE?
YES. YOU KNOW HOW I--WE HAVE LONGED FOR AN END TO OUR SUFFERING. I WELCOME THIS WITH OPEN ARMS.
SIMPLY REMOVE MY MASK, THE TOXINS IN THE AIR WILL KILL ME IN SECONDS.

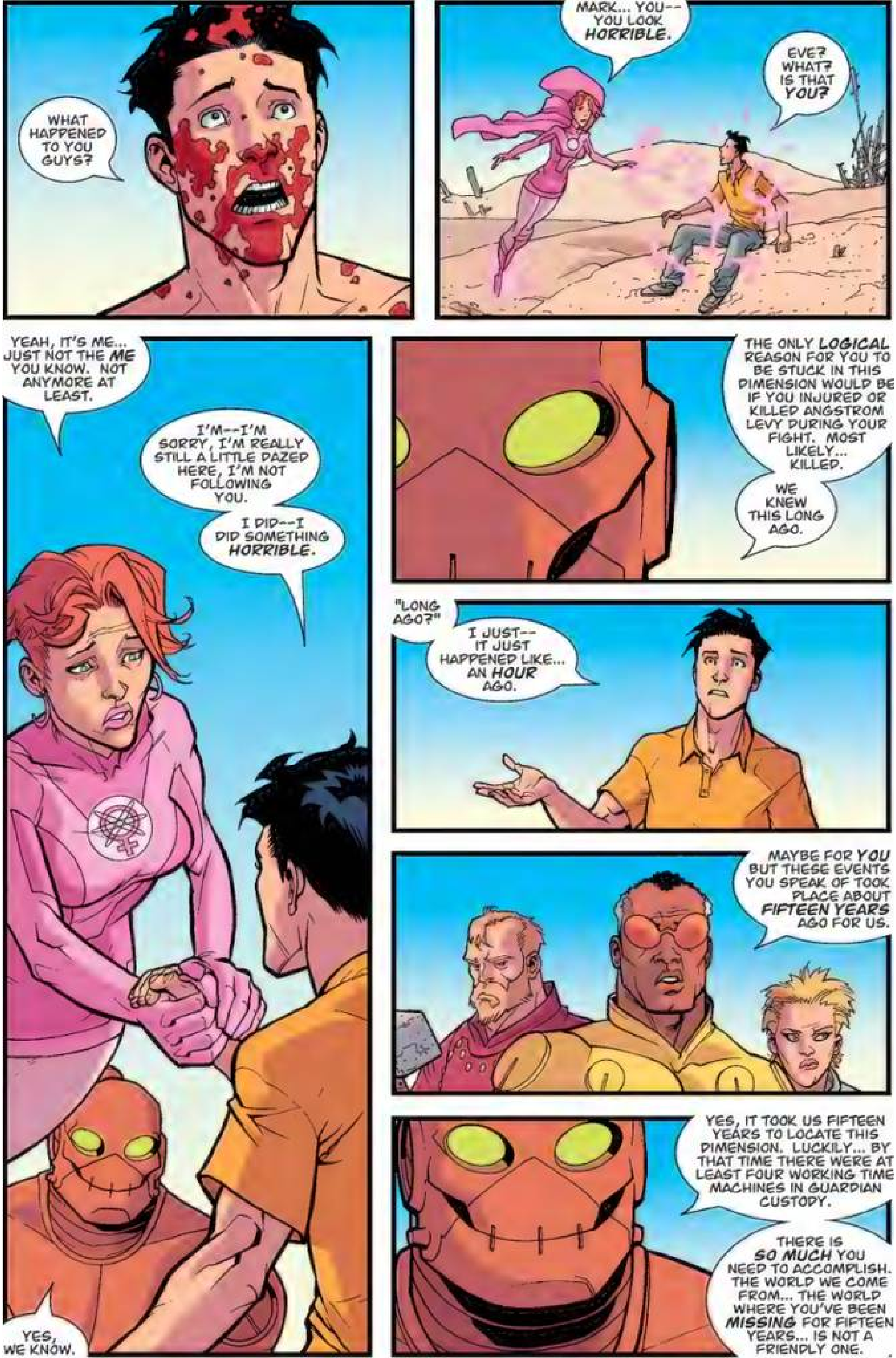

AS YOU WISH.
I HATE TO INTERRUPT THIS TOUCHING MOMENT, BUT THERE'S THE MATTER OF THE REMAINDER OF OUR PAYMENT.
WE HAVE PLANS OF OUR OWN WE'D LIKE TO EVENTUALLY GET BACK TO.
KOFF
KOFF
THERE WILL BE NO SECOND PAYMENT. BUT THAT DOESN'T MATTER. YOU WON'T BE ABLE TO SPEND IT WHERE YOU'RE GOING.
WHEEZE
OH? AND WHERE WOULD THAT BE?
WHERE IS IT THAT YOU THINK YOU'RE GOING TO BE ABLE TO SEND US?
I'M NOT BEYOND USING PEOPLE OF YOUR... CHARACTER TO GET WHAT I WANT BUT I AM NOT A VILLAIN.
I'M SENDING YOU BACK TO PRISON.
YOU HEAR THAT? THIS GUY'S GOING TO SEND US TO PRISON.
LAST TIME IT TOOK THE IMMORTAL TO BRING US IN-- THIS SHOULD BE GOOD.
I'LL BE DOING IT THIS TIME.

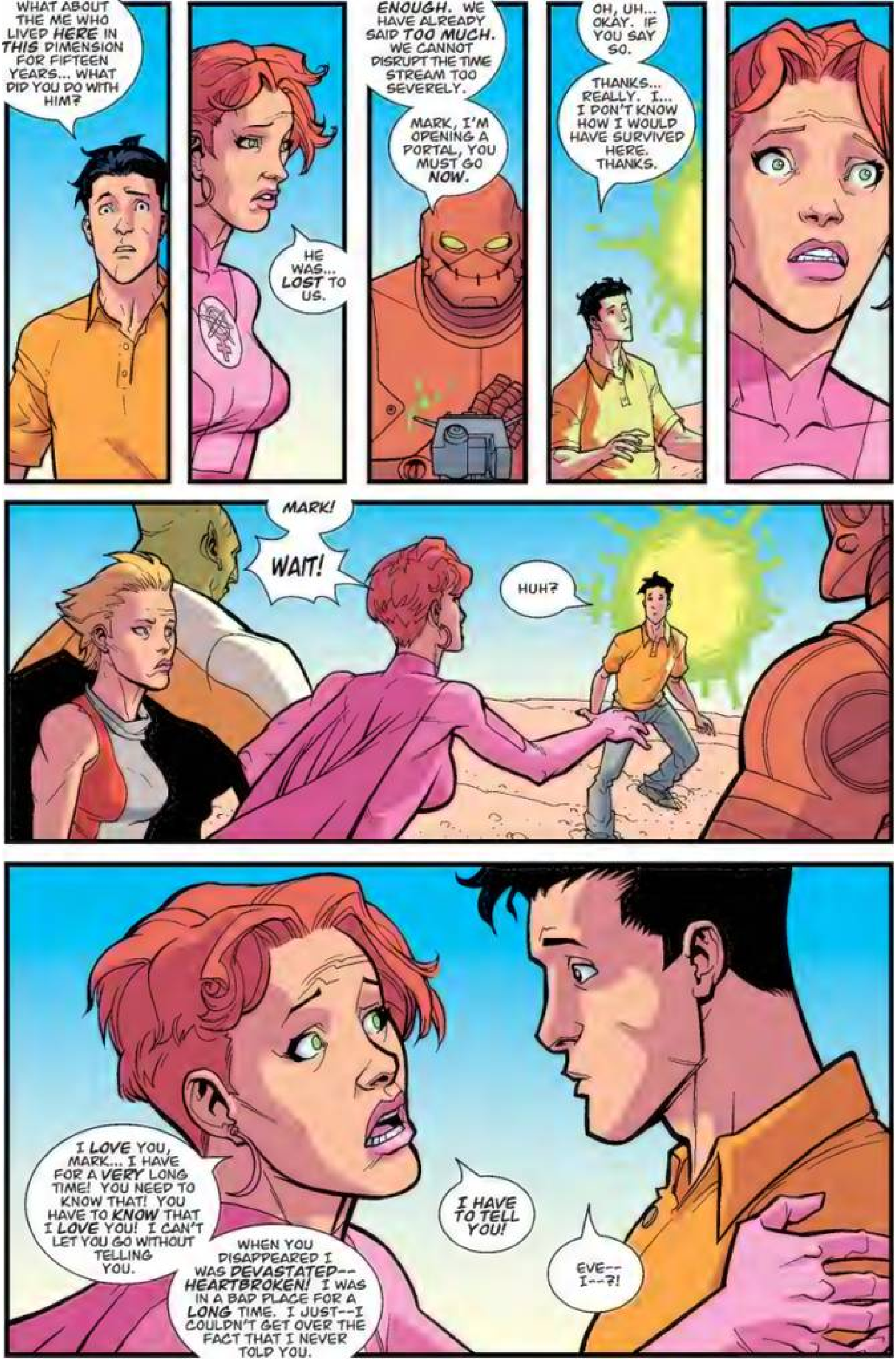

I DON'T SUSPECT IT WILL BE VERY DIFFICULT.
SO--YOU'RE NOT JUST HIS MINDLESS PAWN AFTER ALL--YOU'RE WORKING WITH THIS LITTLE CREEP! I KINDA LIKED THE THOUGHT OF YOU BEING TAKEN OVER--CONTROLLED--MADE TO WORK WITH THE LIKES OF US.
I LIKE THE THOUGHT OF YOU BEING DEAD EVEN BETTER.
YOU HAVE NO HOPE--WE'RE SMARTER THAN YOU AND TWICE AS STRONG. THIS WON'T TAKE BUT A FEW SECONDS.
I'LL TAKE MY CHANCES.
SKROOM!!

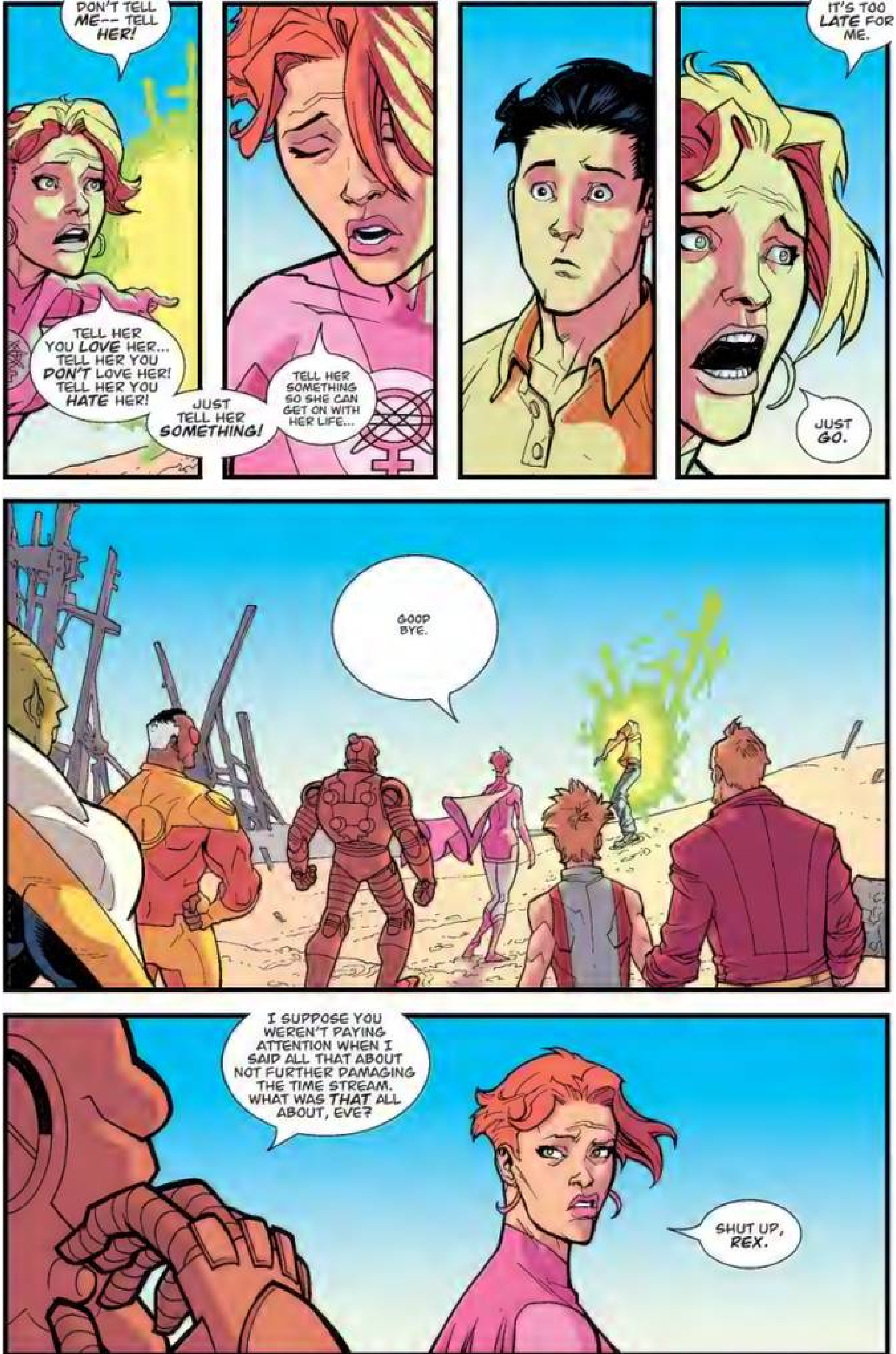

BACK TO MARK GRAYSON, STRANDED IN ANOTHER DIMENSION.
NOTHING.
AS FAR AS THE EYE CAN SEE... NOTHING.
SIGH
YOU'VE REALLY DONE IT THIS TIME, MARK GRAYSON.
YOU'RE SCREWED.

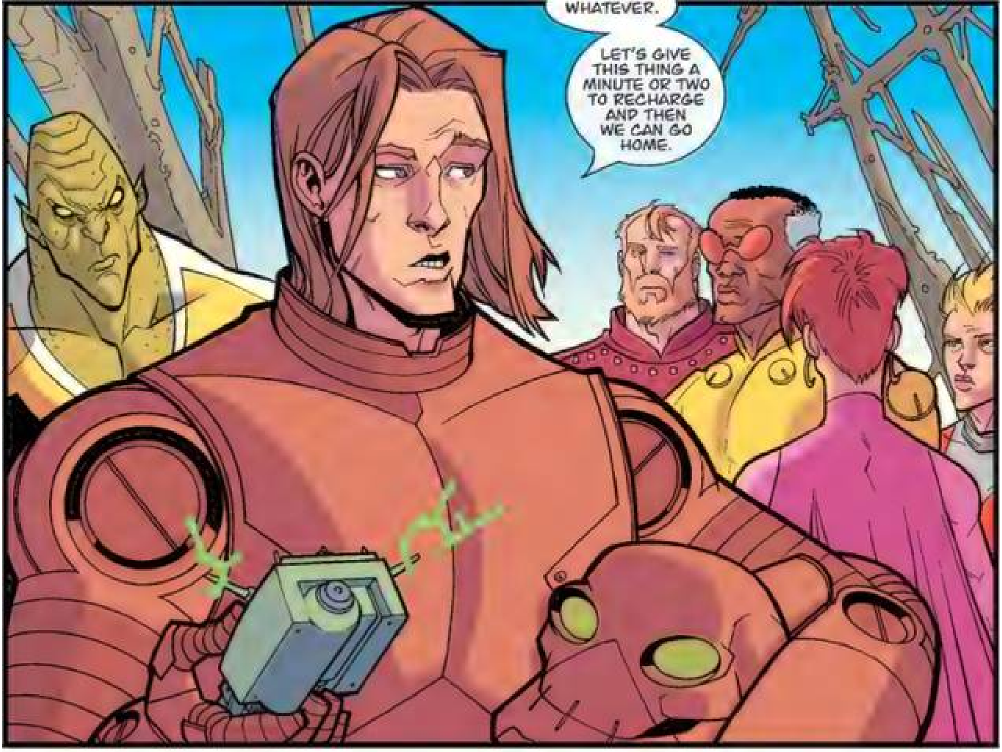

JUST KEEP IGNORING THE FACT THAT YOU JUST KILLED SOMEONE. THAT'S HELPING YOU KEEP IT TOGETHER.
ALTHOUGH, I DON'T THINK TALKING TO YOURSELF IS THE BEST THING TO DO RIGHT NOW.
BUT IT'S NOT LIKE YOU'VE GOT ANYONE ELSE TO TALK TO.
THERE'S GOT TO BE A WAY TO GET BACK HOME... THERE JUST HAS TO BE. SOMEWHERE ON THIS PLANET... THERE'S GOTTA BE SOMETHING.
MAYBE IF I EXAMINE ANGSTROM'S... BODY. MAYBE THAT WILL GIVE ME SOME ANSWERS. MAYBE HIS BODY COULD SOMEHOW--
OH, CRAP.

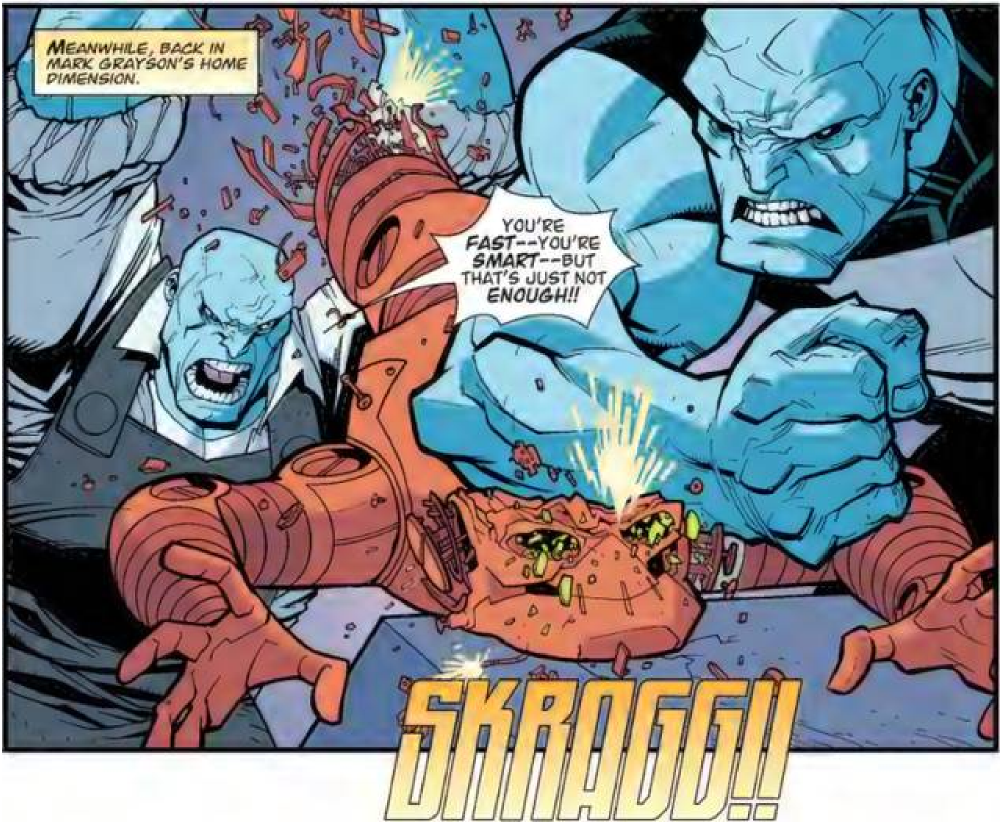

WHOA!

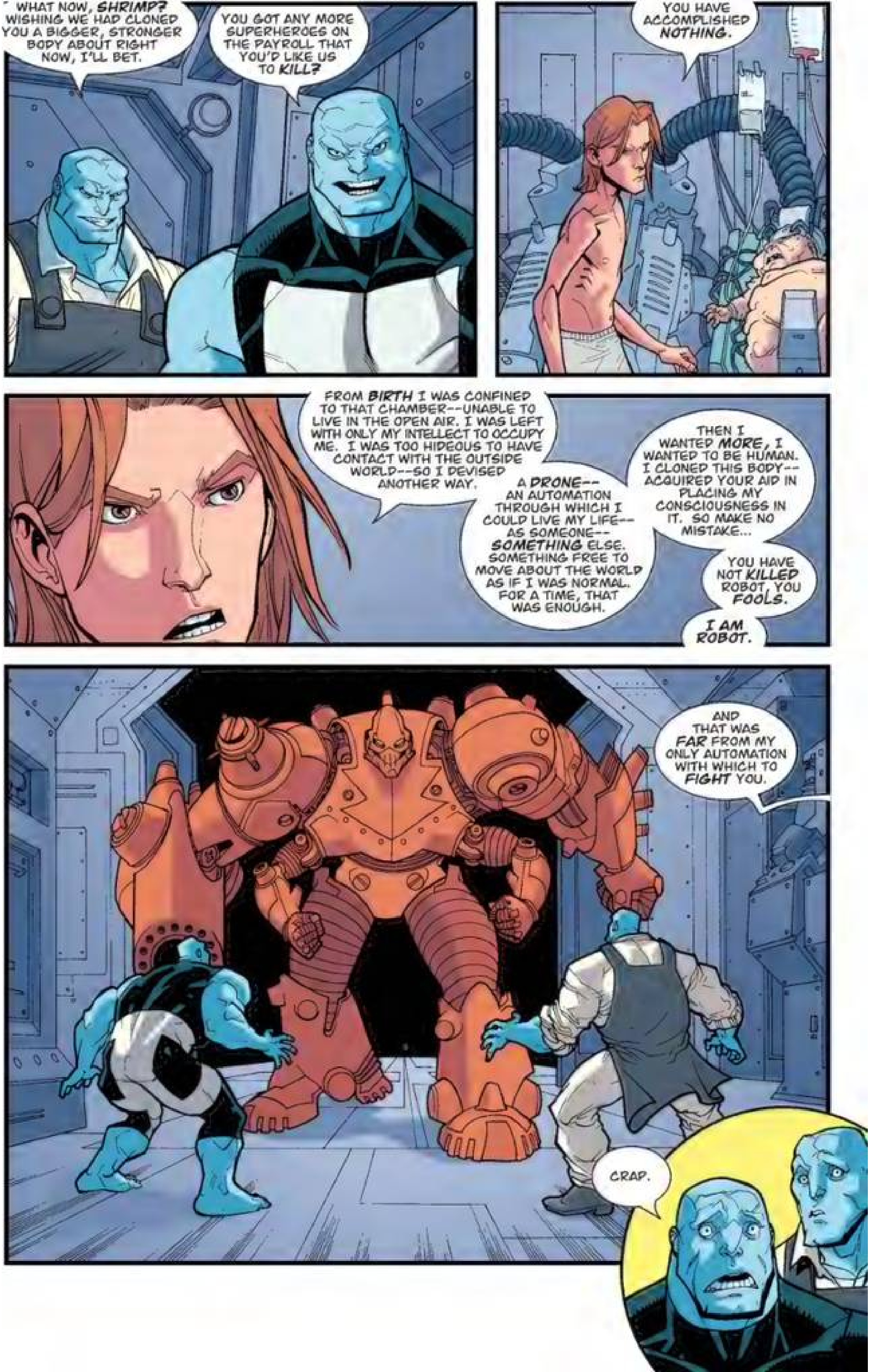

WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU GUYS?
MARK... YOU-- YOU LOOK HORRIBLE.
EVE? WHAT? IS THAT YOU?
YEAH, IT'S ME... JUST NOT THE ME YOU KNOW. NOT ANYMORE AT LEAST.
I'M--I'M SORRY, I'M REALLY STILL A LITTLE DAZED HERE, I'M NOT FOLLOWING YOU.
I DID--I DID SOMETHING HORRIBLE.
YES, WE KNOW.
THE ONLY LOGICAL REASON FOR YOU TO BE STUCK IN THIS DIMENSION WOULD BE IF YOU INJURED OR KILLED ANGSTROM LEVY DURING YOUR FIGHT. MOST LIKELY... KILLED.
WE KNEW THIS LONG AGO.
"LONG AGO?"
I JUST-- IT JUST HAPPENED LIKE... AN HOUR AGO.
MAYBE FOR YOU BUT THESE EVENTS YOU SPEAK OF TOOK PLACE ABOUT FIFTEEN YEARS AGO FOR US.
YES, IT TOOK US FIFTEEN YEARS TO LOCATE THIS DIMENSION. LUCKILY... BY THAT TIME THERE WERE AT LEAST FOUR WORKING TIME MACHINES IN GUARDIAN CUSTODY.
THERE IS SO MUCH YOU NEED TO ACCOMPLISH. THE WORLD WE COME FROM... THE WORLD WHERE YOU'VE BEEN MISSING FOR FIFTEEN YEARS... IS NOT A FRIENDLY ONE.

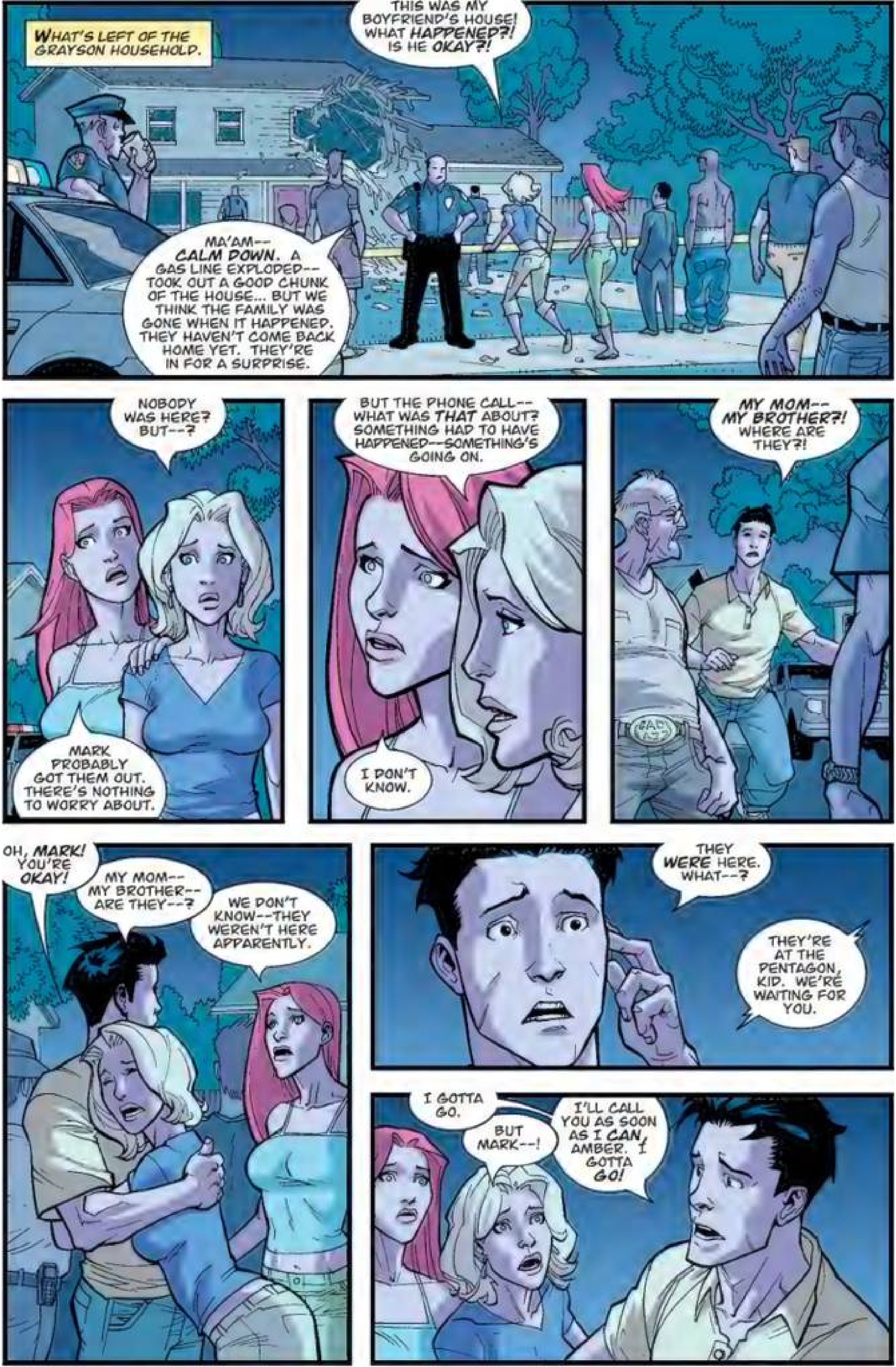

WHAT ABOUT THE ME WHO LIVED *HERE* IN *THIS* DIMENSION FOR FIFTEEN YEARS... WHAT DID YOU DO WITH HIM?
HE WAS... *LOST* TO US.
ENOUGH. WE HAVE ALREADY SAID *TOO MUCH.* WE CANNOT DISRUPT THE TIME STREAM TOO SEVERELY.
MARK, I'M OPENING A PORTAL, YOU MUST GO *NOW.*
OH, UH... OKAY. IF YOU SAY SO.
THANKS... REALLY. I... I DON'T KNOW HOW I WOULD HAVE SURVIVED HERE. THANKS.
MARK!
WAIT!
HUH?
I *LOVE* YOU, MARK... I HAVE FOR A *VERY* LONG TIME! YOU NEED TO KNOW THAT! YOU HAVE TO *KNOW* THAT I *LOVE* YOU! I CAN'T LET YOU GO WITHOUT TELLING YOU.
WHEN YOU DISAPPEARED I WAS *DEVASTATED--HEARTBROKEN!* I WAS IN A BAD PLACE FOR A *LONG* TIME. I JUST--I COULDN'T GET OVER THE FACT THAT I NEVER TOLD YOU.
I HAVE TO TELL YOU!
EVE-- I--?!

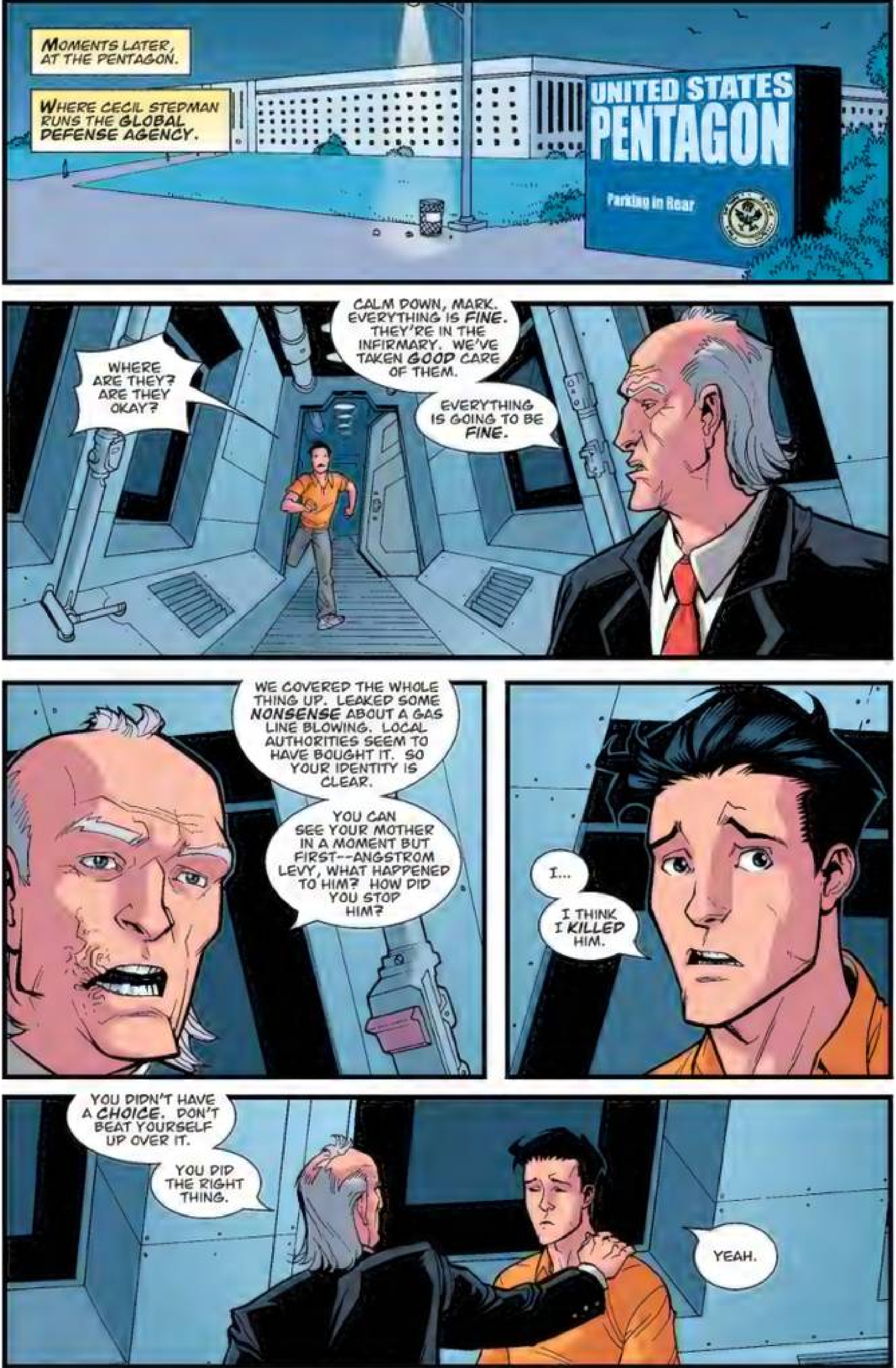

DON'T TELL ME-- TELL HER!
TELL HER YOU LOVE HER... TELL HER YOU DON'T LOVE HER! TELL HER YOU HATE HER!
JUST TELL HER SOMETHING!
TELL HER SOMETHING SO SHE CAN GET ON WITH HER LIFE...
IT'S TOO LATE FOR ME.
JUST GO.
GOOD BYE.
I SUPPOSE YOU WEREN'T PAYING ATTENTION WHEN I SAID ALL THAT ABOUT NOT FURTHER DAMAGING THE TIME STREAM. WHAT WAS THAT ALL ABOUT, EVE?
SHUT UP, REX.

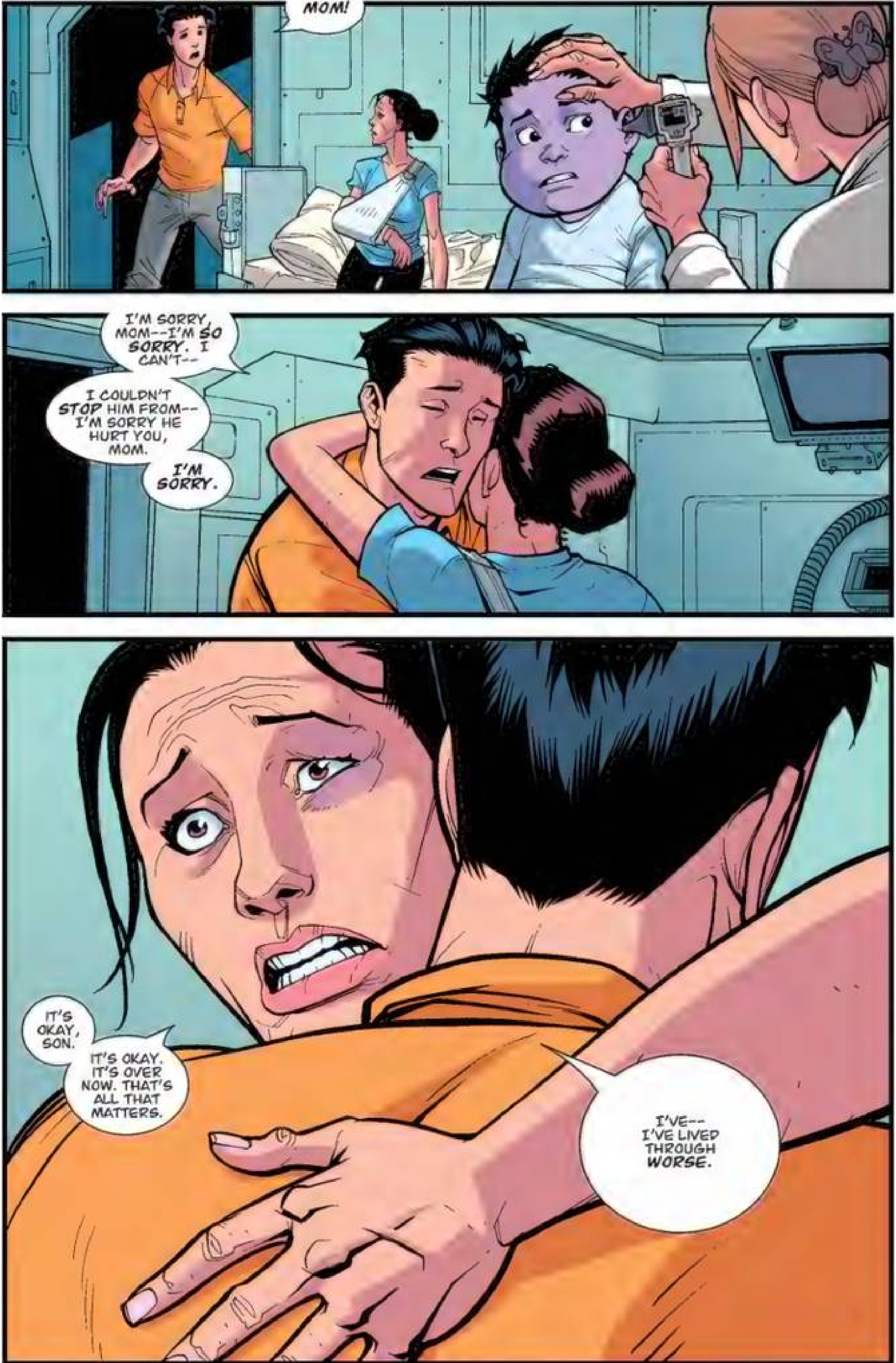

WHATEVER.
LET'S GIVE THIS THING A MINUTE OR TWO TO RECHARGE AND THEN WE CAN GO HOME.


MEANWHILE, BACK IN MARK GRAYSON'S HOME DIMENSION.
YOU'RE FAST--YOU'RE SMART--BUT THAT'S JUST NOT ENOUGH!!
SKRAGG!!

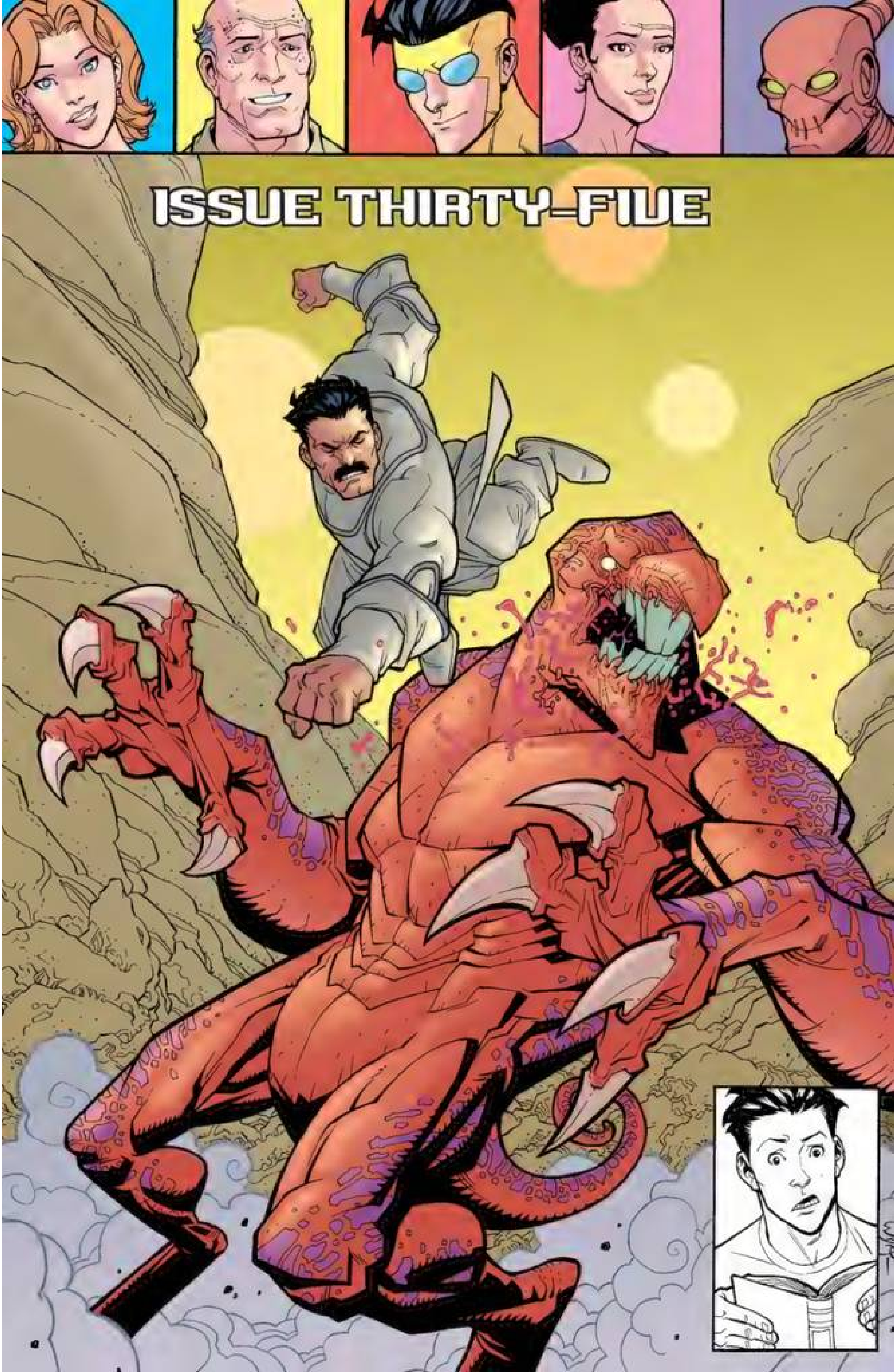

WHAT NOW, SHRIMP? WISHING WE HAD CLONED YOU A BIGGER, STRONGER BODY ABOUT RIGHT NOW, I'LL BET.
YOU GOT ANY MORE SUPERHEROES ON THE PAYROLL THAT YOU'D LIKE US TO KILL?
YOU HAVE ACCOMPLISHED NOTHING.
FROM BIRTH I WAS CONFINED TO THAT CHAMBER--UNABLE TO LIVE IN THE OPEN AIR. I WAS LEFT WITH ONLY MY INTELLECT TO OCCUPY ME. I WAS TOO HIDEOUS TO HAVE CONTACT WITH THE OUTSIDE WORLD--SO I DEVISED ANOTHER WAY.
A DRONE-- AN AUTOMATION THROUGH WHICH I COULD LIVE MY LIFE-- AS SOMEONE-- SOMETHING ELSE. SOMETHING FREE TO MOVE ABOUT THE WORLD AS IF I WAS NORMAL. FOR A TIME, THAT WAS ENOUGH.
THEN I WANTED MORE, I WANTED TO BE HUMAN. I CLONED THIS BODY-- ACQUIRED YOUR AID IN PLACING MY CONSCIOUSNESS IN IT. SO MAKE NO MISTAKE...
YOU HAVE NOT KILLED ROBOT, YOU FOOLS.
I AM ROBOT.
AND THAT WAS FAR FROM MY ONLY AUTOMATION WITH WHICH TO FIGHT YOU.
CRAP.

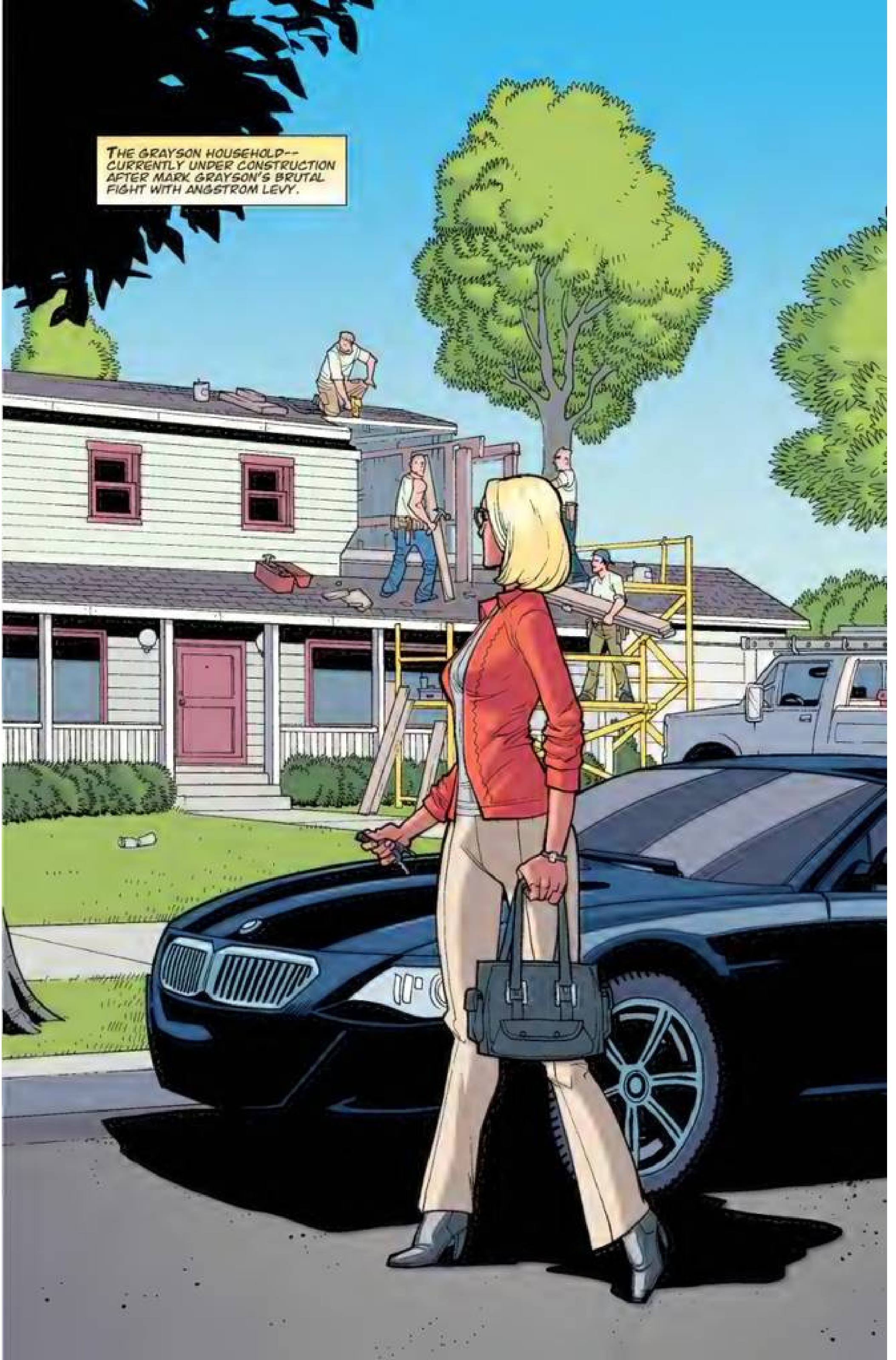

WHAT'S LEFT OF THE GRAYSON HOUSEHOLD.
THIS WAS MY BOYFRIEND'S HOUSE! WHAT HAPPENED?! IS HE OKAY?!
MA'AM-- CALM DOWN. A GAS LINE EXPLODED-- TOOK OUT A GOOD CHUNK OF THE HOUSE... BUT WE THINK THE FAMILY WAS GONE WHEN IT HAPPENED. THEY HAVEN'T COME BACK HOME YET. THEY'RE IN FOR A SURPRISE.
NOBODY WAS HERE? BUT--?
MARK PROBABLY GOT THEM OUT. THERE'S NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT.
BUT THE PHONE CALL-- WHAT WAS THAT ABOUT? SOMETHING HAD TO HAVE HAPPENED--SOMETHING'S GOING ON.
I DON'T KNOW.
MY MOM-- MY BROTHER?! WHERE ARE THEY?!
OH, MARK! YOU'RE OKAY!
MY MOM-- MY BROTHER-- ARE THEY--?
WE DON'T KNOW--THEY WEREN'T HERE APPARENTLY.
THEY WERE HERE. WHAT--?
THEY'RE AT THE PENTAGON, KID. WE'RE WAITING FOR YOU.
I GOTTA GO.
BUT MARK--!
I'LL CALL YOU AS SOON AS I CAN, AMBER. I GOTTA GO!

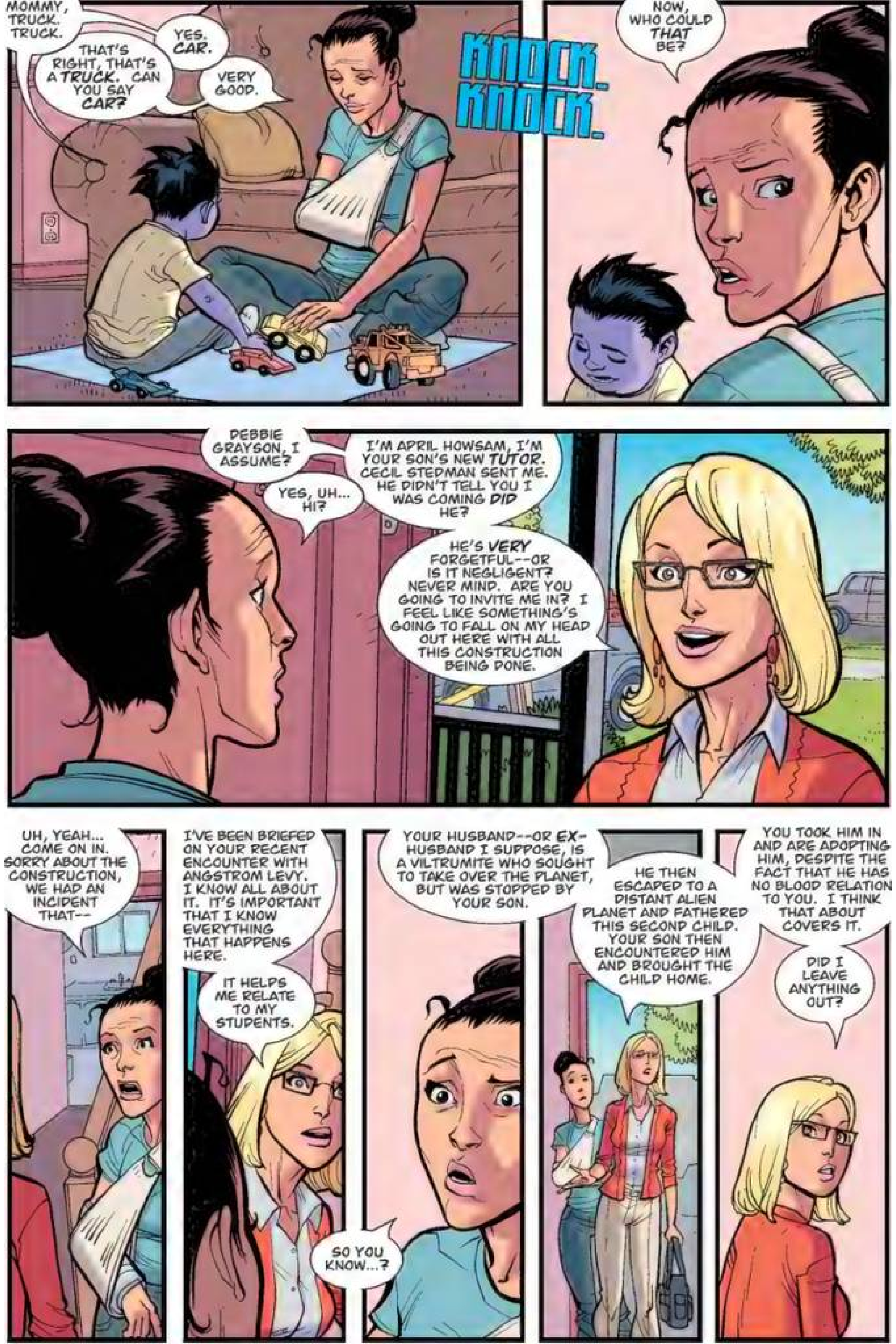

MOMENTS LATER, AT THE PENTAGON.
WHERE CECIL STEDMAN RUNS THE GLOBAL DEFENSE AGENCY.
UNITED STATES PENTAGON
Parking in Rear
WHERE ARE THEY? ARE THEY OKAY?
CALM DOWN, MARK. EVERYTHING IS FINE. THEY'RE IN THE INFIRMARY. WE'VE TAKEN GOOD CARE OF THEM.
EVERYTHING IS GOING TO BE FINE.
WE COVERED THE WHOLE THING UP. LEAKED SOME NONSENSE ABOUT A GAS LINE BLOWING. LOCAL AUTHORITIES SEEM TO HAVE BOUGHT IT. SO YOUR IDENTITY IS CLEAR.
YOU CAN SEE YOUR MOTHER IN A MOMENT BUT FIRST--ANGSTROM LEVY, WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM? HOW DID YOU STOP HIM?
I...
I THINK I KILLED HIM.
YOU DIDN'T HAVE A CHOICE. DON'T BEAT YOURSELF UP OVER IT.
YOU DID THE RIGHT THING.
YEAH.

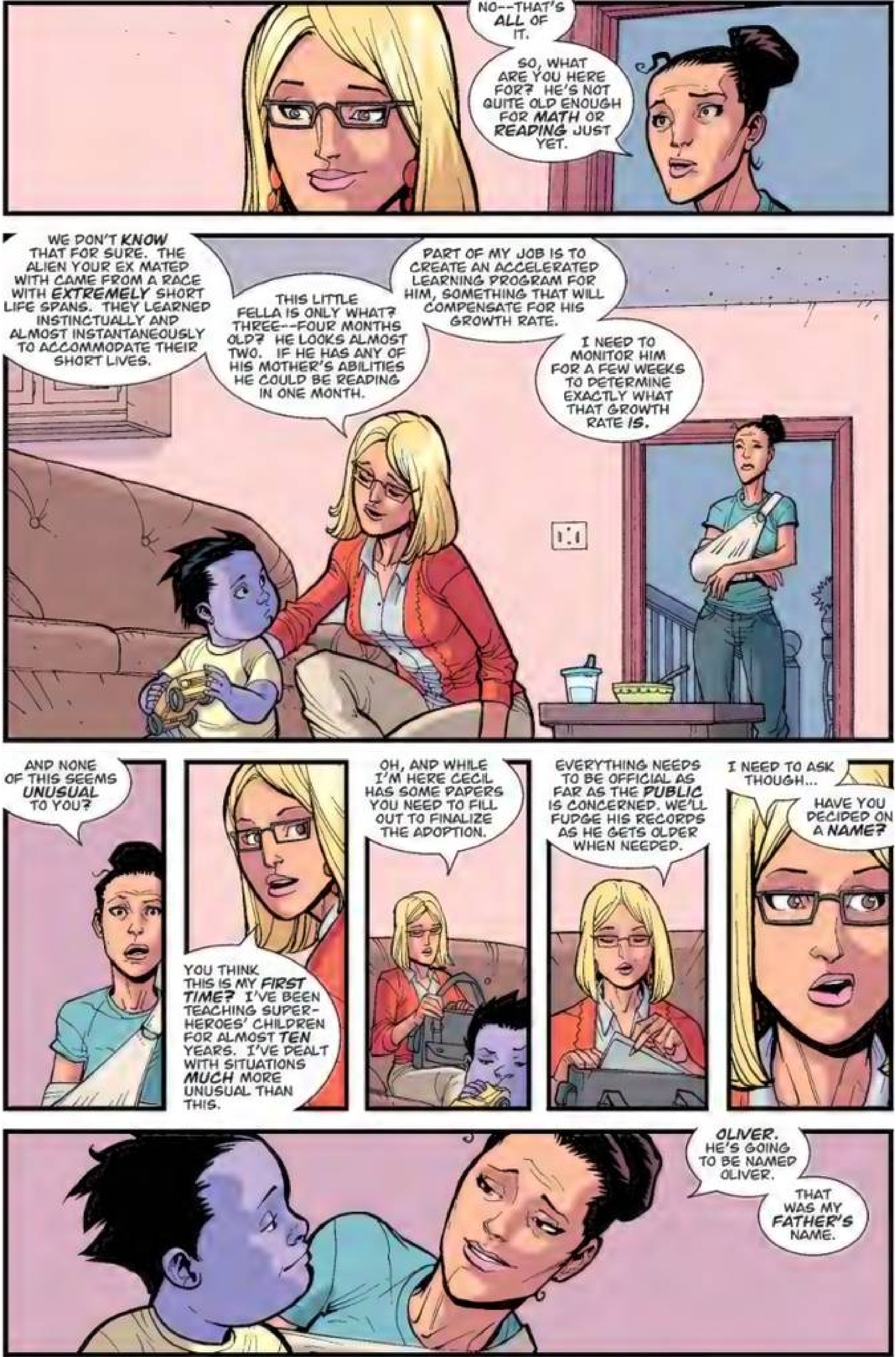

MOM!
I'M SORRY, MOM--I'M SO SORRY. I CAN'T--
I COULDN'T STOP HIM FROM-- I'M SORRY HE HURT YOU, MOM.
I'M SORRY.
IT'S OKAY, SON.
IT'S OKAY. IT'S OVER NOW. THAT'S ALL THAT MATTERS.
I'VE-- I'VE LIVED THROUGH WORSE.

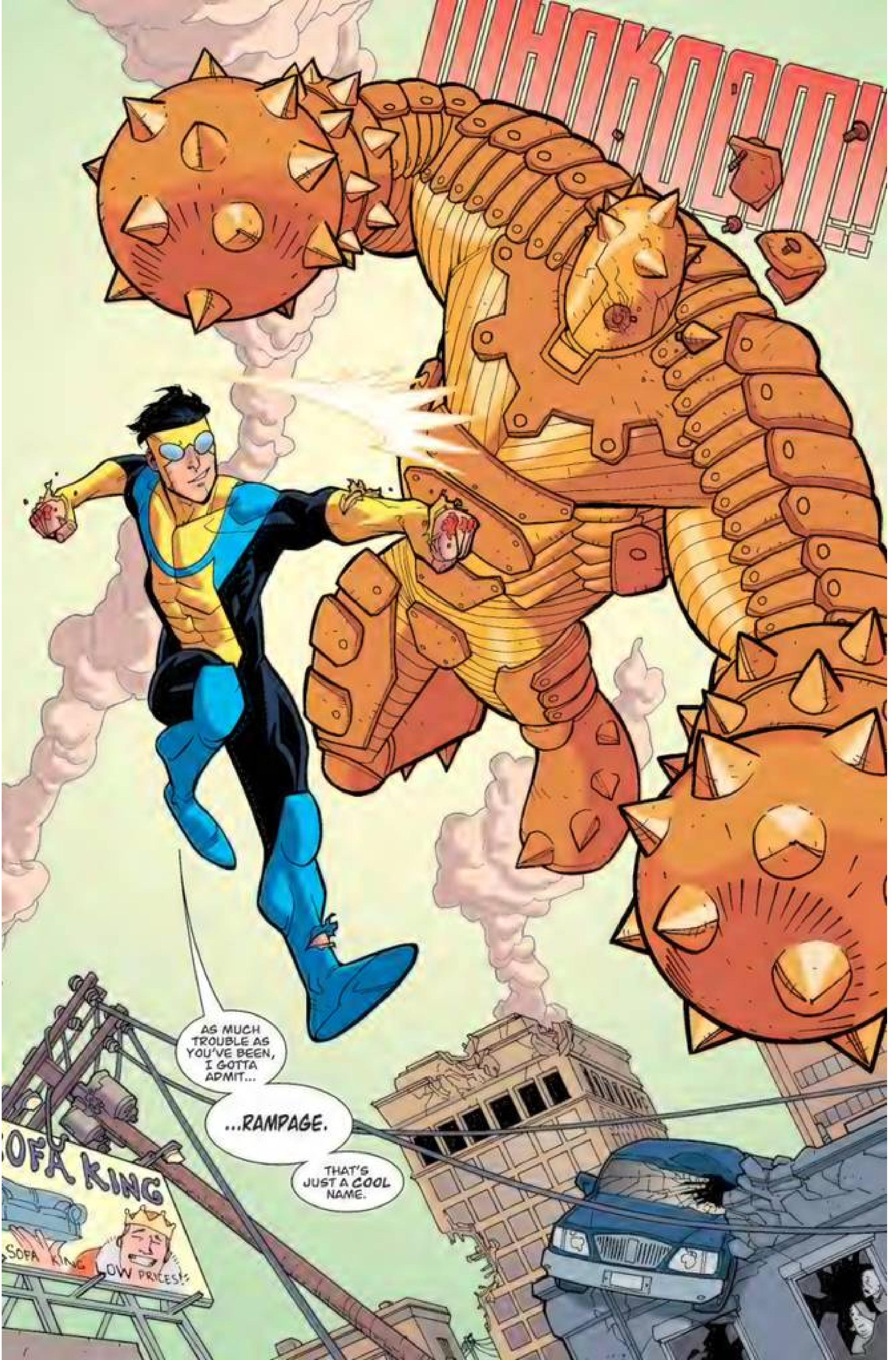
ISSUE THIRTY-FIVE

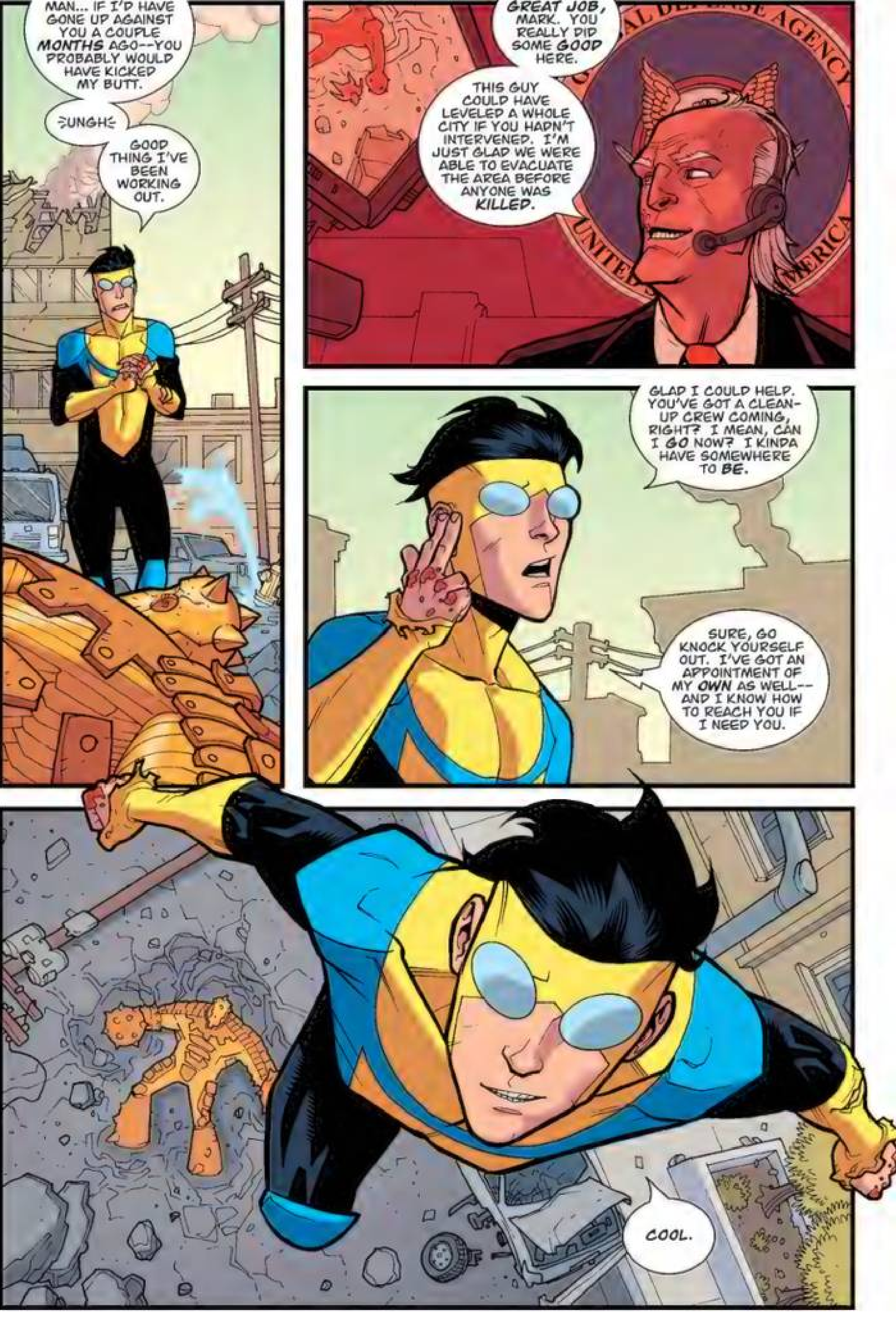


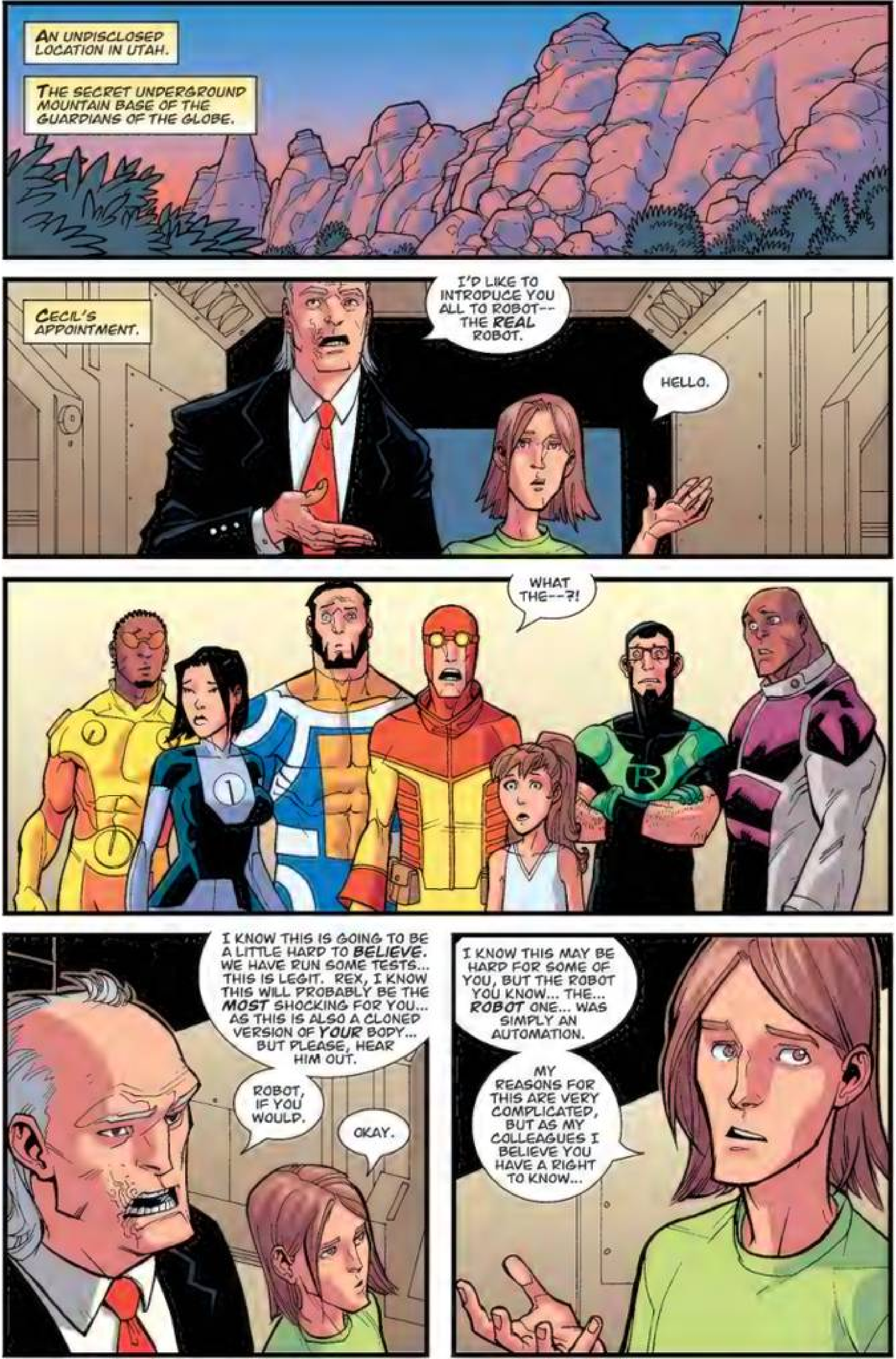

THE GRAYSON HOUSEHOLD--
CURRENTLY UNDER CONSTRUCTION
AFTER MARK GRAYSON'S BRUTAL
FIGHT WITH ANGSTROM LEVY.

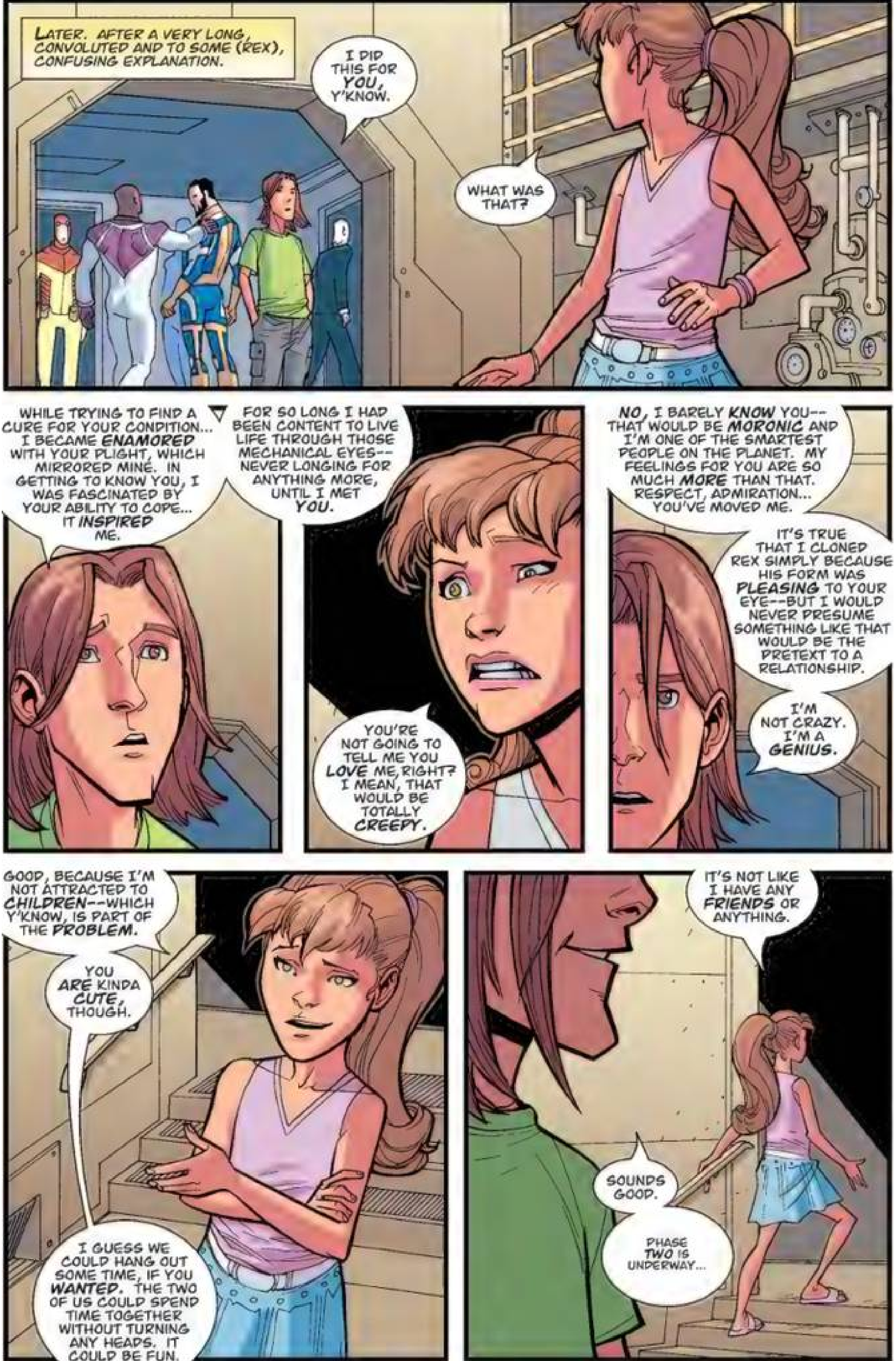

MOMMY, TRUCK. TRUCK.
THAT'S RIGHT, THAT'S A TRUCK. CAN YOU SAY CAR?
YES. CAR.
VERY GOOD.
KNOCK. KNOCK.
NOW, WHO COULD THAT BE?
DEBBIE GRAYSON, I ASSUME?
YES, UH... HI?
I'M APRIL HOWSAM, I'M YOUR SON'S NEW TUTOR. CECIL STEDMAN SENT ME. HE DIDN'T TELL YOU I WAS COMING DID HE?
HE'S VERY FORGETFUL--OR IS IT NEGLIGENT? NEVER MIND. ARE YOU GOING TO INVITE ME IN? I FEEL LIKE SOMETHING'S GOING TO FALL ON MY HEAD OUT HERE WITH ALL THIS CONSTRUCTION BEING DONE.
UH, YEAH... COME ON IN. SORRY ABOUT THE CONSTRUCTION, WE HAD AN INCIDENT THAT--
I'VE BEEN BRIEFED ON YOUR RECENT ENCOUNTER WITH ANGSTROM LEVY. I KNOW ALL ABOUT IT. IT'S IMPORTANT THAT I KNOW EVERYTHING THAT HAPPENS HERE.
IT HELPS ME RELATE TO MY STUDENTS.
SO YOU KNOW...?
YOUR HUSBAND--OR EX-HUSBAND I SUPPOSE, IS A VILTRUMITE WHO SOUGHT TO TAKE OVER THE PLANET, BUT WAS STOPPED BY YOUR SON.
HE THEN ESCAPED TO A DISTANT ALIEN PLANET AND FATHERED THIS SECOND CHILD. YOUR SON THEN ENCOUNTERED HIM AND BROUGHT THE CHILD HOME.
YOU TOOK HIM IN AND ARE ADOPTING HIM, DESPITE THE FACT THAT HE HAS NO BLOOD RELATION TO YOU. I THINK THAT ABOUT COVERS IT.
DID I LEAVE ANYTHING OUT?

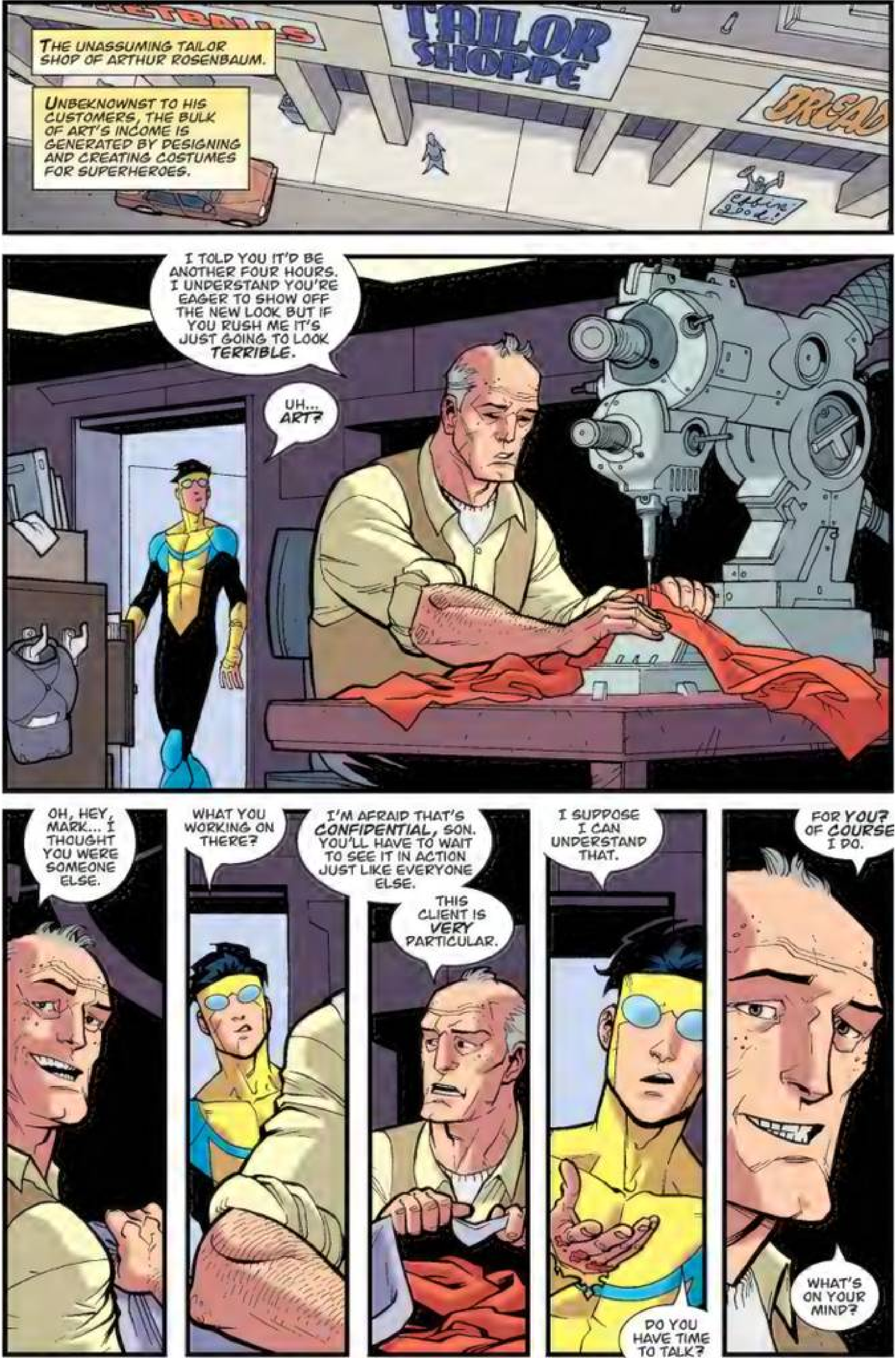

NO--THAT'S ALL OF IT.
SO, WHAT ARE YOU HERE FOR? HE'S NOT QUITE OLD ENOUGH FOR MATH OR READING JUST YET.
WE DON'T KNOW THAT FOR SURE. THE ALIEN YOUR EX MATED WITH CAME FROM A RACE WITH EXTREMELY SHORT LIFE SPANS. THEY LEARNED INSTINCTUALLY AND ALMOST INSTANTANEOUSLY TO ACCOMMODATE THEIR SHORT LIVES.
THIS LITTLE FELLA IS ONLY WHAT? THREE--FOUR MONTHS OLD? HE LOOKS ALMOST TWO. IF HE HAS ANY OF HIS MOTHER'S ABILITIES HE COULD BE READING IN ONE MONTH.
PART OF MY JOB IS TO CREATE AN ACCELERATED LEARNING PROGRAM FOR HIM, SOMETHING THAT WILL COMPENSATE FOR HIS GROWTH RATE.
I NEED TO MONITOR HIM FOR A FEW WEEKS TO DETERMINE EXACTLY WHAT THAT GROWTH RATE IS.
AND NONE OF THIS SEEMS UNUSUAL TO YOU?
YOU THINK THIS IS MY FIRST TIME? I'VE BEEN TEACHING SUPER-HEROES' CHILDREN FOR ALMOST TEN YEARS. I'VE DEALT WITH SITUATIONS MUCH MORE UNUSUAL THAN THIS.
OH, AND WHILE I'M HERE CECIL HAS SOME PAPERS YOU NEED TO FILL OUT TO FINALIZE THE ADOPTION.
EVERYTHING NEEDS TO BE OFFICIAL AS FAR AS THE PUBLIC IS CONCERNED. WE'LL FUDGE HIS RECORDS AS HE GETS OLDER WHEN NEEDED.
I NEED TO ASK THOUGH...
HAVE YOU DECIDED ON A NAME?
OLIVER. HE'S GOING TO BE NAMED OLIVER.
THAT WAS MY FATHER'S NAME.

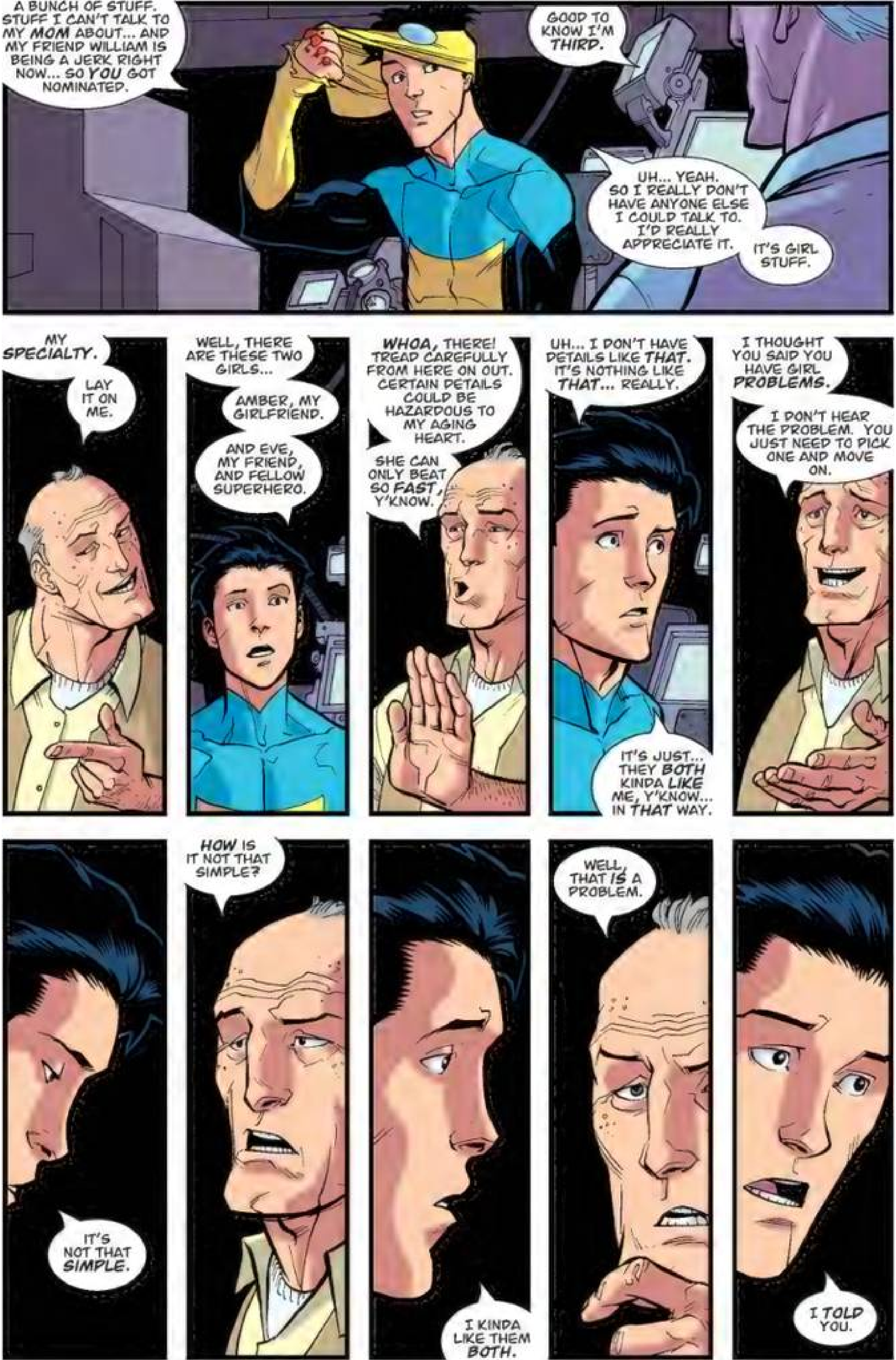

WHOKOOM!!
AS MUCH TROUBLE AS YOU'VE BEEN, I GOTTA ADMIT...
...RAMPAGE.
THAT'S JUST A COOL NAME.
SOFA KING
SOFA KING LOW PRICES!

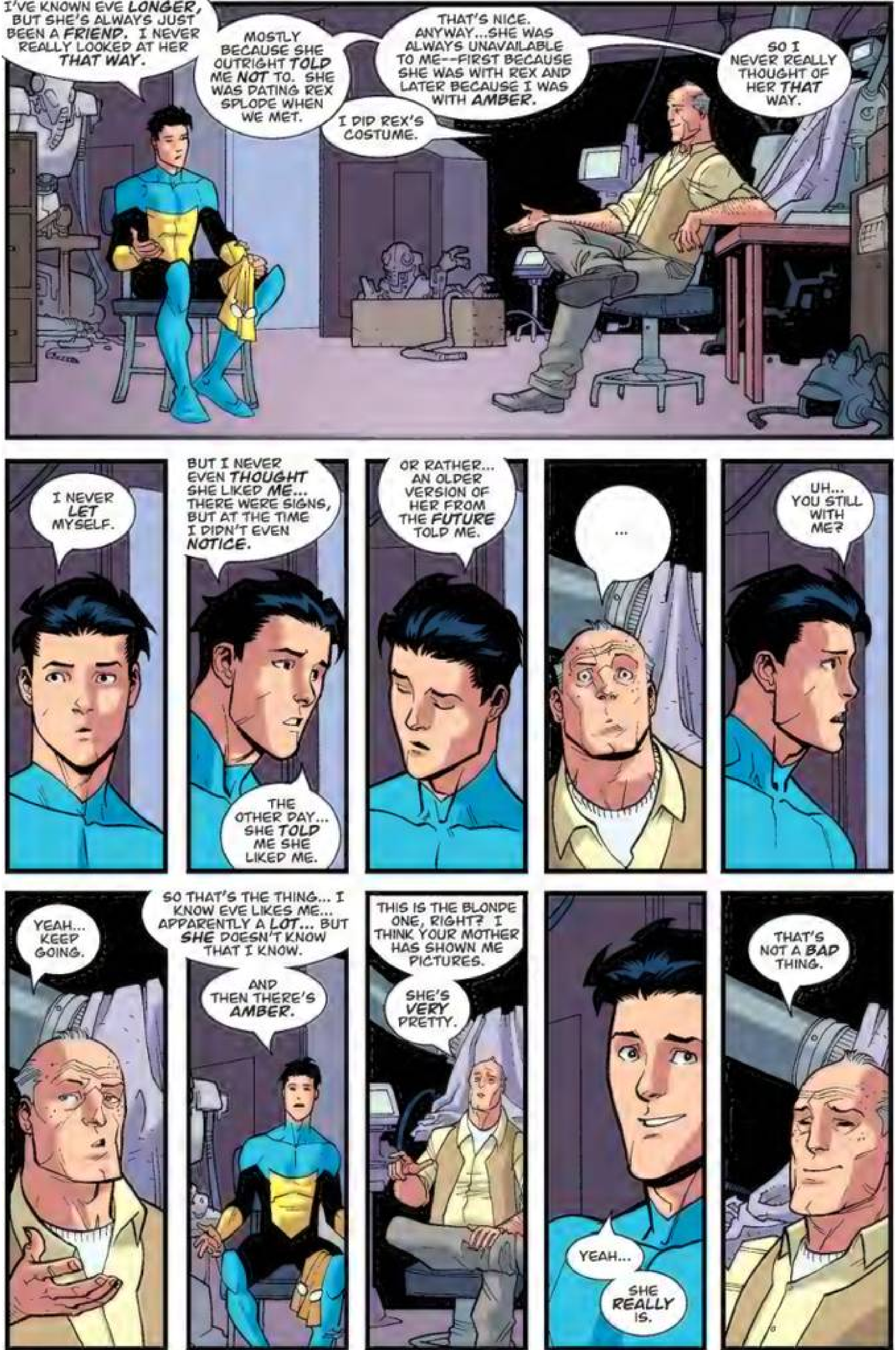

MAN... IF I'D HAVE GONE UP AGAINST YOU A COUPLE MONTHS AGO--YOU PROBABLY WOULD HAVE KICKED MY BUTT.
UNGH
GOOD THING I'VE BEEN WORKING OUT.
GREAT JOB, MARK. YOU REALLY DID SOME GOOD HERE.
THIS GUY COULD HAVE LEVELED A WHOLE CITY IF YOU HADN'T INTERVENED. I'M JUST GLAD WE WERE ABLE TO EVACUATE THE AREA BEFORE ANYONE WAS KILLED.
GLAD I COULD HELP. YOU'VE GOT A CLEAN-UP CREW COMING, RIGHT? I MEAN, CAN I GO NOW? I KINDA HAVE SOMEWHERE TO BE.
SURE, GO KNOCK YOURSELF OUT. I'VE GOT AN APPOINTMENT OF MY OWN AS WELL--AND I KNOW HOW TO REACH YOU IF I NEED YOU.
COOL.

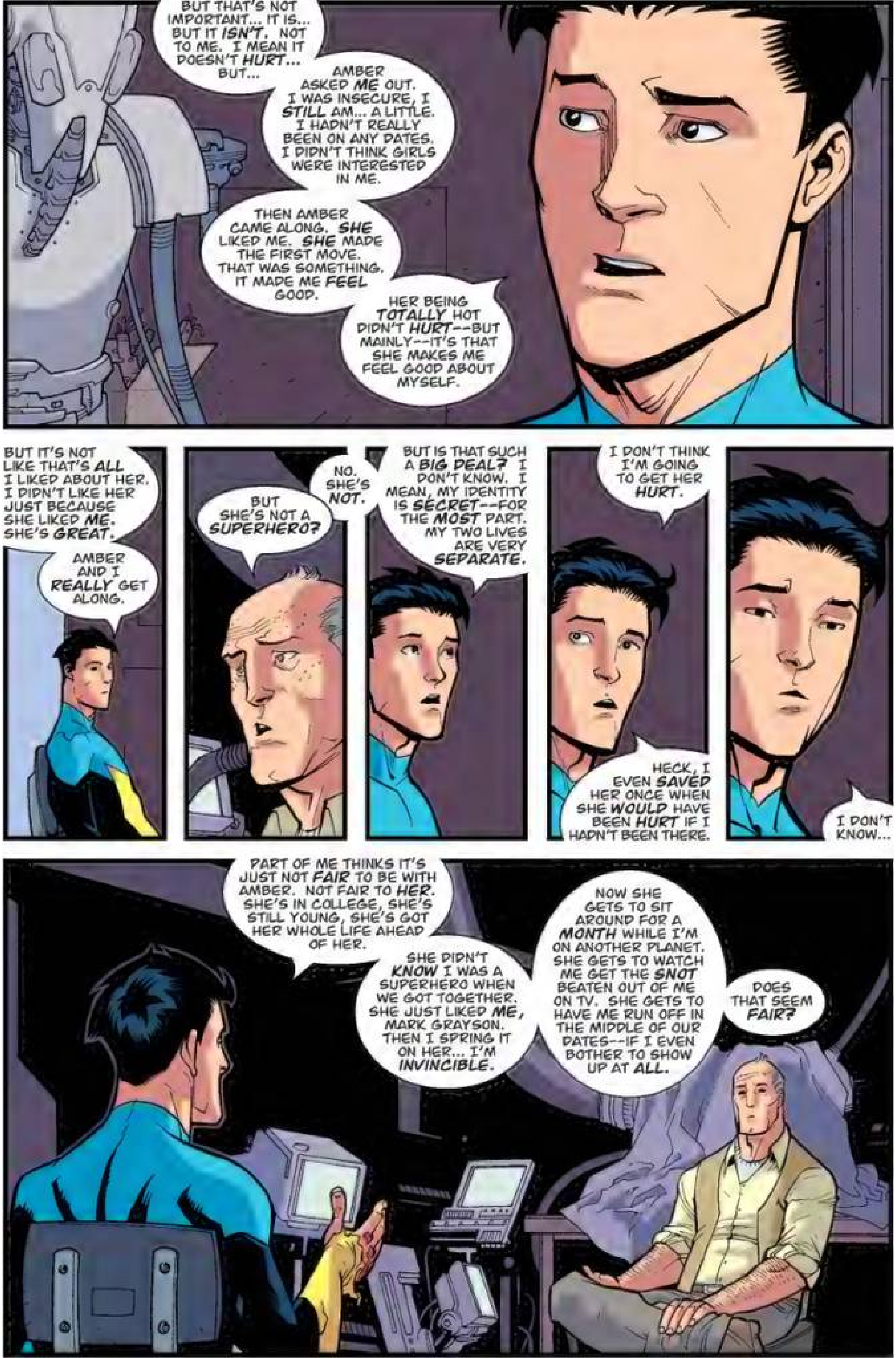

AN UNDISCLOSED LOCATION IN UTAH.
THE SECRET UNDERGROUND MOUNTAIN BASE OF THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE.
CECIL'S APPOINTMENT.
I'D LIKE TO INTRODUCE YOU ALL TO ROBOT-- THE REAL ROBOT.
HELLO.
WHAT THE--?!
I KNOW THIS IS GOING TO BE A LITTLE HARD TO BELIEVE. WE HAVE RUN SOME TESTS... THIS IS LEGIT. REX, I KNOW THIS WILL PROBABLY BE THE MOST SHOCKING FOR YOU... AS THIS IS ALSO A CLONED VERSION OF YOUR BODY... BUT PLEASE, HEAR HIM OUT.
ROBOT, IF YOU WOULD.
OKAY.
I KNOW THIS MAY BE HARD FOR SOME OF YOU, BUT THE ROBOT YOU KNOW... THE... ROBOT ONE... WAS SIMPLY AN AUTOMATION.
MY REASONS FOR THIS ARE VERY COMPLICATED, BUT AS MY COLLEAGUES I BELIEVE YOU HAVE A RIGHT TO KNOW...

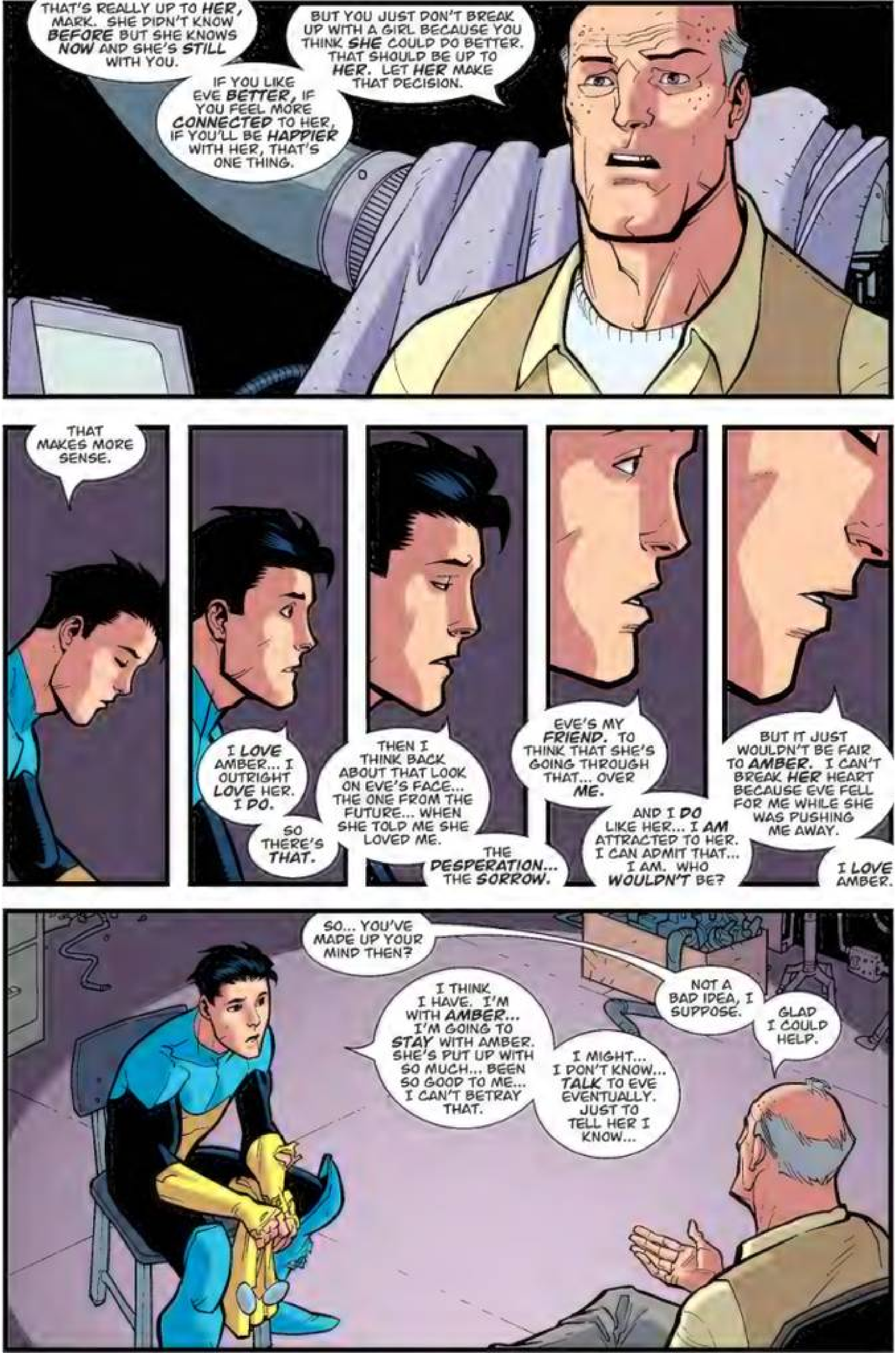

LATER. AFTER A VERY LONG, CONVOLUTED AND TO SOME (REX), CONFUSING EXPLANATION.
I DID THIS FOR YOU, Y'KNOW.
WHAT WAS THAT?
WHILE TRYING TO FIND A CURE FOR YOUR CONDITION... I BECAME ENAMORED WITH YOUR PLIGHT, WHICH MIRRORED MINE. IN GETTING TO KNOW YOU, I WAS FASCINATED BY YOUR ABILITY TO COPE... IT INSPIRED ME.
FOR SO LONG I HAD BEEN CONTENT TO LIVE LIFE THROUGH THOSE MECHANICAL EYES--NEVER LONGING FOR ANYTHING MORE, UNTIL I MET YOU.
YOU'RE NOT GOING TO TELL ME YOU LOVE ME, RIGHT? I MEAN, THAT WOULD BE TOTALLY CREEPY.
NO, I BARELY KNOW YOU--THAT WOULD BE MORONIC AND I'M ONE OF THE SMARTEST PEOPLE ON THE PLANET. MY FEELINGS FOR YOU ARE SO MUCH MORE THAN THAT. RESPECT, ADMIRATION... YOU'VE MOVED ME.
IT'S TRUE THAT I CLONED REX SIMPLY BECAUSE HIS FORM WAS PLEASING TO YOUR EYE--BUT I WOULD NEVER PRESUME SOMETHING LIKE THAT WOULD BE THE PRETEXT TO A RELATIONSHIP.
I'M NOT CRAZY. I'M A GENIUS.
GOOD, BECAUSE I'M NOT ATTRACTED TO CHILDREN--WHICH Y'KNOW, IS PART OF THE PROBLEM.
YOU ARE KINDA CUTE, THOUGH.
I GUESS WE COULD HANG OUT SOME TIME, IF YOU WANTED. THE TWO OF US COULD SPEND TIME TOGETHER WITHOUT TURNING ANY HEADS. IT COULD BE FUN.
IT'S NOT LIKE I HAVE ANY FRIENDS OR ANYTHING.
SOUNDS GOOD.
PHASE TWO IS UNDERWAY...

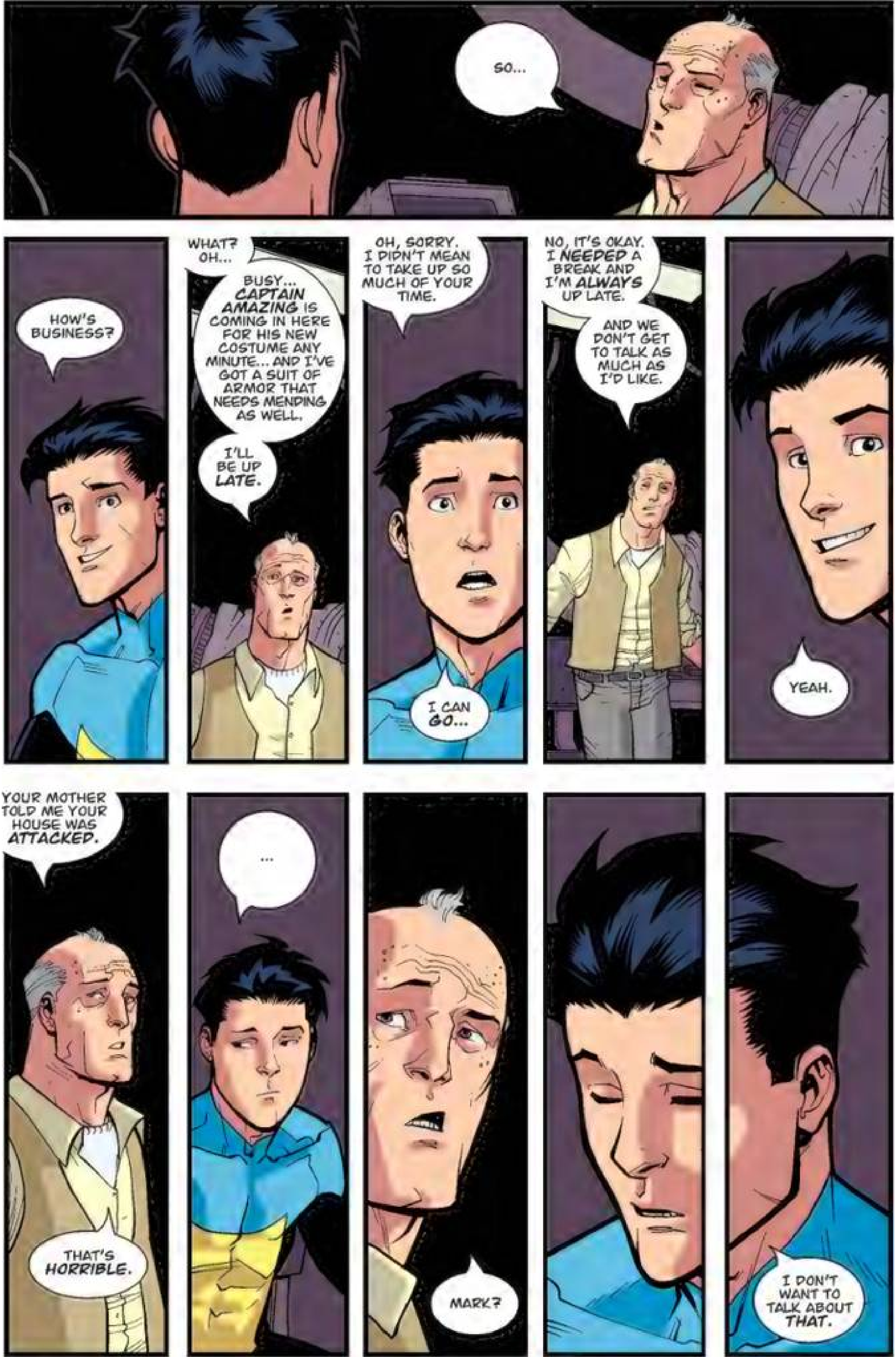

THE UNASSUMING TAILOR SHOP OF ARTHUR ROSENBAUM.
UNBEKNOWNST TO HIS CUSTOMERS, THE BULK OF ART'S INCOME IS GENERATED BY DESIGNING AND CREATING COSTUMES FOR SUPERHEROES.
TAILOR SHOPPE
I TOLD YOU IT'D BE ANOTHER FOUR HOURS. I UNDERSTAND YOU'RE EAGER TO SHOW OFF THE NEW LOOK BUT IF YOU RUSH ME IT'S JUST GOING TO LOOK TERRIBLE.
UH... ART?
OH, HEY, MARK... I THOUGHT YOU WERE SOMEONE ELSE.
WHAT YOU WORKING ON THERE?
I'M AFRAID THAT'S CONFIDENTIAL, SON. YOU'LL HAVE TO WAIT TO SEE IT IN ACTION JUST LIKE EVERYONE ELSE.
THIS CLIENT IS VERY PARTICULAR.
I SUPPOSE I CAN UNDERSTAND THAT.
DO YOU HAVE TIME TO TALK?
FOR YOU? OF COURSE I DO.
WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND?

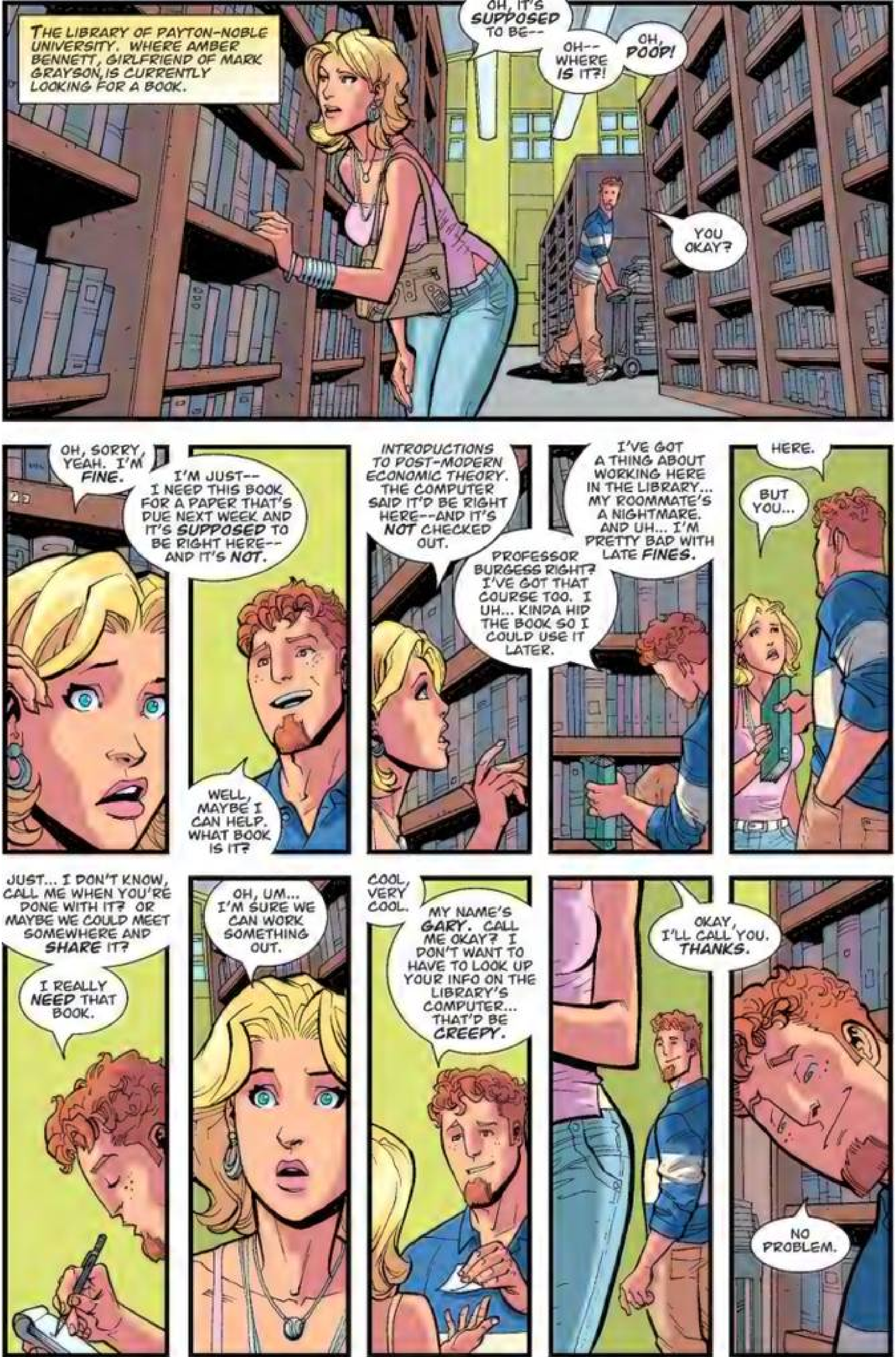

A BUNCH OF STUFF. STUFF I CAN'T TALK TO MY MOM ABOUT... AND MY FRIEND WILLIAM IS BEING A JERK RIGHT NOW... SO YOU GOT NOMINATED.
GOOD TO KNOW I'M THIRD.
UH... YEAH. SO I REALLY DON'T HAVE ANYONE ELSE I COULD TALK TO. I'D REALLY APPRECIATE IT.
IT'S GIRL STUFF.
MY SPECIALTY.
LAY IT ON ME.
WELL, THERE ARE THESE TWO GIRLS...
AMBER, MY GIRLFRIEND.
AND EVE, MY FRIEND, AND FELLOW SUPERHERO.
WHOA, THERE! TREAD CAREFULLY FROM HERE ON OUT. CERTAIN DETAILS COULD BE HAZARDOUS TO MY AGING HEART.
SHE CAN ONLY BEAT SO FAST, Y'KNOW.
UH... I DON'T HAVE DETAILS LIKE THAT. IT'S NOTHING LIKE THAT... REALLY.
IT'S JUST... THEY BOTH KINDA LIKE ME, Y'KNOW... IN THAT WAY.
I THOUGHT YOU SAID YOU HAVE GIRL PROBLEMS.
I DON'T HEAR THE PROBLEM. YOU JUST NEED TO PICK ONE AND MOVE ON.
IT'S NOT THAT SIMPLE.
HOW IS IT NOT THAT SIMPLE?
I KINDA LIKE THEM BOTH.
WELL, THAT IS A PROBLEM.
I TOLD YOU.

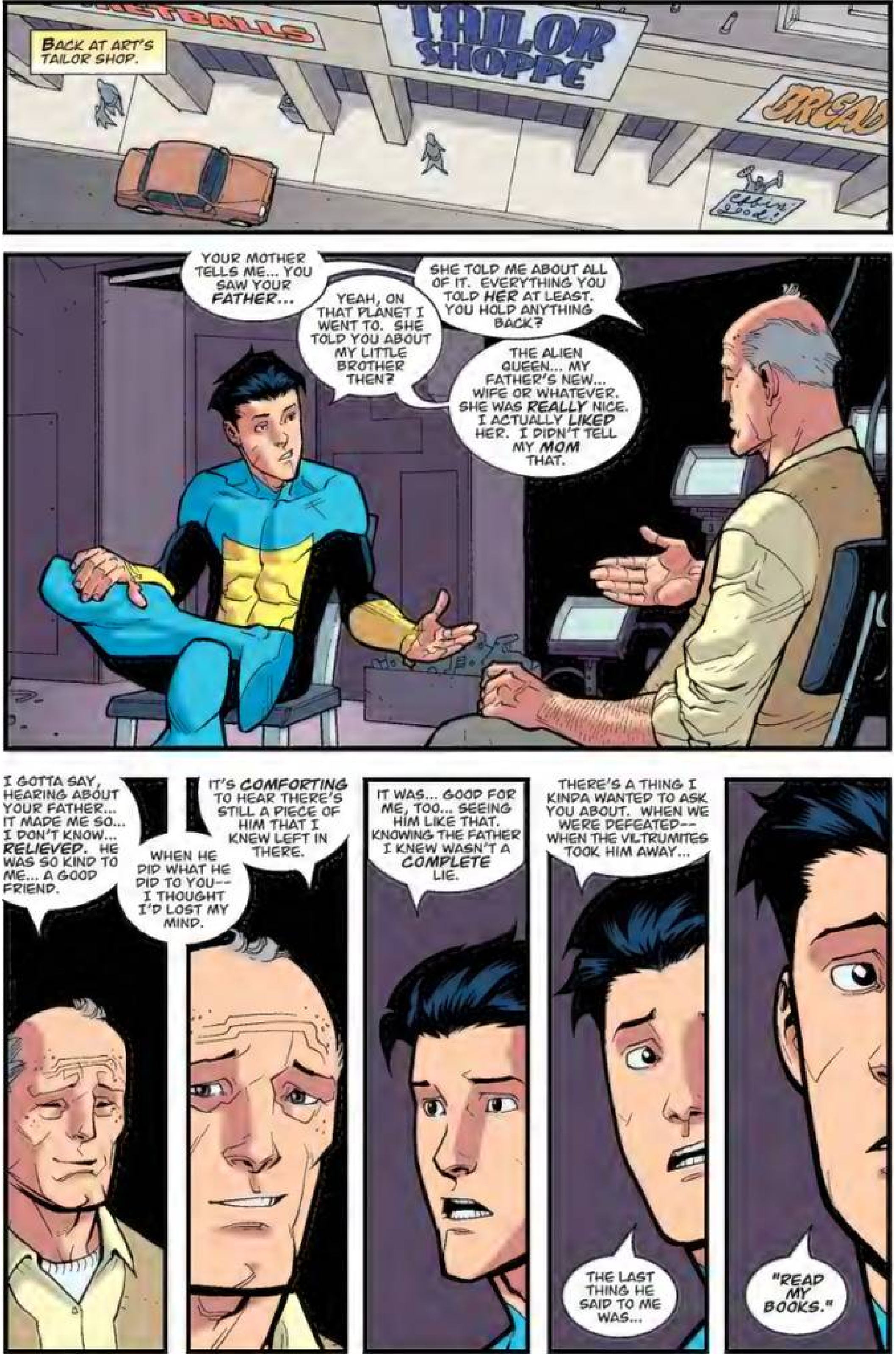

I'VE KNOWN EVE LONGER, BUT SHE'S ALWAYS JUST BEEN A FRIEND. I NEVER REALLY LOOKED AT HER THAT WAY.
MOSTLY BECAUSE SHE OUTRIGHT TOLD ME NOT TO. SHE WAS DATING REX SPLODE WHEN WE MET.
I DID REX'S COSTUME.
THAT'S NICE. ANYWAY...SHE WAS ALWAYS UNAVAILABLE TO ME--FIRST BECAUSE SHE WAS WITH REX AND LATER BECAUSE I WAS WITH AMBER.
SO I NEVER REALLY THOUGHT OF HER THAT WAY.
I NEVER LET MYSELF.
BUT I NEVER EVEN THOUGHT SHE LIKED ME... THERE WERE SIGNS, BUT AT THE TIME I DIDN'T EVEN NOTICE.
THE OTHER DAY... SHE TOLD ME SHE LIKED ME.
OR RATHER... AN OLDER VERSION OF HER FROM THE FUTURE TOLD ME.
...
UH... YOU STILL WITH ME?
YEAH... KEEP GOING.
SO THAT'S THE THING... I KNOW EVE LIKES ME... APPARENTLY A LOT... BUT SHE DOESN'T KNOW THAT I KNOW.
AND THEN THERE'S AMBER.
THIS IS THE BLONDE ONE, RIGHT? I THINK YOUR MOTHER HAS SHOWN ME PICTURES.
SHE'S VERY PRETTY.
YEAH...
SHE REALLY IS.
THAT'S NOT A BAD THING.

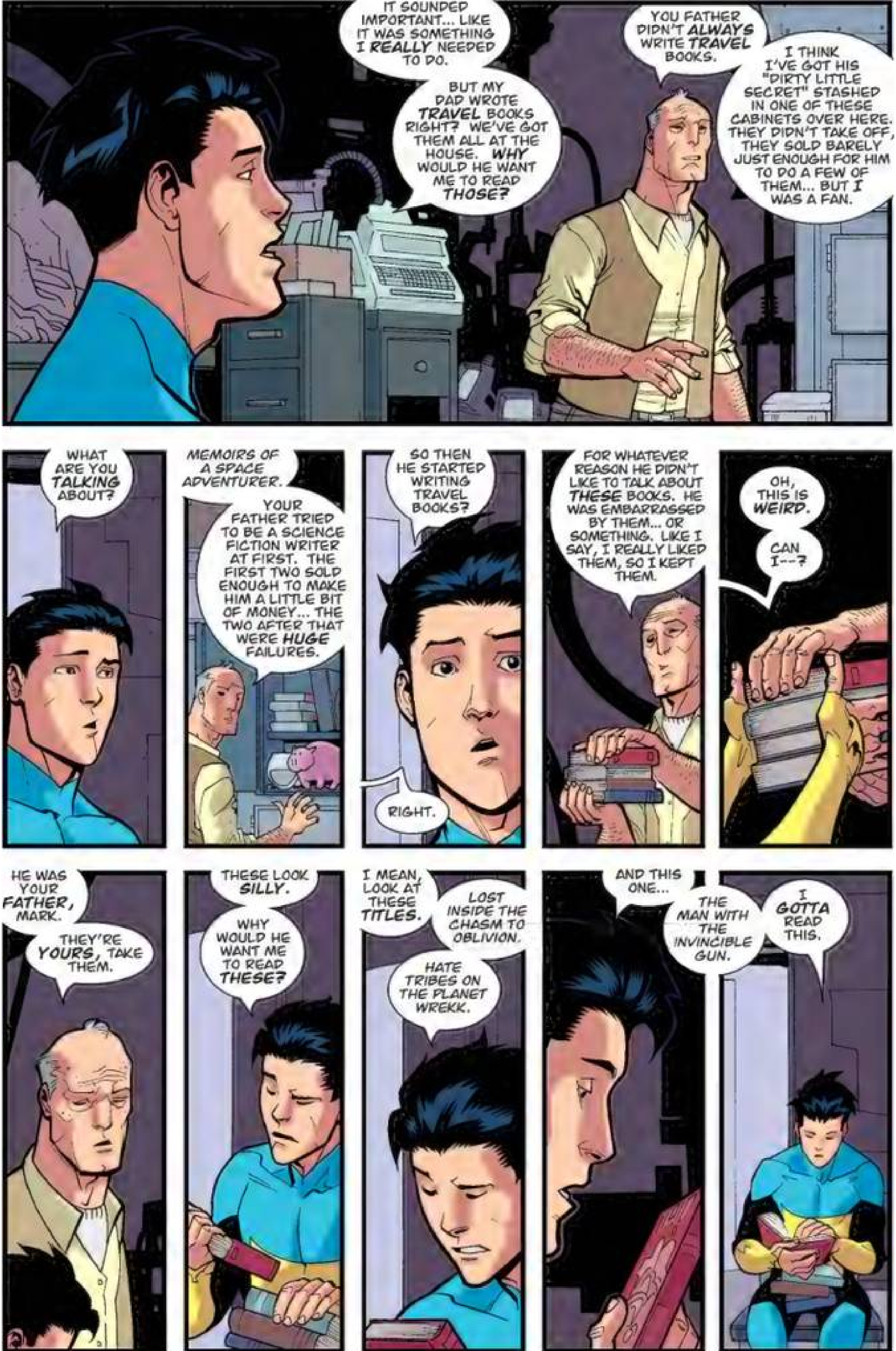

BUT THAT'S NOT IMPORTANT... IT IS... BUT IT *ISN'T*. NOT TO ME. I MEAN IT DOESN'T *HURT*... BUT...
AMBER ASKED *ME* OUT. I WAS INSECURE, I *STILL* AM... A LITTLE. I HADN'T REALLY BEEN ON ANY DATES. I DIDN'T THINK GIRLS WERE INTERESTED IN ME.
THEN AMBER CAME ALONG. *SHE* LIKED ME. *SHE* MADE THE FIRST MOVE. THAT WAS SOMETHING. IT MADE ME *FEEL* GOOD.
HER BEING *TOTALLY* HOT DIDN'T *HURT*--BUT MAINLY--IT'S THAT SHE MAKES ME FEEL GOOD ABOUT MYSELF.
BUT IT'S NOT LIKE THAT'S *ALL* I LIKED ABOUT HER. I DIDN'T LIKE HER JUST BECAUSE SHE LIKED *ME*. SHE'S *GREAT*.
AMBER AND I *REALLY* GET ALONG.
BUT SHE'S NOT A *SUPERHERO?*
NO. SHE'S *NOT*.
BUT IS THAT SUCH A *BIG DEAL?* I DON'T KNOW. I MEAN, MY IDENTITY IS *SECRET*--FOR THE *MOST* PART. MY TWO LIVES ARE VERY *SEPARATE*.
I DON'T THINK I'M GOING TO GET HER *HURT*.
HECK, I EVEN *SAVED* HER ONCE WHEN SHE *WOULD* HAVE BEEN *HURT* IF I HADN'T BEEN THERE.
I DON'T KNOW...
PART OF ME THINKS IT'S JUST NOT *FAIR* TO BE WITH AMBER. NOT FAIR TO *HER*. SHE'S IN COLLEGE, SHE'S STILL YOUNG, SHE'S GOT HER WHOLE LIFE AHEAD OF HER.
SHE DIDN'T *KNOW* I WAS A SUPERHERO WHEN WE GOT TOGETHER. SHE JUST LIKED *ME*, MARK GRAYSON. THEN I SPRING IT ON HER... I'M *INVINCIBLE*.
NOW SHE GETS TO SIT AROUND FOR A *MONTH* WHILE I'M ON ANOTHER PLANET. SHE GETS TO WATCH ME GET THE *SNOT* BEATEN OUT OF ME ON TV. SHE GETS TO HAVE ME RUN OFF IN THE MIDDLE OF OUR DATES--IF I EVEN BOTHER TO SHOW UP AT *ALL*.
DOES THAT SEEM *FAIR?*


THAT'S REALLY UP TO HER, MARK. SHE DIDN'T KNOW BEFORE BUT SHE KNOWS NOW AND SHE'S STILL WITH YOU.
IF YOU LIKE EVE BETTER, IF YOU FEEL MORE CONNECTED TO HER, IF YOU'LL BE HAPPIER WITH HER, THAT'S ONE THING.
BUT YOU JUST DON'T BREAK UP WITH A GIRL BECAUSE YOU THINK SHE COULD DO BETTER. THAT SHOULD BE UP TO HER. LET HER MAKE THAT DECISION.
THAT MAKES MORE SENSE.
I LOVE AMBER... I OUTRIGHT LOVE HER. I DO.
SO THERE'S THAT.
THEN I THINK BACK ABOUT THAT LOOK ON EVE'S FACE... THE ONE FROM THE FUTURE... WHEN SHE TOLD ME SHE LOVED ME.
THE DESPERATION... THE SORROW.
EVE'S MY FRIEND. TO THINK THAT SHE'S GOING THROUGH THAT... OVER ME.
AND I DO LIKE HER... I AM ATTRACTED TO HER. I CAN ADMIT THAT... I AM. WHO WOULDN'T BE?
BUT IT JUST WOULDN'T BE FAIR TO AMBER. I CAN'T BREAK HER HEART BECAUSE EVE FELL FOR ME WHILE SHE WAS PUSHING ME AWAY.
I LOVE AMBER.
SO... YOU'VE MADE UP YOUR MIND THEN?
I THINK I HAVE. I'M WITH AMBER... I'M GOING TO STAY WITH AMBER. SHE'S PUT UP WITH SO MUCH... BEEN SO GOOD TO ME... I CAN'T BETRAY THAT.
I MIGHT... I DON'T KNOW... TALK TO EVE EVENTUALLY. JUST TO TELL HER I KNOW...
NOT A BAD IDEA, I SUPPOSE.
GLAD I COULD HELP.


SO...
HOW'S BUSINESS?
WHAT? OH...
BUSY... **CAPTAIN AMAZING** IS COMING IN HERE FOR HIS NEW COSTUME ANY MINUTE... AND I'VE GOT A SUIT OF ARMOR THAT NEEDS MENDING AS WELL.
I'LL BE UP **LATE.**
OH, SORRY. I DIDN'T MEAN TO TAKE UP SO MUCH OF YOUR TIME.
I CAN **GO...**
NO, IT'S OKAY. I **NEEDED** A BREAK AND I'M **ALWAYS** UP LATE.
AND WE DON'T GET TO TALK AS MUCH AS I'D LIKE.
YEAH.
YOUR MOTHER TOLD ME YOUR HOUSE WAS **ATTACKED.**
THAT'S **HORRIBLE.**
...
MARK?
I DON'T WANT TO TALK ABOUT **THAT.**


THE LIBRARY OF PAYTON-NOBLE UNIVERSITY. WHERE AMBER BENNETT, GIRLFRIEND OF MARK GRAYSON, IS CURRENTLY LOOKING FOR A BOOK.
OH, IT'S SUPPOSED TO BE--
OH-- WHERE IS IT?!
OH, POOP!
YOU OKAY?
OH, SORRY, YEAH. I'M FINE.
I'M JUST-- I NEED THIS BOOK FOR A PAPER THAT'S DUE NEXT WEEK AND IT'S SUPPOSED TO BE RIGHT HERE-- AND IT'S NOT.
WELL, MAYBE I CAN HELP. WHAT BOOK IS IT?
INTRODUCTIONS TO POST-MODERN ECONOMIC THEORY. THE COMPUTER SAID IT'D BE RIGHT HERE--AND IT'S NOT CHECKED OUT.
PROFESSOR BURGESS RIGHT? I'VE GOT THAT COURSE TOO. I UH... KINDA HID THE BOOK SO I COULD USE IT LATER.
I'VE GOT A THING ABOUT WORKING HERE IN THE LIBRARY... MY ROOMMATE'S A NIGHTMARE. AND UH... I'M PRETTY BAD WITH LATE FINES.
HERE.
BUT YOU...
JUST... I DON'T KNOW, CALL ME WHEN YOU'RE DONE WITH IT? OR MAYBE WE COULD MEET SOMEWHERE AND SHARE IT?
I REALLY NEED THAT BOOK.
OH, UM... I'M SURE WE CAN WORK SOMETHING OUT.
COOL, VERY COOL.
MY NAME'S GARY. CALL ME OKAY? I DON'T WANT TO HAVE TO LOOK UP YOUR INFO ON THE LIBRARY'S COMPUTER... THAT'D BE CREEPY.
OKAY, I'LL CALL YOU. THANKS.
NO PROBLEM.


BACK AT ART'S TAILOR SHOP.
TAILOR SHOPPE
YOUR MOTHER TELLS ME... YOU SAW YOUR FATHER...
YEAH, ON THAT PLANET I WENT TO. SHE TOLD YOU ABOUT MY LITTLE BROTHER THEN?
SHE TOLD ME ABOUT ALL OF IT. EVERYTHING YOU TOLD HER AT LEAST. YOU HOLD ANYTHING BACK?
THE ALIEN QUEEN... MY FATHER'S NEW... WIFE OR WHATEVER. SHE WAS REALLY NICE. I ACTUALLY LIKED HER. I DIDN'T TELL MY MOM THAT.
I GOTTA SAY, HEARING ABOUT YOUR FATHER... IT MADE ME SO... I DON'T KNOW... RELIEVED. HE WAS SO KIND TO ME... A GOOD FRIEND.
WHEN HE DID WHAT HE DID TO YOU-- I THOUGHT I'D LOST MY MIND.
IT'S COMFORTING TO HEAR THERE'S STILL A PIECE OF HIM THAT I KNEW LEFT IN THERE.
IT WAS... GOOD FOR ME, TOO... SEEING HIM LIKE THAT. KNOWING THE FATHER I KNEW WASN'T A COMPLETE LIE.
THERE'S A THING I KINDA WANTED TO ASK YOU ABOUT. WHEN WE WERE DEFEATED-- WHEN THE VILTRUMITES TOOK HIM AWAY...
THE LAST THING HE SAID TO ME WAS...
"READ MY BOOKS."


IT SOUNDED IMPORTANT... LIKE IT WAS SOMETHING I REALLY NEEDED TO DO.
BUT MY DAD WROTE TRAVEL BOOKS RIGHT? WE'VE GOT THEM ALL AT THE HOUSE. WHY WOULD HE WANT ME TO READ THOSE?
YOU FATHER DIDN'T ALWAYS WRITE TRAVEL BOOKS.
I THINK I'VE GOT HIS "DIRTY LITTLE SECRET" STASHED IN ONE OF THESE CABINETS OVER HERE. THEY DIDN'T TAKE OFF, THEY SOLD BARELY JUST ENOUGH FOR HIM TO DO A FEW OF THEM... BUT I WAS A FAN.
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
MEMOIRS OF A SPACE ADVENTURER.
YOUR FATHER TRIED TO BE A SCIENCE FICTION WRITER AT FIRST. THE FIRST TWO SOLD ENOUGH TO MAKE HIM A LITTLE BIT OF MONEY... THE TWO AFTER THAT WERE HUGE FAILURES.
SO THEN HE STARTED WRITING TRAVEL BOOKS?
RIGHT.
FOR WHATEVER REASON HE DIDN'T LIKE TO TALK ABOUT THESE BOOKS. HE WAS EMBARRASSED BY THEM... OR SOMETHING. LIKE I SAY, I REALLY LIKED THEM, SO I KEPT THEM.
OH, THIS IS WEIRD.
CAN I--?
HE WAS YOUR FATHER, MARK.
THEY'RE YOURS, TAKE THEM.
THESE LOOK SILLY.
WHY WOULD HE WANT ME TO READ THESE?
I MEAN, LOOK AT THESE TITLES.
LOST INSIDE THE CHASM TO OBLIVION.
HATE TRIBES ON THE PLANET WREKK.
AND THIS ONE...
THE MAN WITH THE INVINCIBLE GUN.
I GOTTA READ THIS.

how he obtained the weapon, or where it came from. The origins of the weapon are completely unknown to the empire. All that is known are its capabilities.

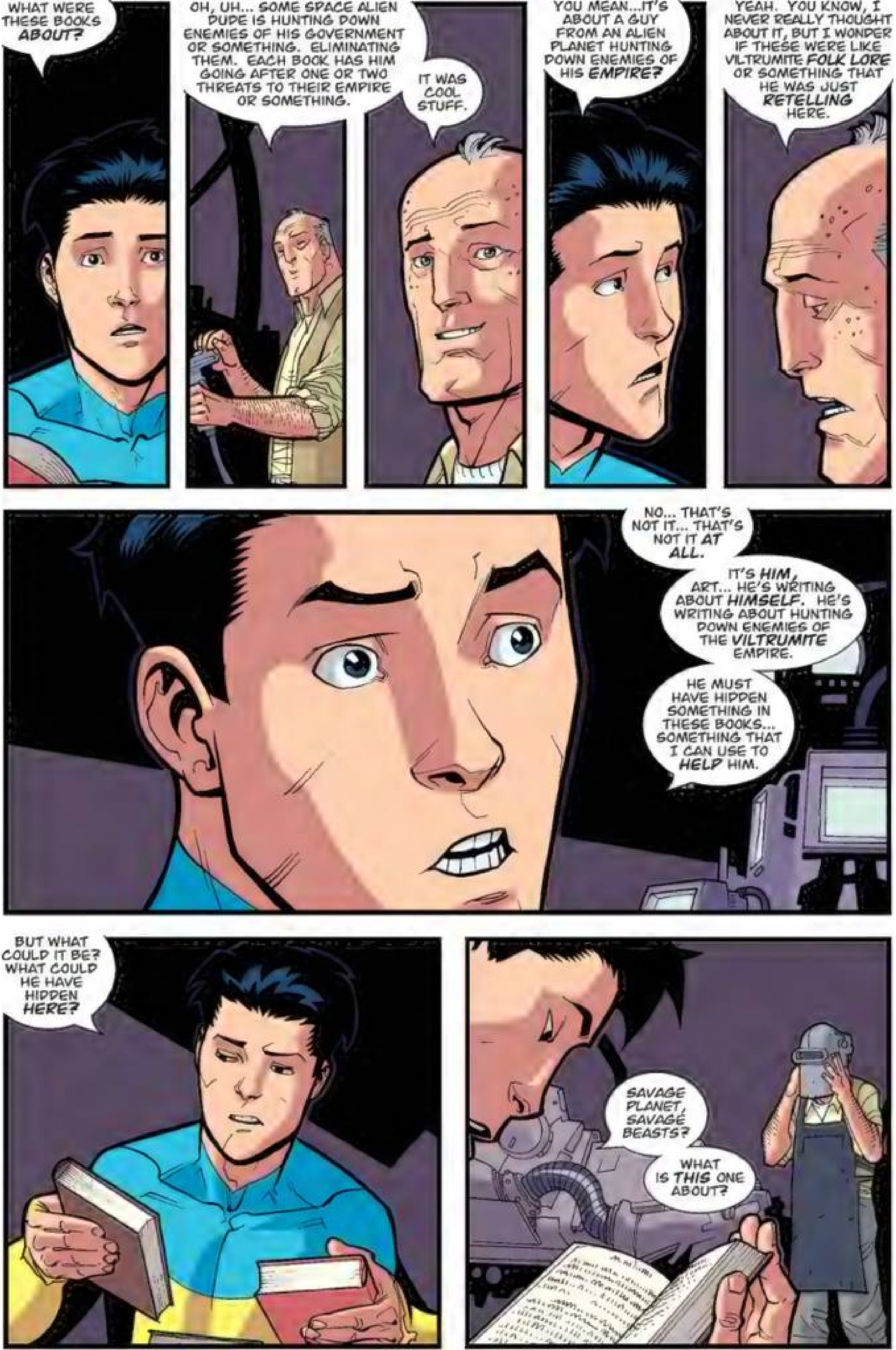
The information was gathered from thousands of sources. Sketchy eyewitness accounts, damaged artifacts--evidence of the weapon's power--everything points to the same conclusion. This weapon--the infinity ray--emitted an energy wave that was unstoppable. It was said that blasts from this infinity ray still race through the cosmos, blasting a path through anything they encounter. Planets, Stars, Ships--anything in their path is destroyed. Again, this is only a theory. No one has ever gotten close enough to study the infinity ray for themselves. The Space Rider made sure of that.

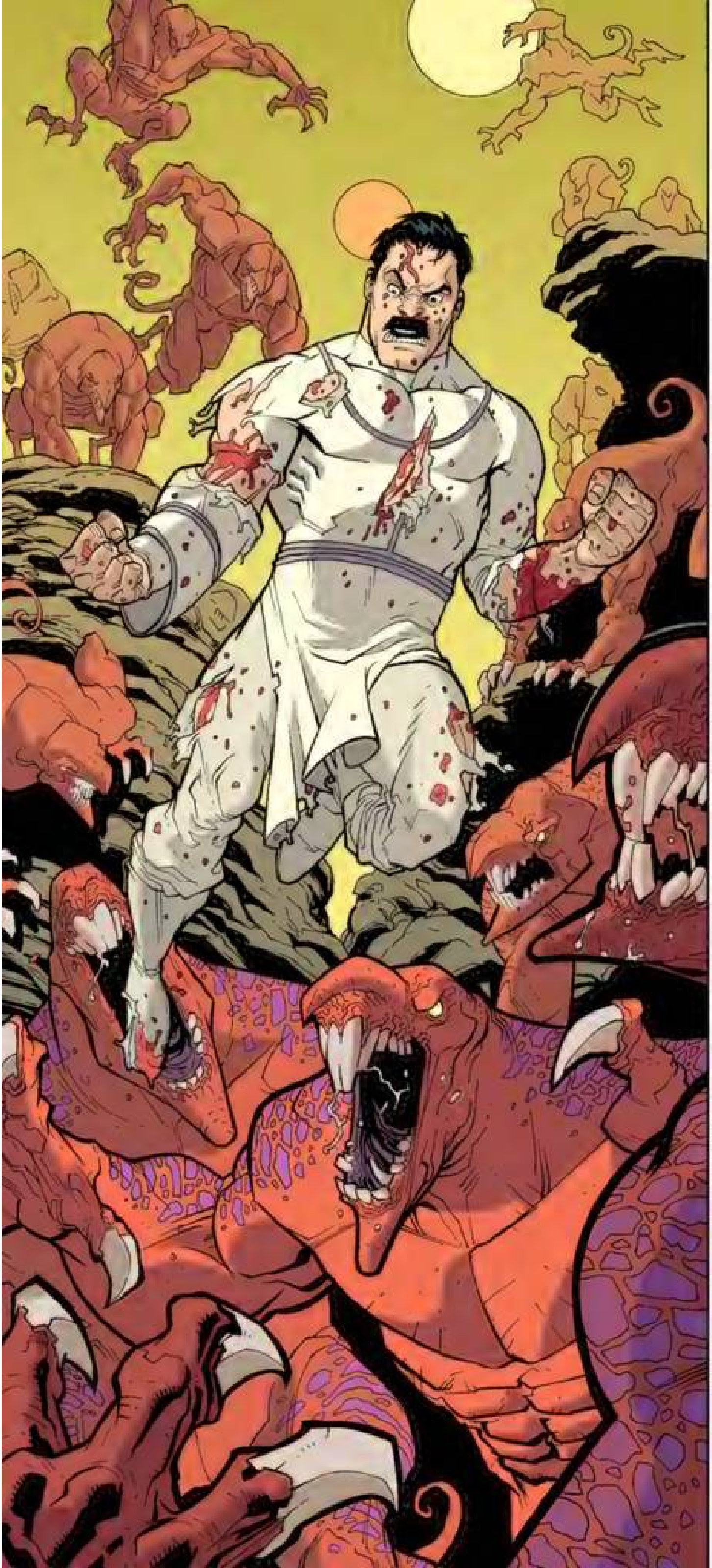
Whether the story was true or not, I had my mission. I was to hunt down the Space Rider, determine whether or not the stories of his weapon were true and if so, arrest him. He was to stand trial for offenses against the empire. Were his weapon as powerful as it was fabled to be he was a huge threat. I left at once.

Little was known about the Space Rider, where he lived, what quadrant of space he operated in, all was a mystery. He had become the stuff of legend. Stories of him stretch across the twelve galaxies. He was said to be in two places at once. Stories were conflicting with each other. Finding him would be no easy task. Yet it was a task I had to complete. I dare not fail my people. I knew what was at stake. Our very way of life.

At first, I studied the stories for similarities, common elements. Anything that made it possible for me to tell fact from fiction--if there was any fact to these stories. In time I would find that the Space Rider and his weapon were very real--and as far fetched as they were, its capabilities were that of tall tales. But it would take me nearly fifteen years to discover this.

The first clue came when I was contacted by a former subordinate of The Space Rider who was willing to inform me of his possible whereabouts. With


WHAT WERE THESE BOOKS ABOUT?
OH, UH... SOME SPACE ALIEN DUDE IS HUNTING DOWN ENEMIES OF HIS GOVERNMENT OR SOMETHING. ELIMINATING THEM. EACH BOOK HAS HIM GOING AFTER ONE OR TWO THREATS TO THEIR EMPIRE OR SOMETHING.
IT WAS COOL STUFF.
YOU MEAN...IT'S ABOUT A GUY FROM AN ALIEN PLANET HUNTING DOWN ENEMIES OF HIS EMPIRE?
YEAH. YOU KNOW, I NEVER REALLY THOUGHT ABOUT IT, BUT I WONDER IF THESE WERE LIKE VILTRUMITE FOLK LORE OR SOMETHING THAT HE WAS JUST RETELLING HERE.
NO... THAT'S NOT IT... THAT'S NOT IT AT ALL.
IT'S HIM, ART... HE'S WRITING ABOUT HIMSELF. HE'S WRITING ABOUT HUNTING DOWN ENEMIES OF THE VILTRUMITE EMPIRE.
HE MUST HAVE HIDDEN SOMETHING IN THESE BOOKS... SOMETHING THAT I CAN USE TO HELP HIM.
BUT WHAT COULD IT BE? WHAT COULD HE HAVE HIDDEN HERE?
SAVAGE PLANET, SAVAGE BEASTS?
WHAT IS THIS ONE ABOUT?



and at once, I knew I had made a grave mistake. In an instant I was surrounded, swarmed, overwhelmed. It was unclear if I would make it out alive. I had grossly underestimated the situation.

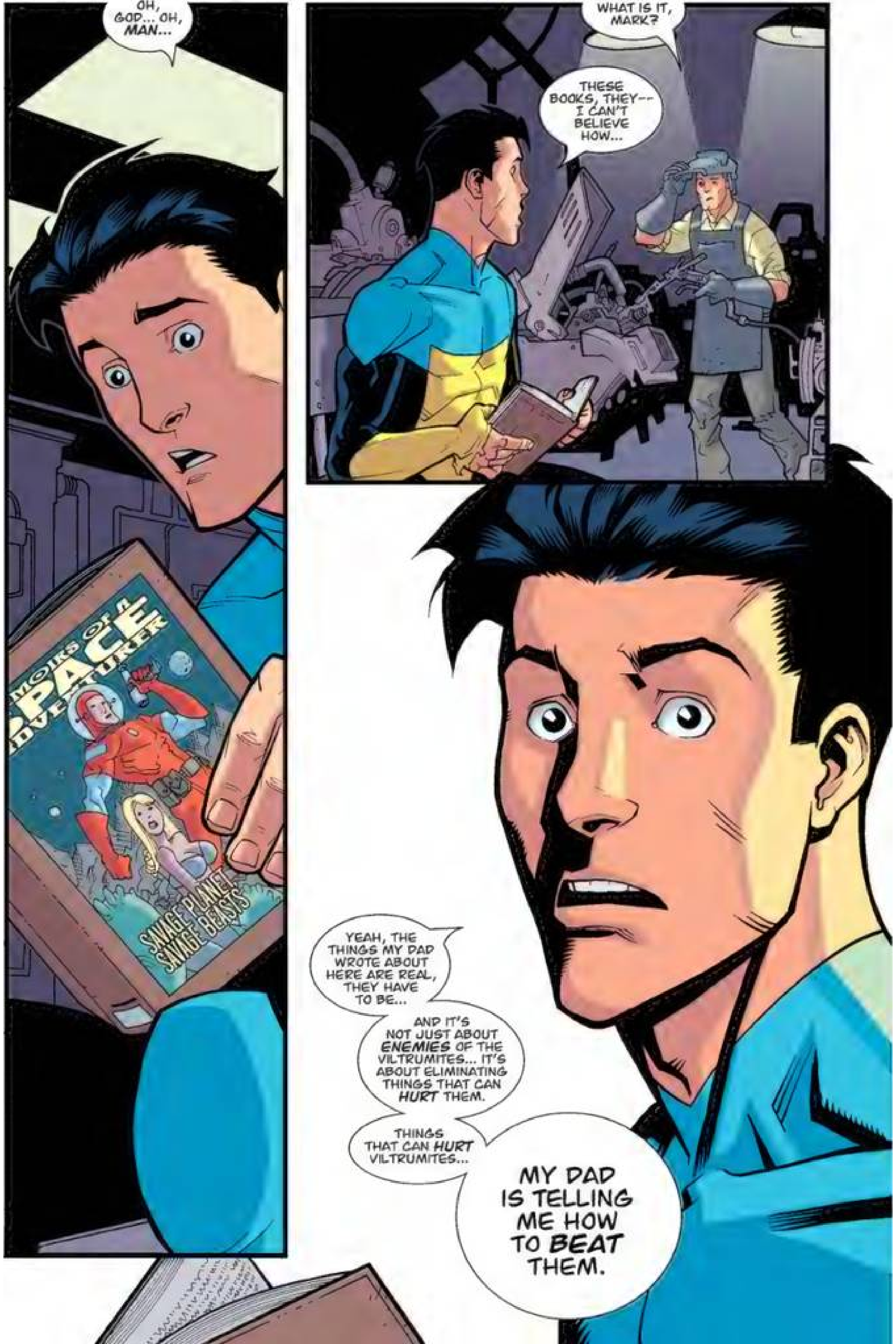
The mission was clear, investigate the inhabitants of this harsh planet, determine their exact threat level to the empire, and then report back for further instructions. It appeared then that I might not make it back to receive those instructions. It was clear the threat level was high. With almost minimal effort I was quickly injured. These creatures were fast. They seemed to come out of nowhere. I did not have time to react. My life was immediately in danger.

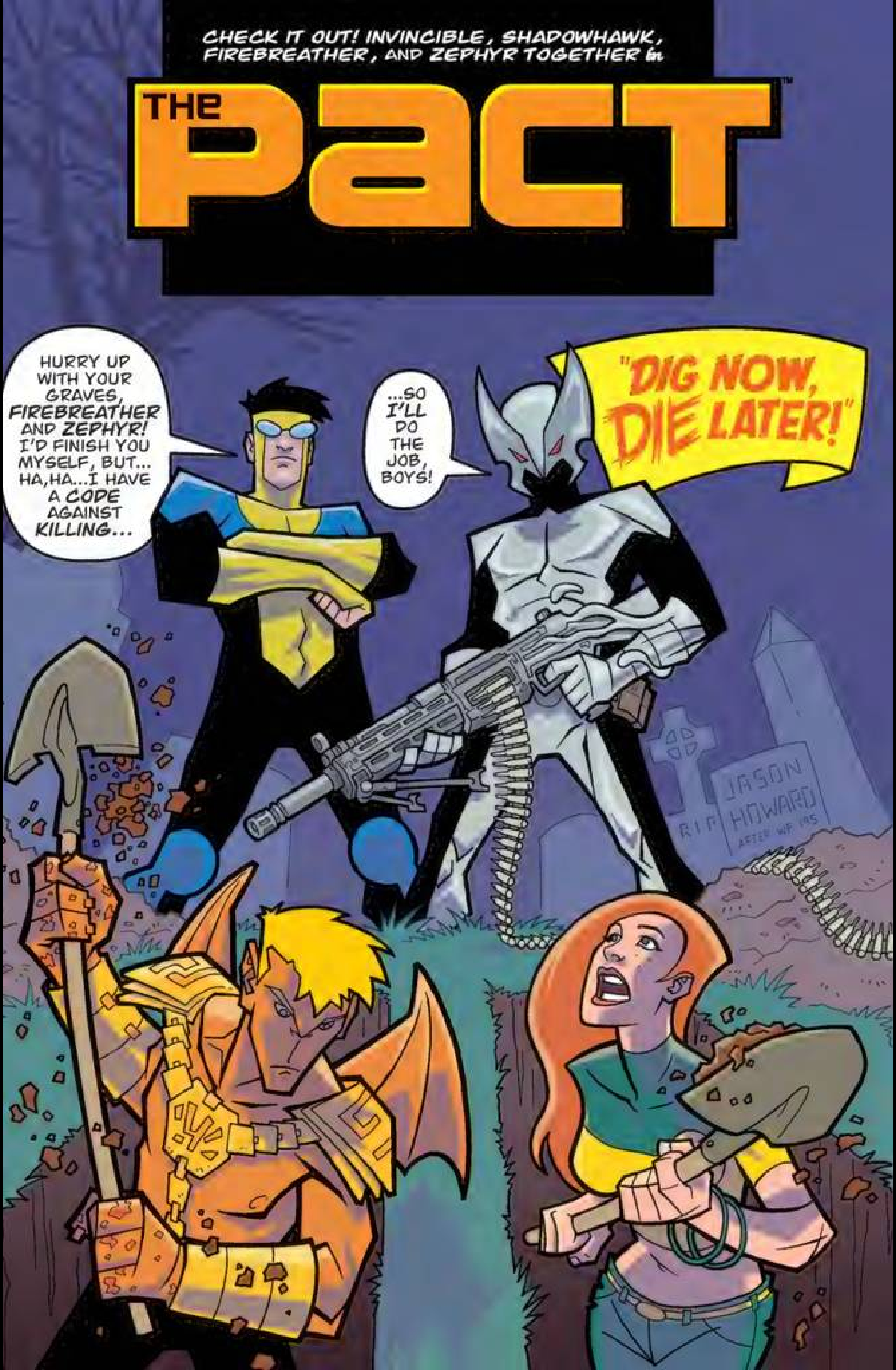
The size of these beasts was deceiving. They were barely twice my size. I've battled creatures ten times their size with infinitely less effort. The planet they inhabit caused them to evolve into such tough creatures. The gravitational quotient on this unnamed planet was so severe they had to be stronger than most to simply be able to move. They were remarkable creatures. In hindsight I can look at them scientifically and I find a tremendous respect for them.

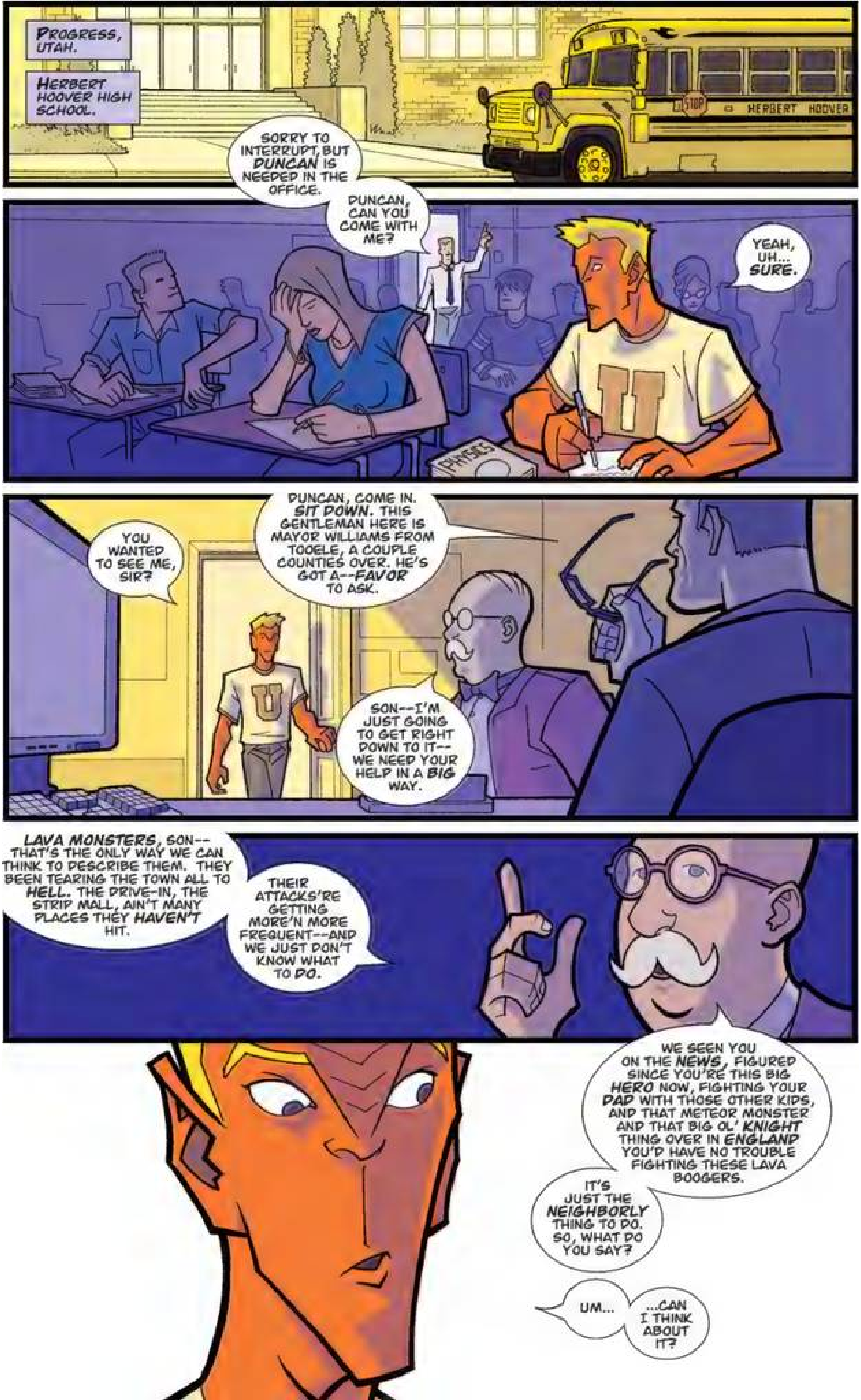
At the time I felt differently. I just wanted to survive, if that meant wiping out the entire race, I would have done it, as harsh as that sounds.

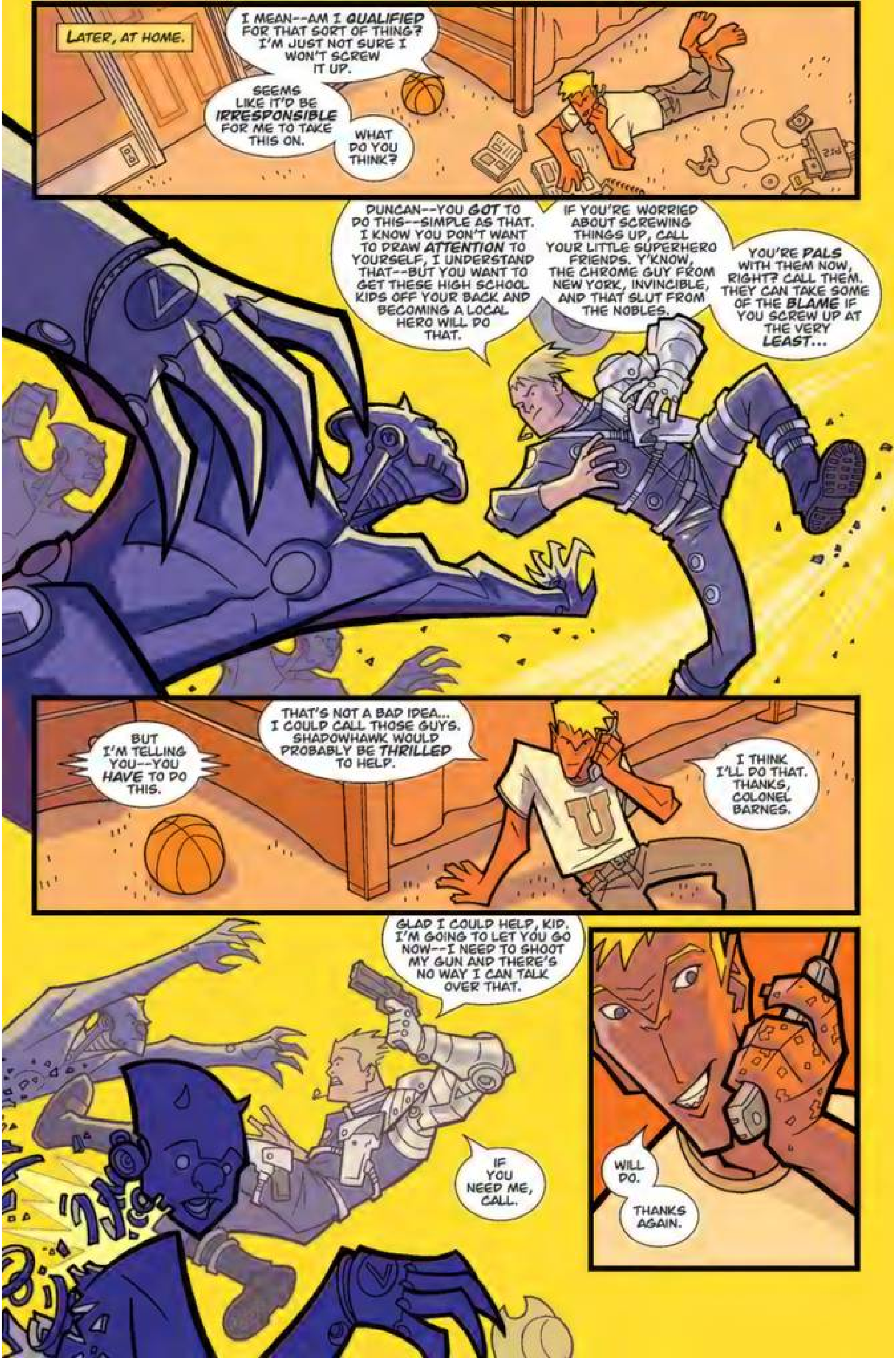
With every attempt to reach the sky and escape to the stars, I was thwarted, pulled back into the heap, ravaged all over again. While these creatures did not possess the ability to fly they could jump long distances and high into the air with their powerful legs. Any attempt to fly was met with a swift attack from one or more that resulted in my falling back to the planet's surface. It was clear that strategy was not going to work.

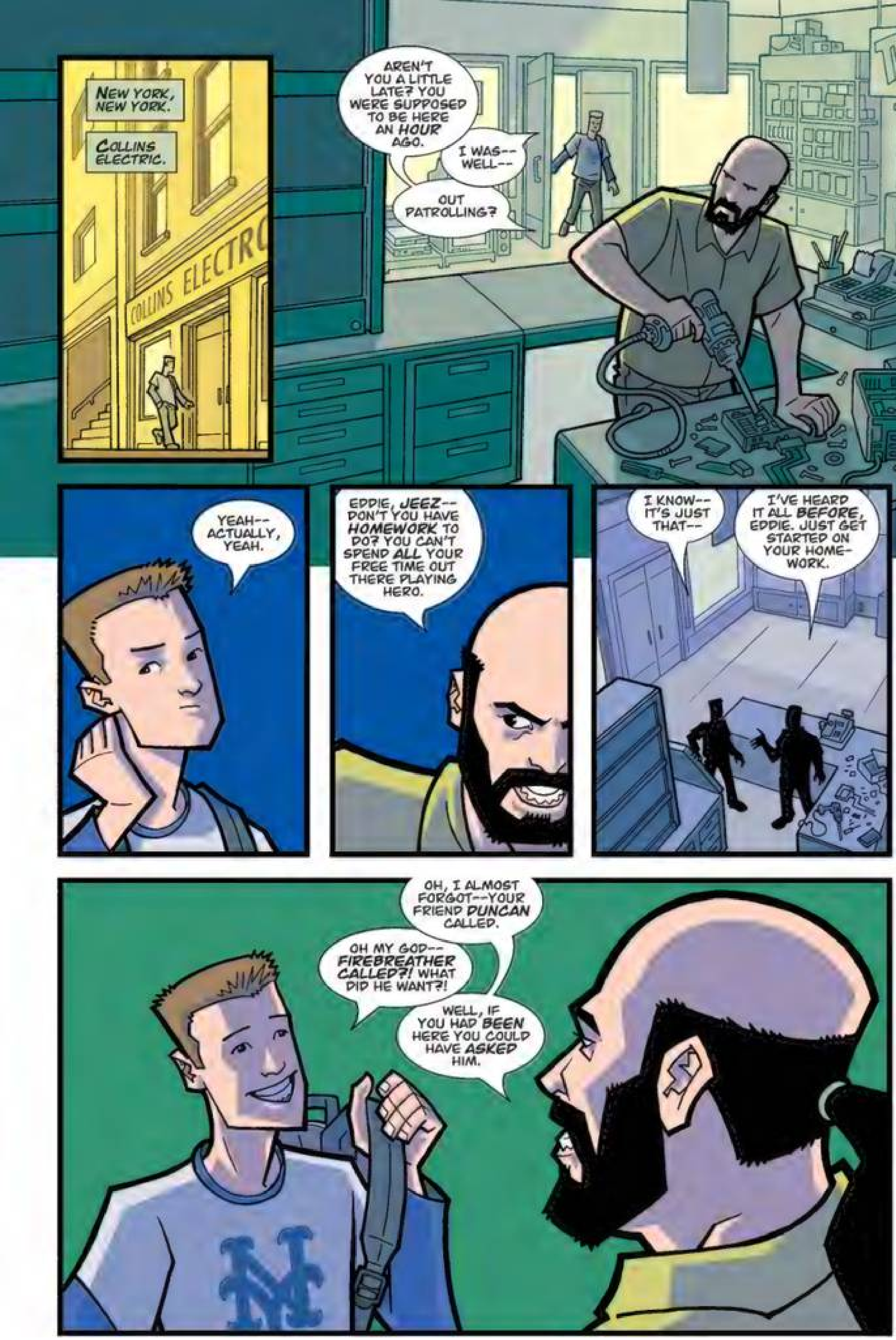
I began trying to fight my way through the horde. If I could push through them, maybe I could get far enough away from them fast enough to make my escape. The problem with that strategy was that I was under constant attack. I could feel the flesh being ripped from my bones as I pressed on. This method of escape was not going

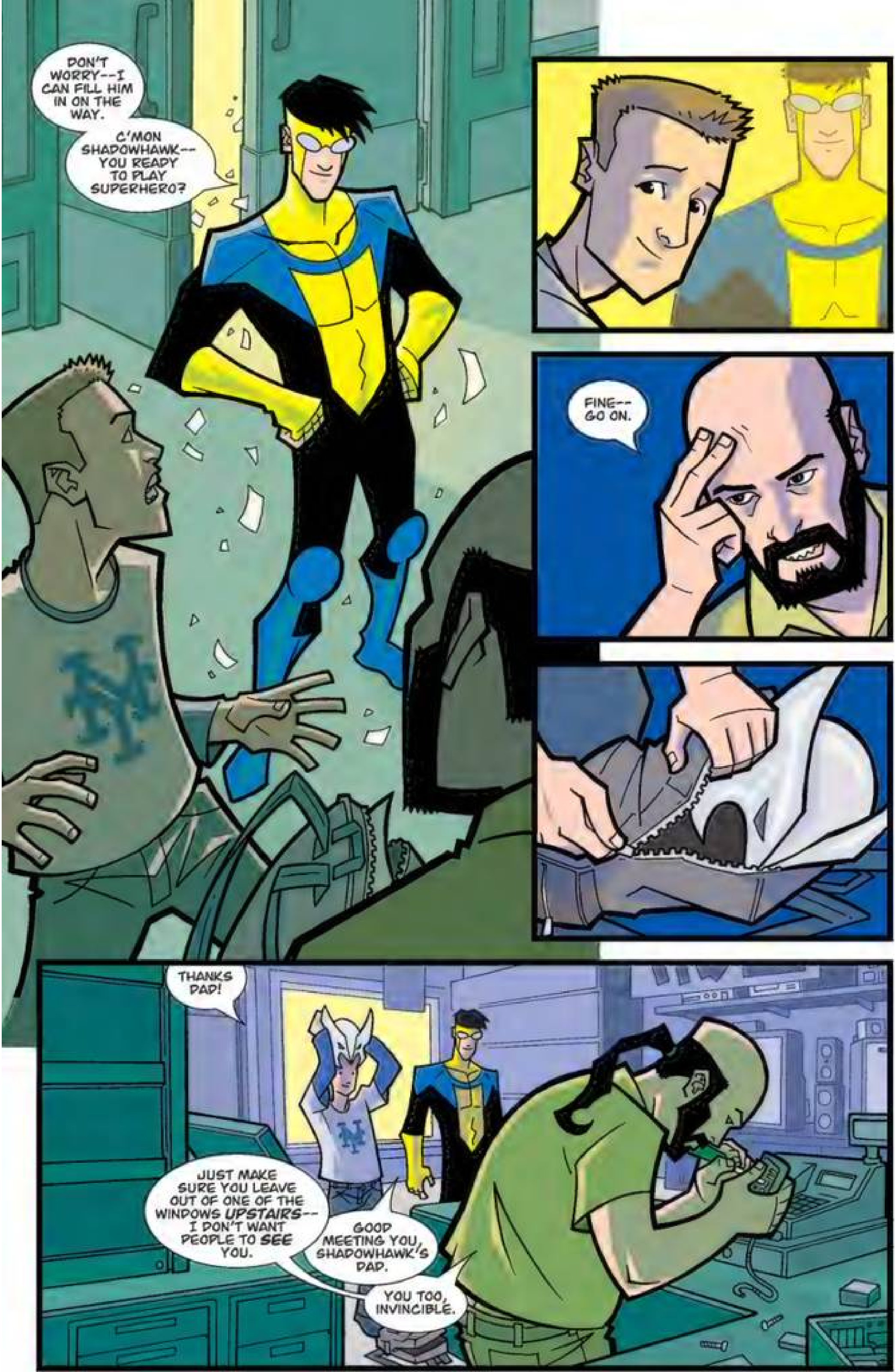

OH, GOD... OH, MAN...
WHAT IS IT, MARK?
THESE BOOKS, THEY-- I CAN'T BELIEVE HOW...
SAVAGE PLANET SAVAGE BEASTS
YEAH, THE THINGS MY DAD WROTE ABOUT HERE ARE REAL, THEY HAVE TO BE...
AND IT'S NOT JUST ABOUT ENEMIES OF THE VILTRUMITES... IT'S ABOUT ELIMINATING THINGS THAT CAN HURT THEM.
THINGS THAT CAN HURT VILTRUMITES...
MY DAD IS TELLING ME HOW TO BEAT THEM.

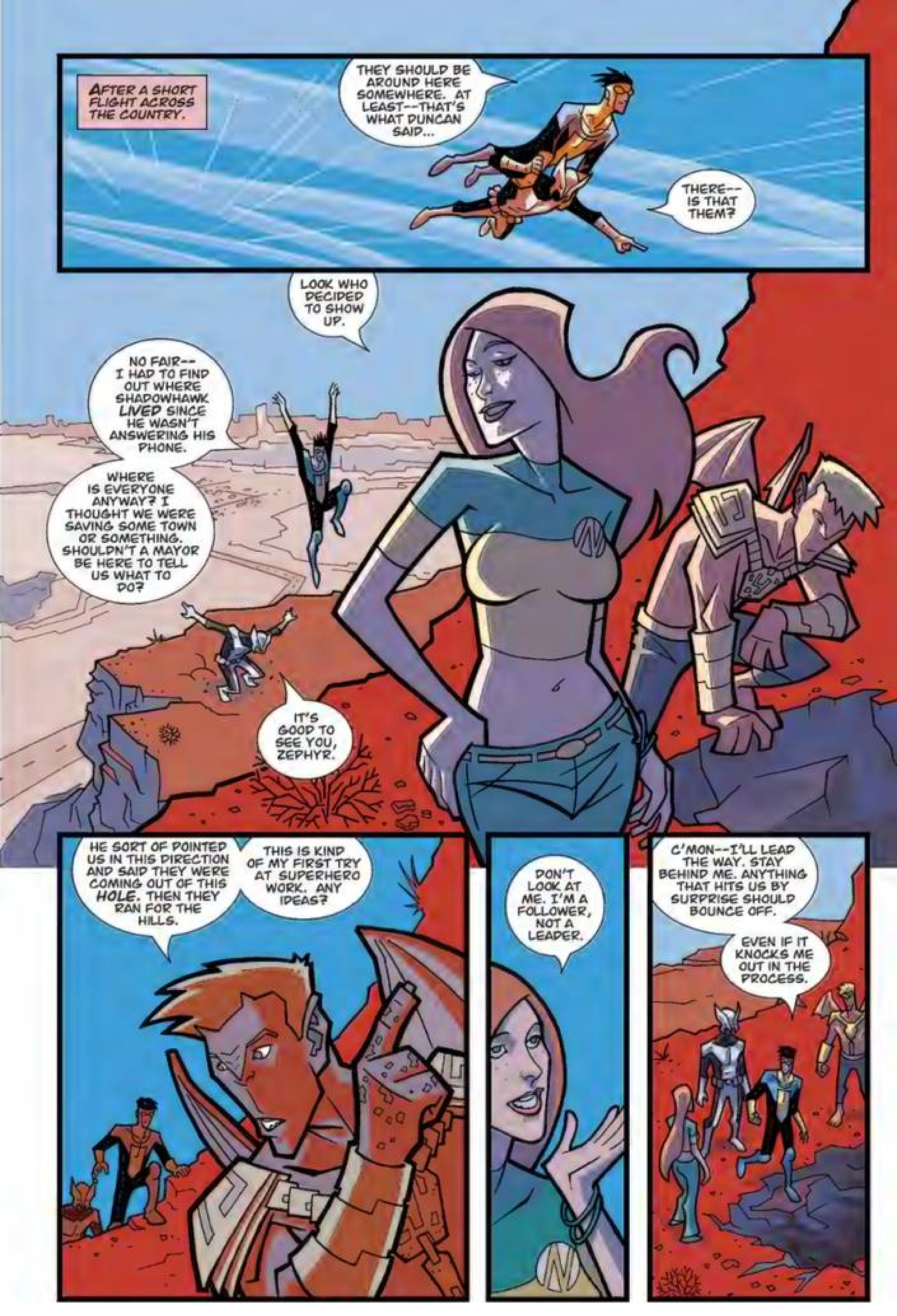

CHECK IT OUT! INVINCIBLE, SHADOWHAWK, FIREBREATHER, AND ZEPHYR TOGETHER in
THE PACT™
HURRY UP WITH YOUR GRAVES, FIREBREATHER AND ZEPHYR! I'D FINISH YOU MYSELF, BUT... HA,HA...I HAVE A CODE AGAINST KILLING...
...SO I'LL DO THE JOB, BOYS!
"DIG NOW, DIE LATER!"
JASON HOWARD
R.I.P.
AFTER WF 195

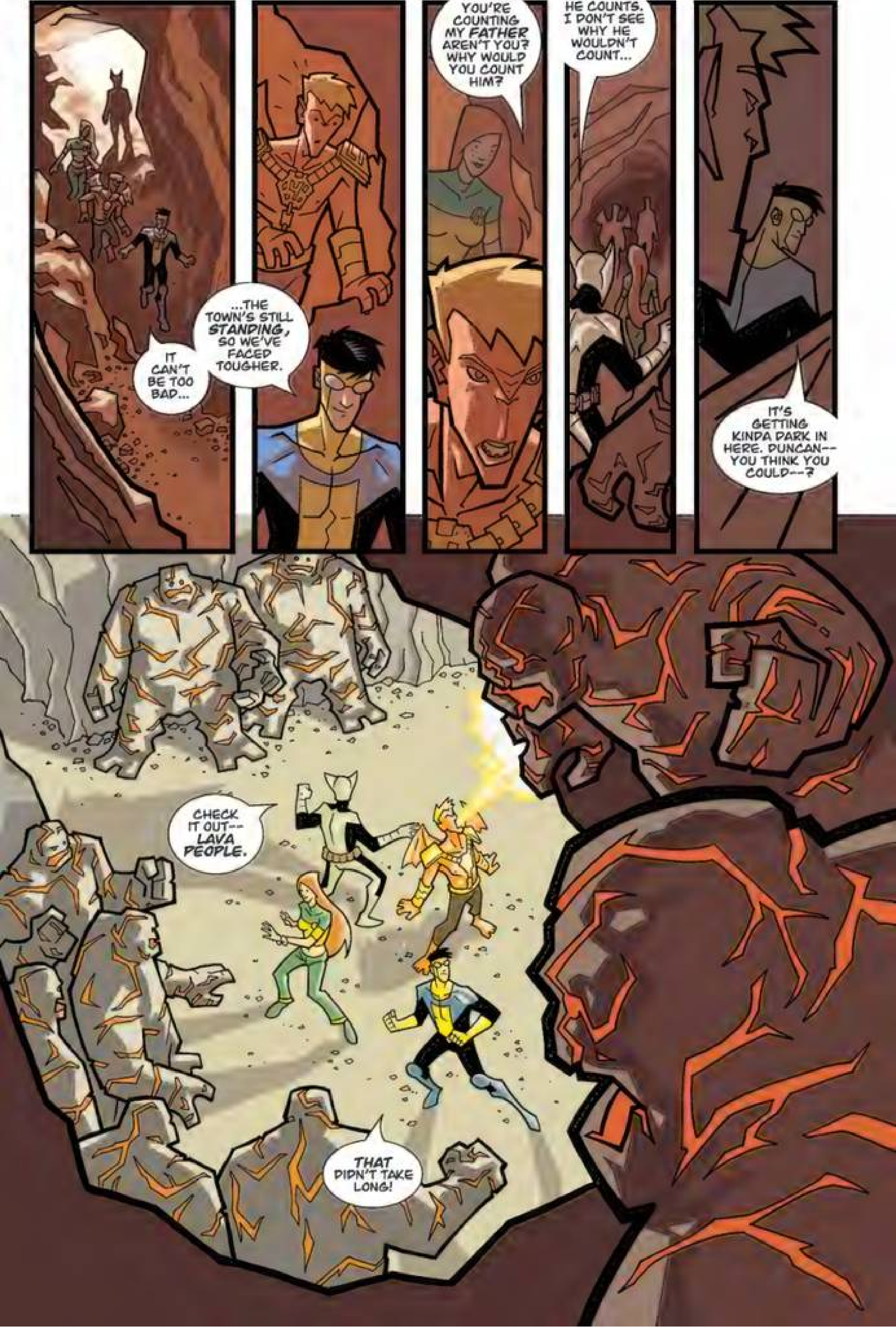

PROGRESS, UTAH.
HERBERT HOOVER HIGH SCHOOL.
STOP
HERBERT HOOVER
SORRY TO INTERRUPT, BUT DUNCAN IS NEEDED IN THE OFFICE.
DUNCAN, CAN YOU COME WITH ME?
YEAH, UH... SURE.
PHYSICS
YOU WANTED TO SEE ME, SIR?
DUNCAN, COME IN. SIT DOWN. THIS GENTLEMAN HERE IS MAYOR WILLIAMS FROM TOOELE, A COUPLE COUNTIES OVER. HE'S GOT A--FAVOR TO ASK.
SON--I'M JUST GOING TO GET RIGHT DOWN TO IT--WE NEED YOUR HELP IN A BIG WAY.
LAVA MONSTERS, SON--THAT'S THE ONLY WAY WE CAN THINK TO DESCRIBE THEM. THEY BEEN TEARING THE TOWN ALL TO HELL. THE DRIVE-IN, THE STRIP MALL, AIN'T MANY PLACES THEY HAVEN'T HIT.
THEIR ATTACKS'RE GETTING MORE'N MORE FREQUENT--AND WE JUST DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO.
WE SEEN YOU ON THE NEWS, FIGURED SINCE YOU'RE THIS BIG HERO NOW, FIGHTING YOUR DAD WITH THOSE OTHER KIDS, AND THAT METEOR MONSTER AND THAT BIG OL' KNIGHT THING OVER IN ENGLAND YOU'D HAVE NO TROUBLE FIGHTING THESE LAVA BOOGERS.
IT'S JUST THE NEIGHBORLY THING TO DO. SO, WHAT DO YOU SAY?
UM...
...CAN I THINK ABOUT IT?

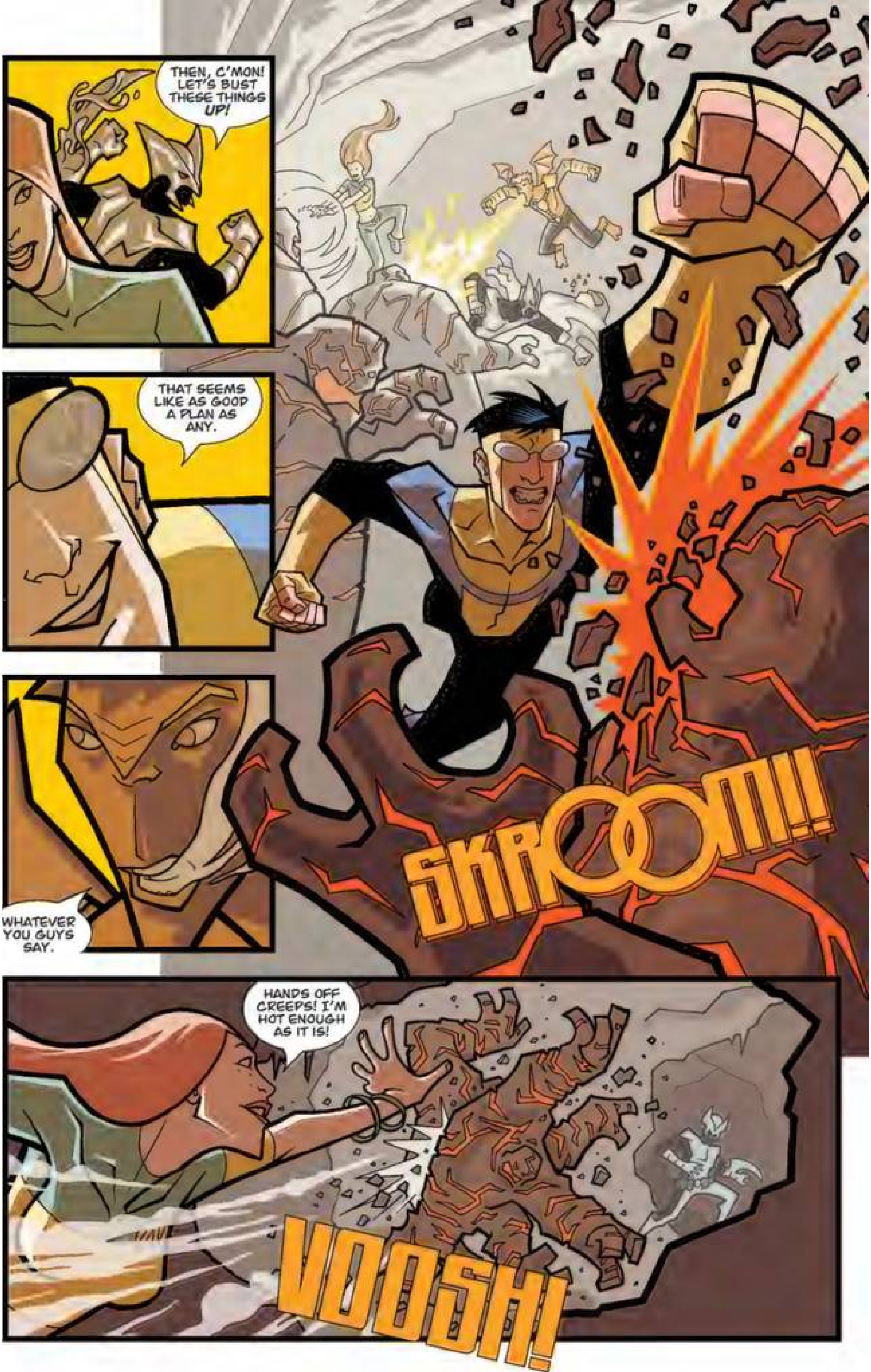

LATER, AT HOME.
I MEAN--AM I QUALIFIED FOR THAT SORT OF THING? I'M JUST NOT SURE I WON'T SCREW IT UP.
SEEMS LIKE IT'D BE IRRESPONSIBLE FOR ME TO TAKE THIS ON.
WHAT DO YOU THINK?
DUNCAN--YOU GOT TO DO THIS--SIMPLE AS THAT. I KNOW YOU DON'T WANT TO DRAW ATTENTION TO YOURSELF, I UNDERSTAND THAT--BUT YOU WANT TO GET THESE HIGH SCHOOL KIDS OFF YOUR BACK AND BECOMING A LOCAL HERO WILL DO THAT.
IF YOU'RE WORRIED ABOUT SCREWING THINGS UP, CALL YOUR LITTLE SUPERHERO FRIENDS. Y'KNOW, THE CHROME GUY FROM NEW YORK, INVINCIBLE, AND THAT SLUT FROM THE NOBLES.
YOU'RE PALS WITH THEM NOW, RIGHT? CALL THEM. THEY CAN TAKE SOME OF THE BLAME IF YOU SCREW UP AT THE VERY LEAST...
BUT I'M TELLING YOU--YOU HAVE TO DO THIS.
THAT'S NOT A BAD IDEA... I COULD CALL THOSE GUYS. SHADOWHAWK WOULD PROBABLY BE THRILLED TO HELP.
I THINK I'LL DO THAT. THANKS, COLONEL BARNES.
GLAD I COULD HELP, KID. I'M GOING TO LET YOU GO NOW--I NEED TO SHOOT MY GUN AND THERE'S NO WAY I CAN TALK OVER THAT.
IF YOU NEED ME, CALL.
WILL DO.
THANKS AGAIN.

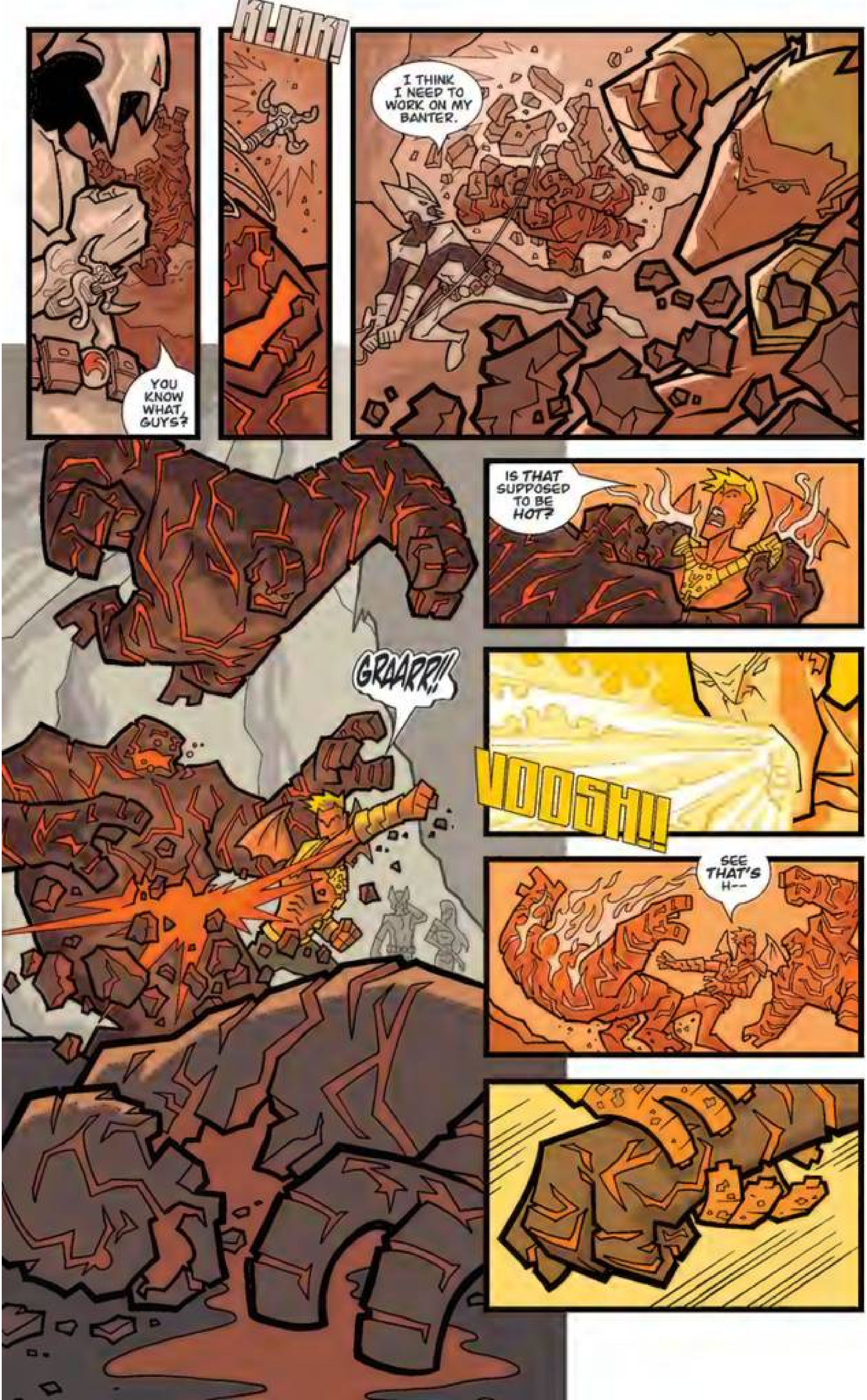

NEW YORK, NEW YORK.
COLLINS ELECTRIC.
COLLINS ELECTRO
AREN'T YOU A LITTLE LATE? YOU WERE SUPPOSED TO BE HERE AN *HOUR* AGO.
I WAS-- WELL--
OUT PATROLLING?
YEAH-- ACTUALLY, YEAH.
EDDIE, **JEEZ**-- DON'T YOU HAVE **HOMEWORK** TO DO? YOU CAN'T SPEND **ALL** YOUR FREE TIME OUT THERE PLAYING HERO.
I KNOW-- IT'S JUST THAT--
I'VE HEARD IT ALL **BEFORE**, EDDIE. JUST GET STARTED ON YOUR HOMEWORK.
OH, I ALMOST FORGOT--YOUR FRIEND **DUNCAN** CALLED.
OH MY GOD-- ***FIREBREATHER CALLED?!*** WHAT DID HE WANT?!
WELL, IF YOU HAD **BEEN** HERE YOU COULD HAVE **ASKED** HIM.

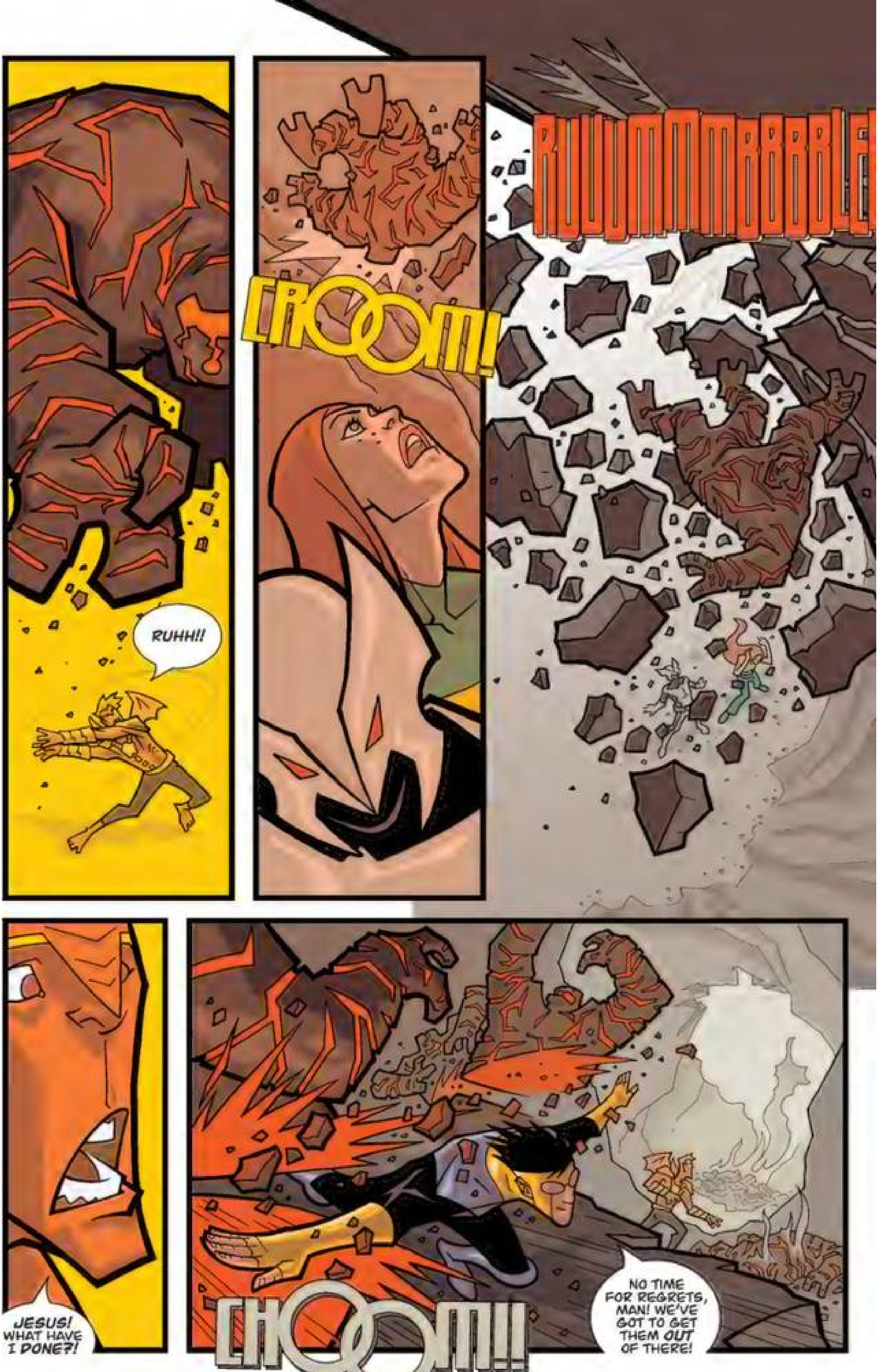

DON'T WORRY--I CAN FILL HIM IN ON THE WAY.
C'MON SHADOWHAWK--YOU READY TO PLAY SUPERHERO?
FINE--GO ON.
THANKS DAD!
JUST MAKE SURE YOU LEAVE OUT OF ONE OF THE WINDOWS UPSTAIRS--I DON'T WANT PEOPLE TO SEE YOU.
GOOD MEETING YOU, SHADOWHAWK'S DAD.
YOU TOO, INVINCIBLE.

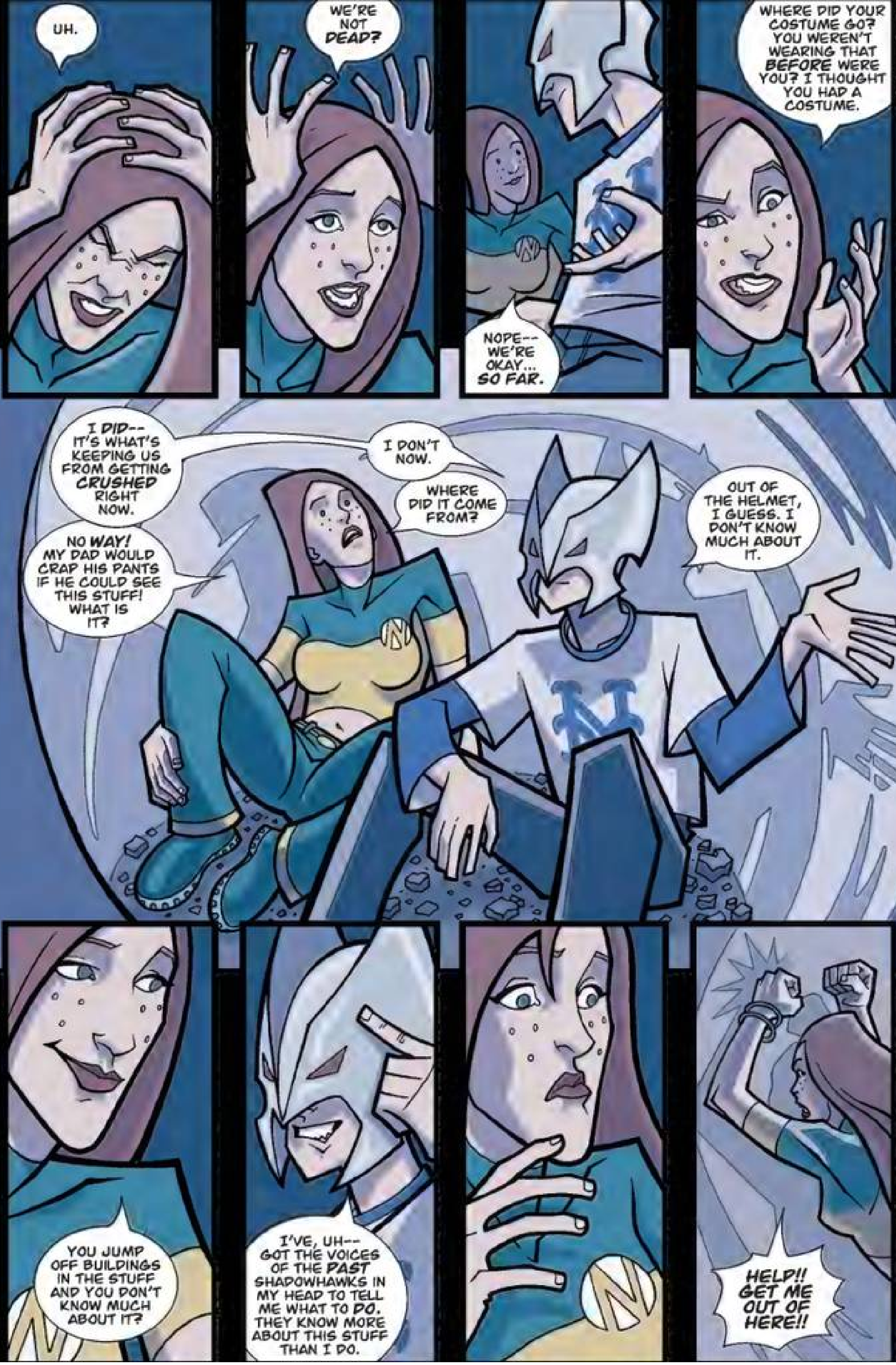

AFTER A SHORT FLIGHT ACROSS THE COUNTRY.
THEY SHOULD BE AROUND HERE SOMEWHERE. AT LEAST--THAT'S WHAT DUNCAN SAID...
THERE-- IS THAT THEM?
LOOK WHO DECIDED TO SHOW UP.
NO FAIR-- I HAD TO FIND OUT WHERE SHADOWHAWK *LIVED* SINCE HE WASN'T ANSWERING HIS PHONE.
WHERE IS EVERYONE ANYWAY? I THOUGHT WE WERE SAVING SOME TOWN OR SOMETHING. SHOULDN'T A MAYOR BE HERE TO TELL US WHAT TO DO?
IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU, ZEPHYR.
HE SORT OF POINTED US IN THIS DIRECTION AND SAID THEY WERE COMING OUT OF THIS *HOLE*. THEN THEY RAN FOR THE HILLS.
THIS IS KIND OF MY FIRST TRY AT SUPERHERO WORK. ANY IDEAS?
DON'T LOOK AT ME. I'M A FOLLOWER, NOT A LEADER.
C'MON--I'LL LEAD THE WAY. STAY BEHIND ME. ANYTHING THAT HITS US BY SURPRISE SHOULD BOUNCE OFF.
EVEN IF IT KNOCKS ME OUT IN THE PROCESS.

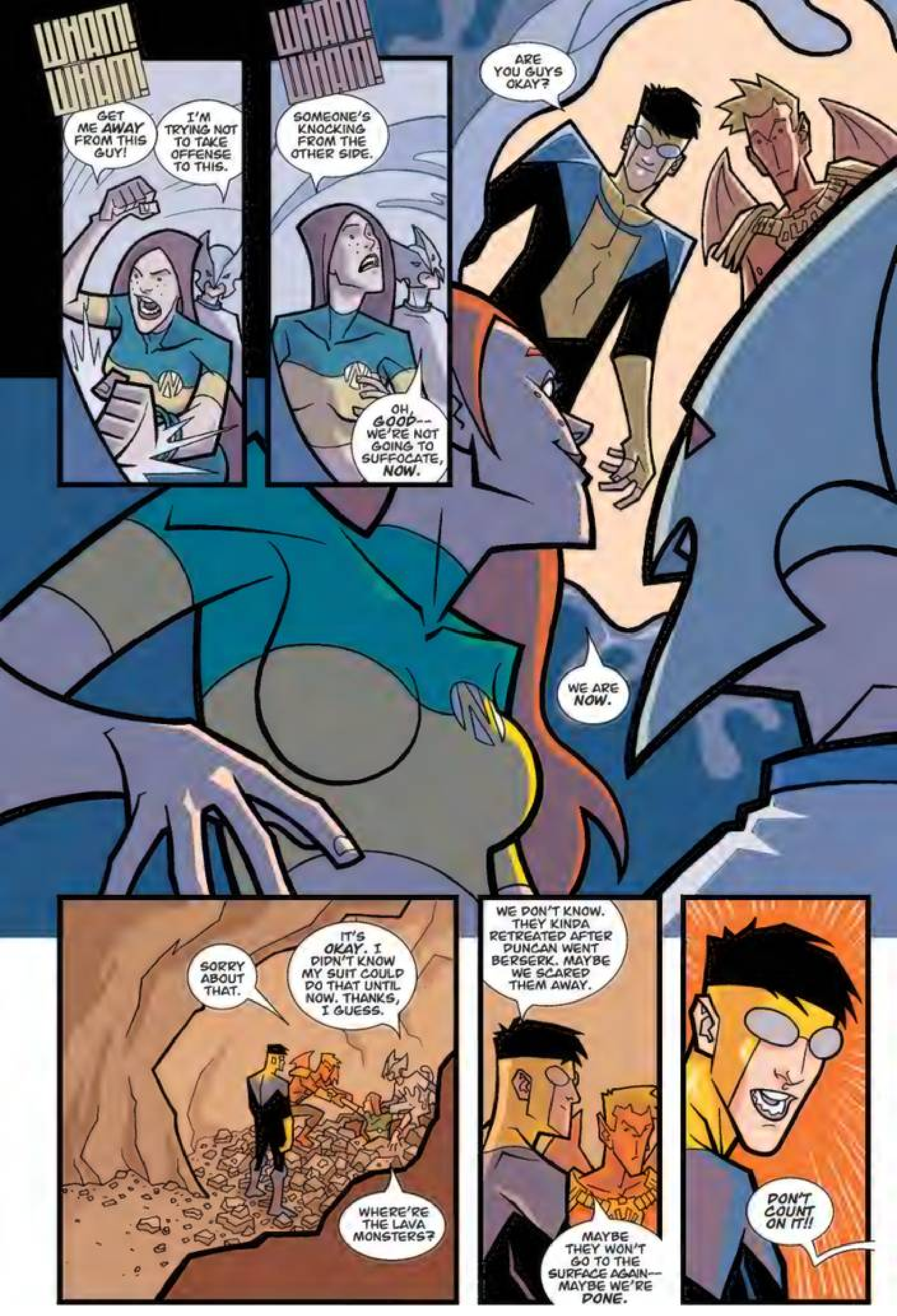

IT CAN'T BE TOO BAD...
...THE TOWN'S STILL *STANDING*, SO WE'VE FACED TOUGHER.
YOU'RE COUNTING MY *FATHER* AREN'T YOU? WHY WOULD YOU COUNT HIM?
HE COUNTS. I DON'T SEE WHY HE WOULDN'T COUNT...
IT'S GETTING KINDA DARK IN HERE. DUNCAN-- YOU THINK YOU COULD--?
CHECK IT OUT-- *LAVA PEOPLE.*
THAT DIDN'T TAKE LONG!

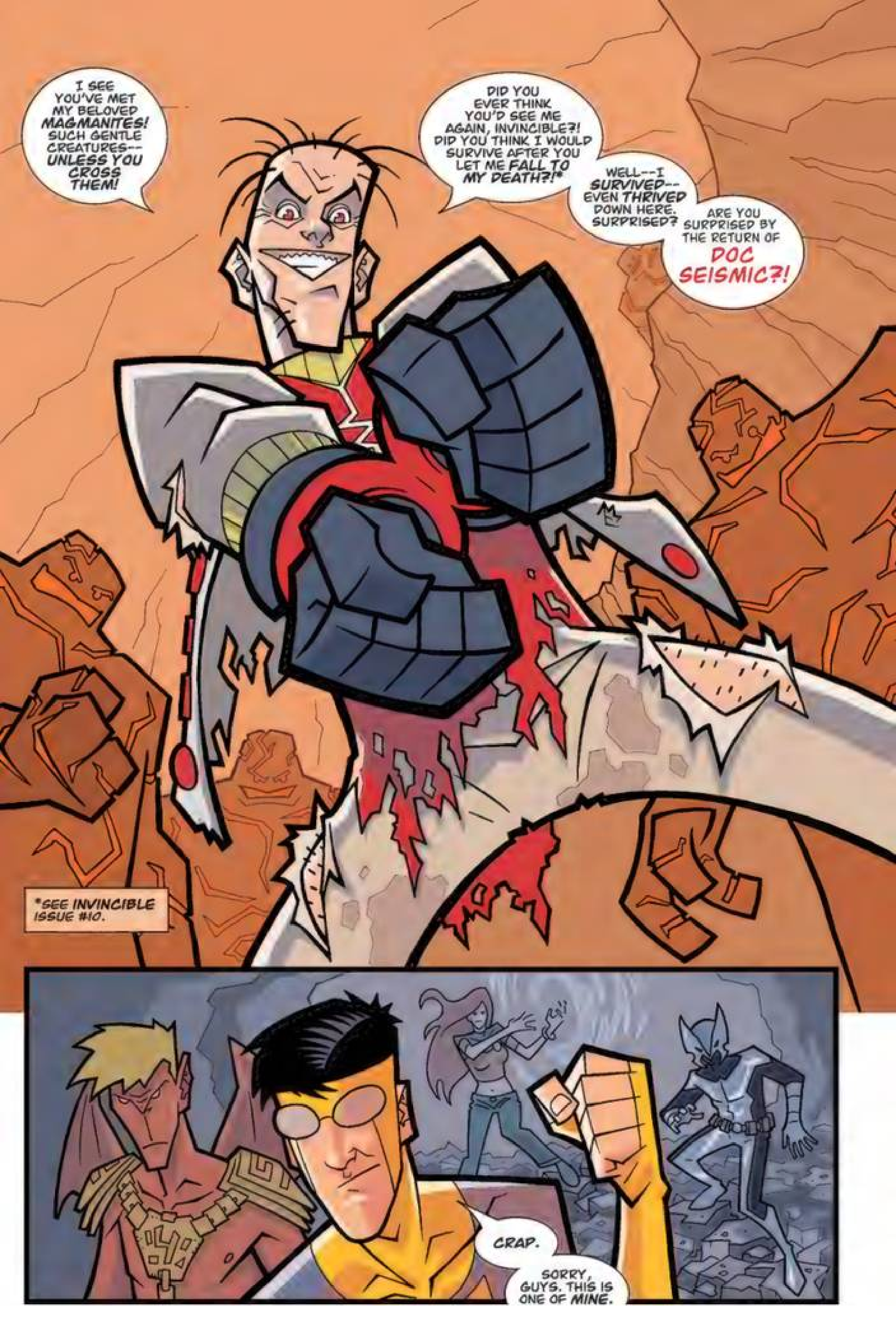

THEN, C'MON! LET'S BUST THESE THINGS *UP!*
THAT SEEMS LIKE AS GOOD A PLAN AS ANY.
WHATEVER YOU GUYS SAY.
SKROOOM!!
HANDS OFF CREEPS! I'M HOT ENOUGH AS IT IS!
VOOSH!

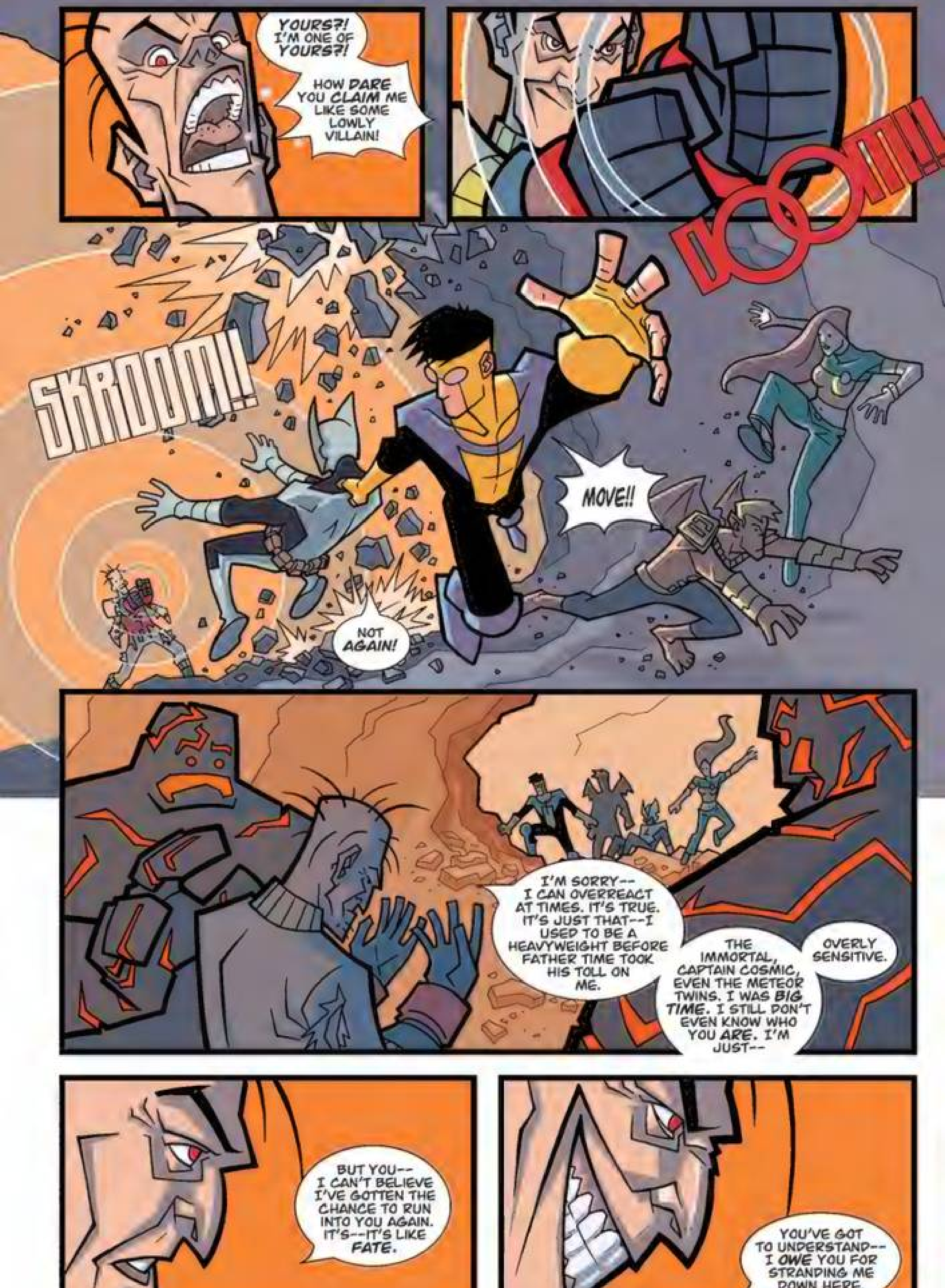

YOU KNOW WHAT, GUYS?
KLINK!
I THINK I NEED TO WORK ON MY BANTER.
GRAARR!!
IS THAT SUPPOSED TO BE HOT?
VOOSH!!
SEE THAT'S H--

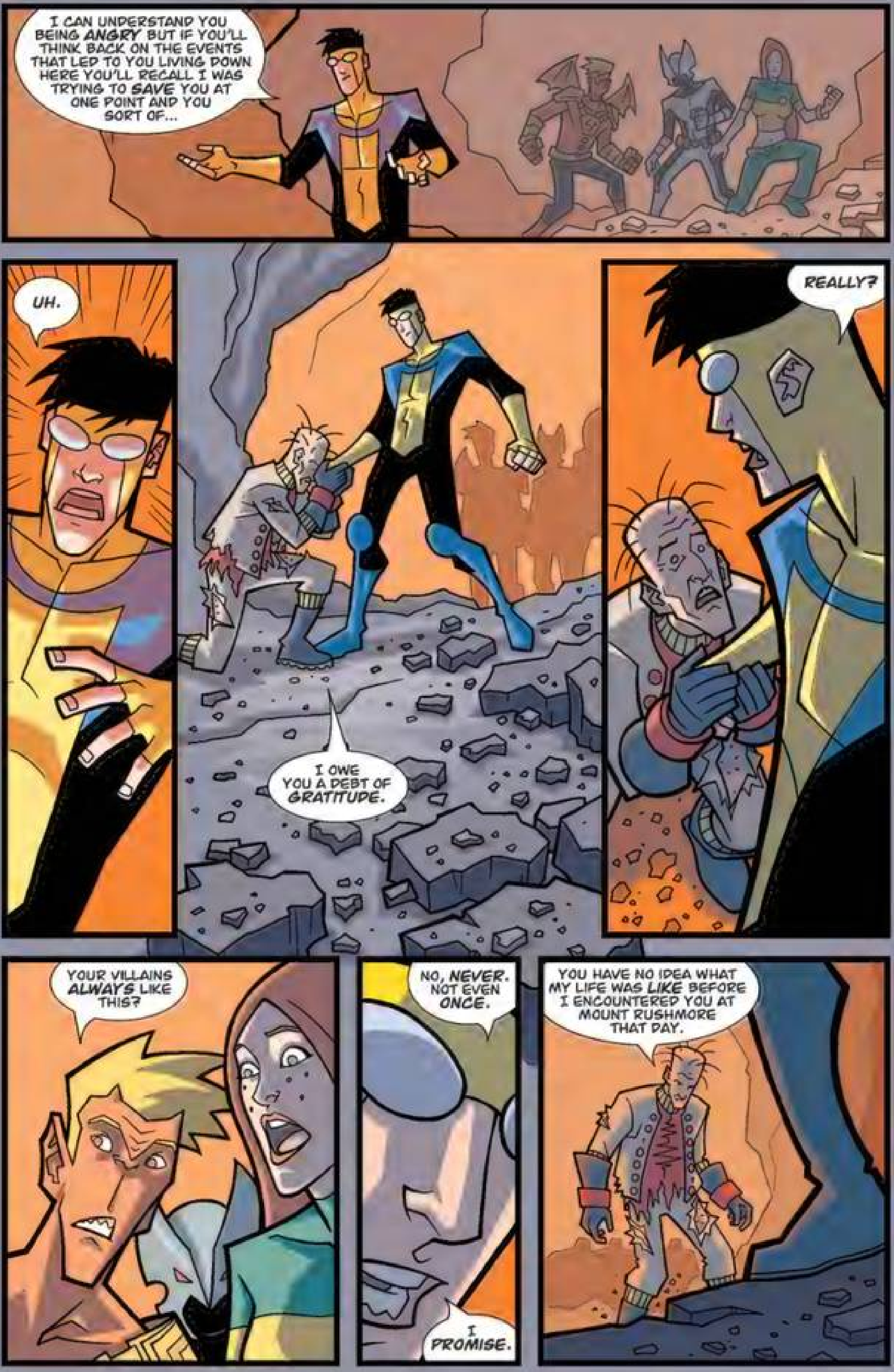

RUHH!!
CROOM!
RUUUMMMBBBBLE
JESUS! WHAT HAVE I *DONE*?!
CHOOM!!
NO TIME FOR REGRETS, MAN! WE'VE GOT TO GET THEM *OUT* OF THERE!

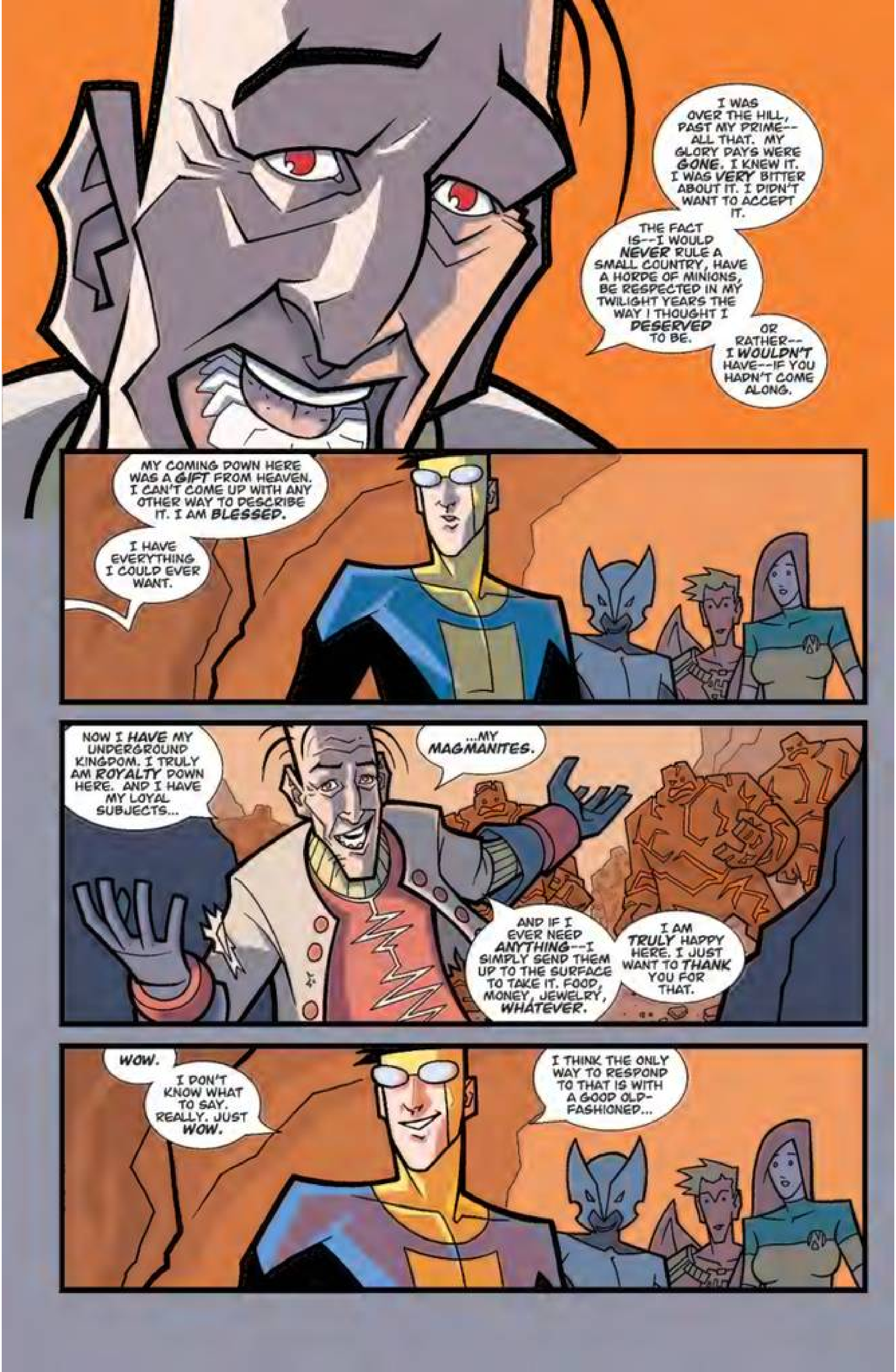

UH.
WE'RE NOT *DEAD?*
NOPE-- WE'RE OKAY... **SO FAR.**
WHERE DID YOUR COSTUME GO? YOU WEREN'T WEARING THAT *BEFORE* WERE YOU? I THOUGHT YOU HAD A COSTUME.
I *DID*-- IT'S WHAT'S KEEPING US FROM GETTING *CRUSHED* RIGHT NOW.
I DON'T NOW.
WHERE DID IT COME FROM?
OUT OF THE HELMET, I GUESS. I DON'T KNOW MUCH ABOUT IT.
NO *WAY!* MY DAD WOULD CRAP HIS PANTS IF HE COULD SEE THIS STUFF! WHAT IS IT?
YOU JUMP OFF BUILDINGS IN THE STUFF AND YOU DON'T KNOW MUCH ABOUT IT?
I'VE, UH-- GOT THE VOICES OF THE *PAST* SHADOWHAWKS IN MY HEAD TO TELL ME WHAT TO *DO.* THEY KNOW MORE ABOUT THIS STUFF THAN I DO.
HELP!! GET ME OUT OF HERE!!

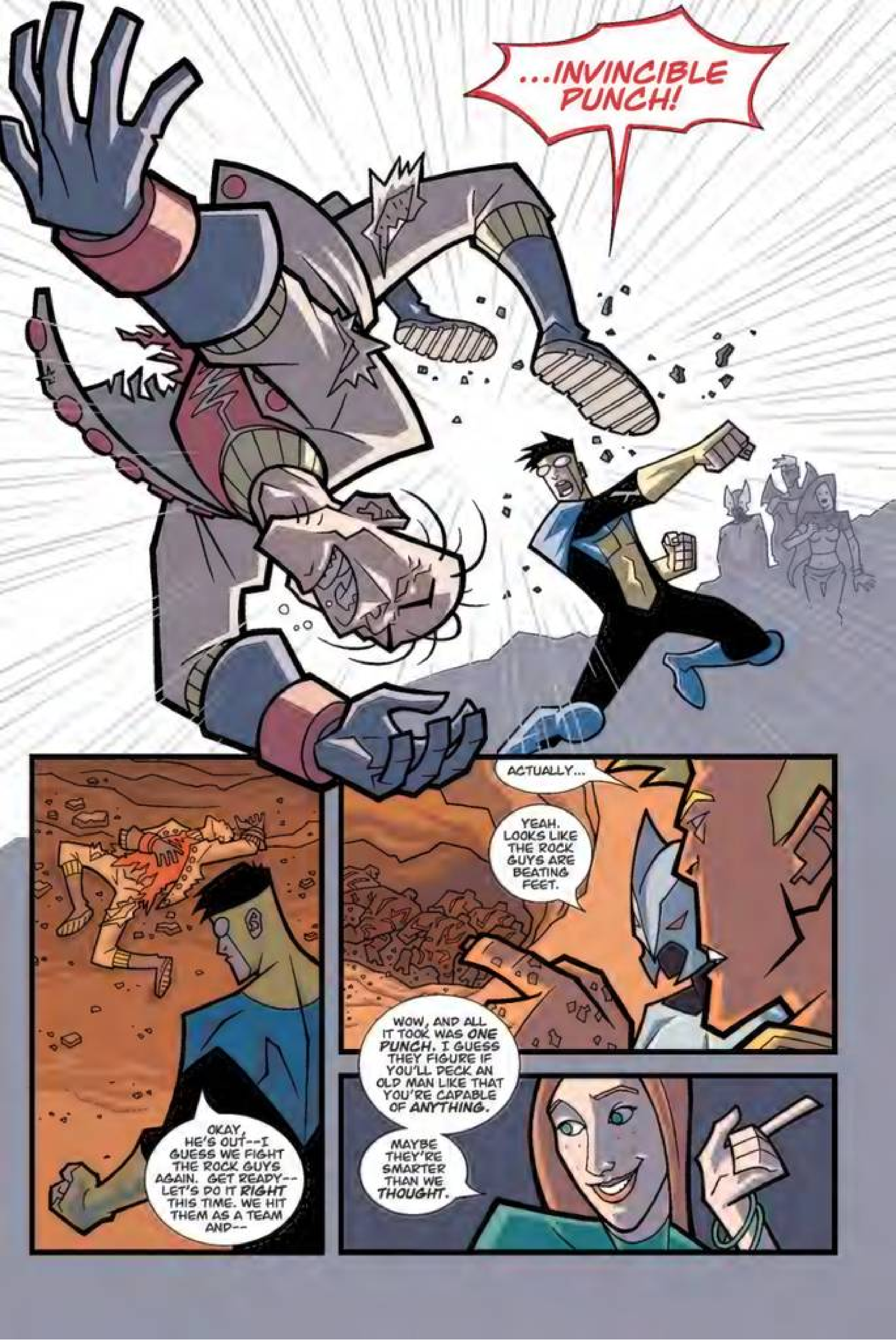

WHAM!
WHAM!
GET ME AWAY FROM THIS GUY!
I'M TRYING NOT TO TAKE OFFENSE TO THIS.
WHAM!
WHAM!
SOMEONE'S KNOCKING FROM THE OTHER SIDE.
OH, GOOD-- WE'RE NOT GOING TO SUFFOCATE, NOW.
ARE YOU GUYS OKAY?
WE ARE NOW.
SORRY ABOUT THAT.
IT'S OKAY. I DIDN'T KNOW MY SUIT COULD DO THAT UNTIL NOW. THANKS, I GUESS.
WHERE'RE THE LAVA MONSTERS?
WE DON'T KNOW. THEY KINDA RETREATED AFTER DUNCAN WENT BERSERK. MAYBE WE SCARED THEM AWAY.
MAYBE THEY WON'T GO TO THE SURFACE AGAIN-- MAYBE WE'RE DONE.
DON'T COUNT ON IT!!

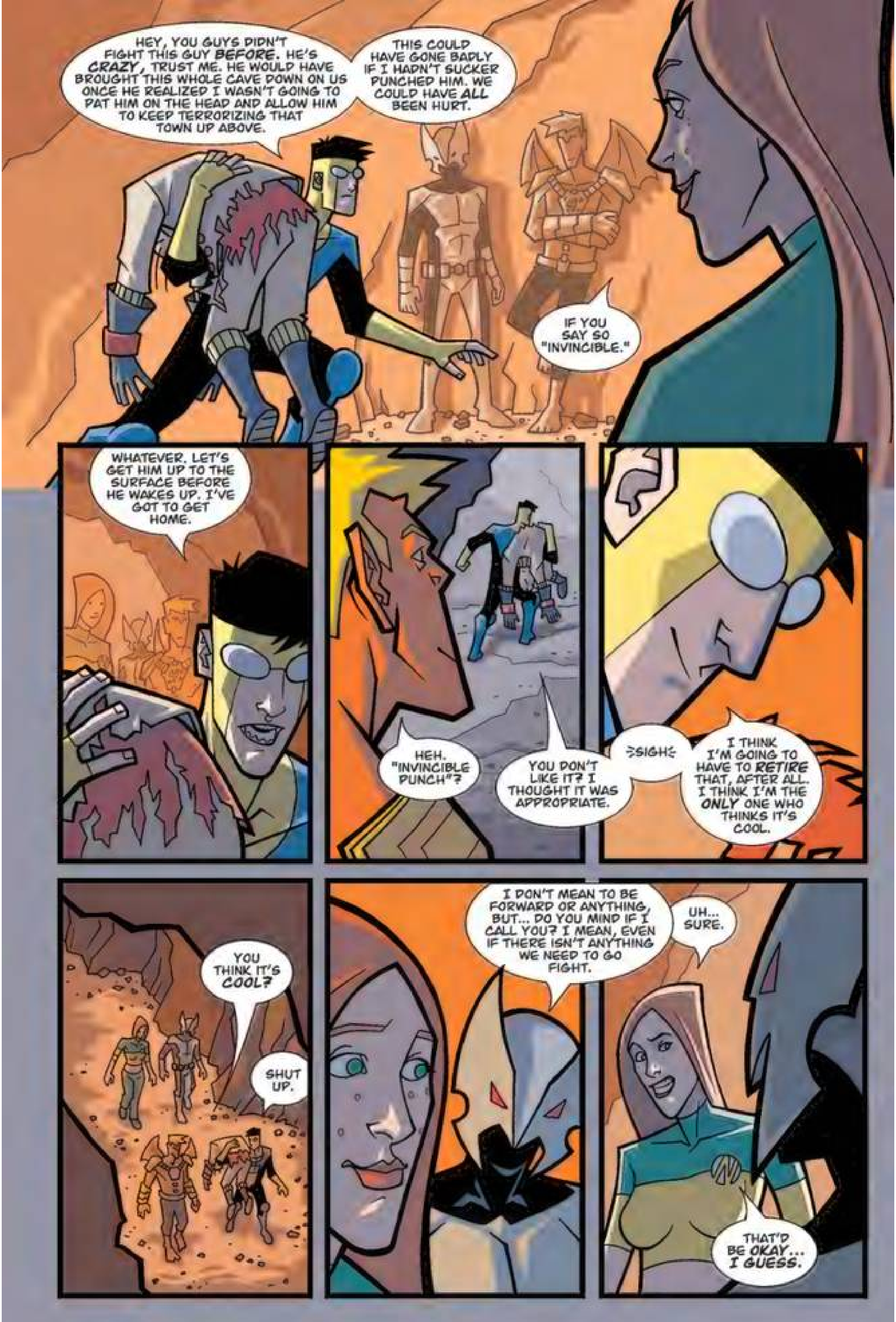

I SEE YOU'VE MET MY BELOVED **MAGMANITES!** SUCH GENTLE CREATURES-- **UNLESS YOU CROSS THEM!**
DID YOU EVER THINK YOU'D SEE ME AGAIN, INVINCIBLE?! DID YOU THINK I WOULD SURVIVE AFTER YOU LET ME **FALL TO MY DEATH?!***
WELL--I **SURVIVED**-- EVEN **THRIVED** DOWN HERE. SURPRISED?
ARE YOU SURPRISED BY THE RETURN OF **DOC SEISMIC?!**
*SEE **INVINCIBLE** ISSUE #10.
CRAP.
SORRY, GUYS. THIS IS ONE OF *MINE*.

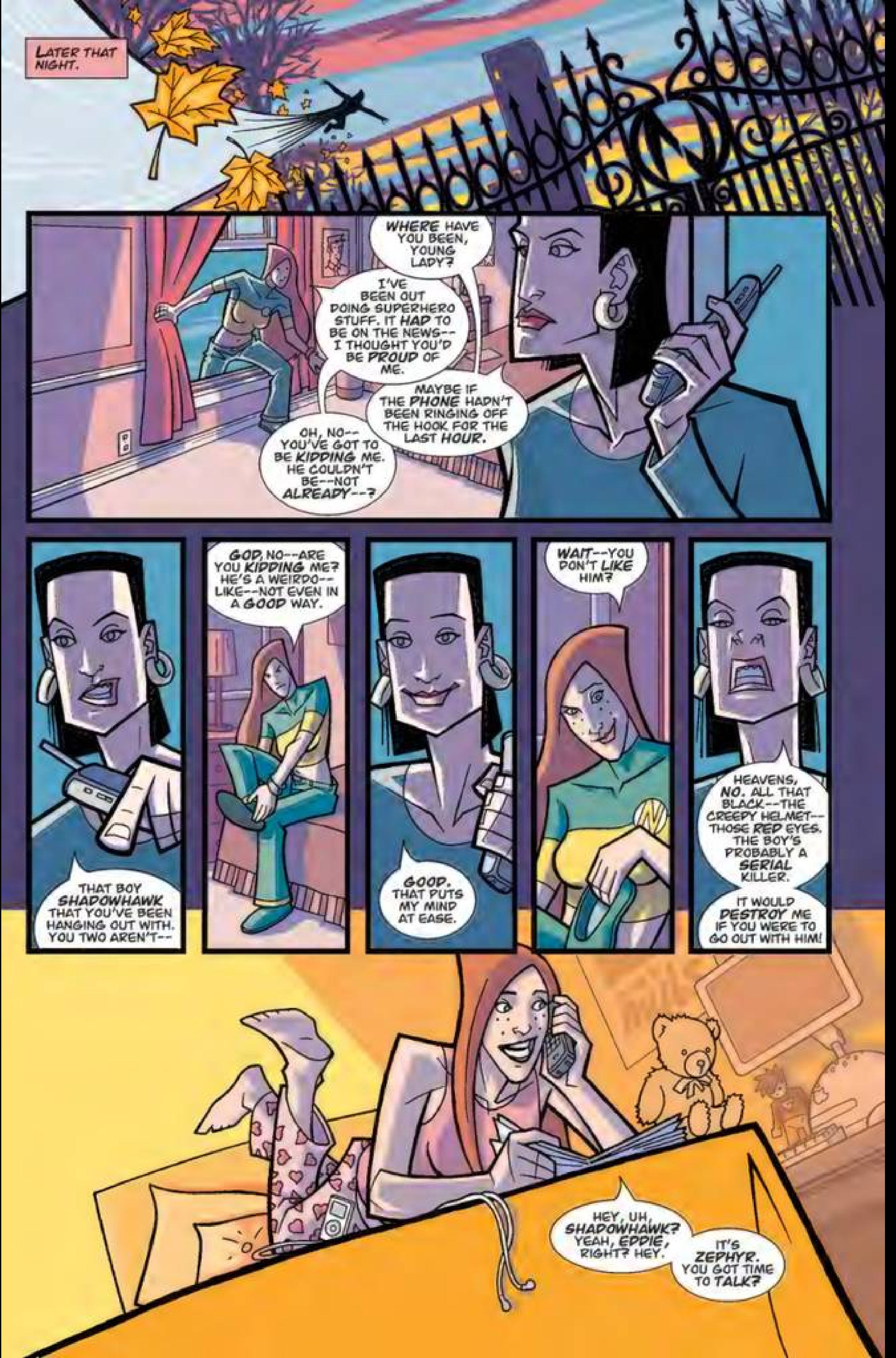

YOURS?! I'M ONE OF YOURS?!
HOW DARE YOU CLAIM ME LIKE SOME LOWLY VILLAIN!
DOOOM!!
SKROOM!!
MOVE!!
NOT AGAIN!
I'M SORRY-- I CAN OVERREACT AT TIMES. IT'S TRUE. IT'S JUST THAT--I USED TO BE A HEAVYWEIGHT BEFORE FATHER TIME TOOK HIS TOLL ON ME.
THE IMMORTAL, CAPTAIN COSMIC, EVEN THE METEOR TWINS. I WAS BIG TIME. I STILL DON'T EVEN KNOW WHO YOU ARE. I'M JUST--
OVERLY SENSITIVE.
BUT YOU-- I CAN'T BELIEVE I'VE GOTTEN THE CHANCE TO RUN INTO YOU AGAIN. IT'S--IT'S LIKE FATE.
YOU'VE GOT TO UNDERSTAND-- I OWE YOU FOR STRANDING ME DOWN HERE.

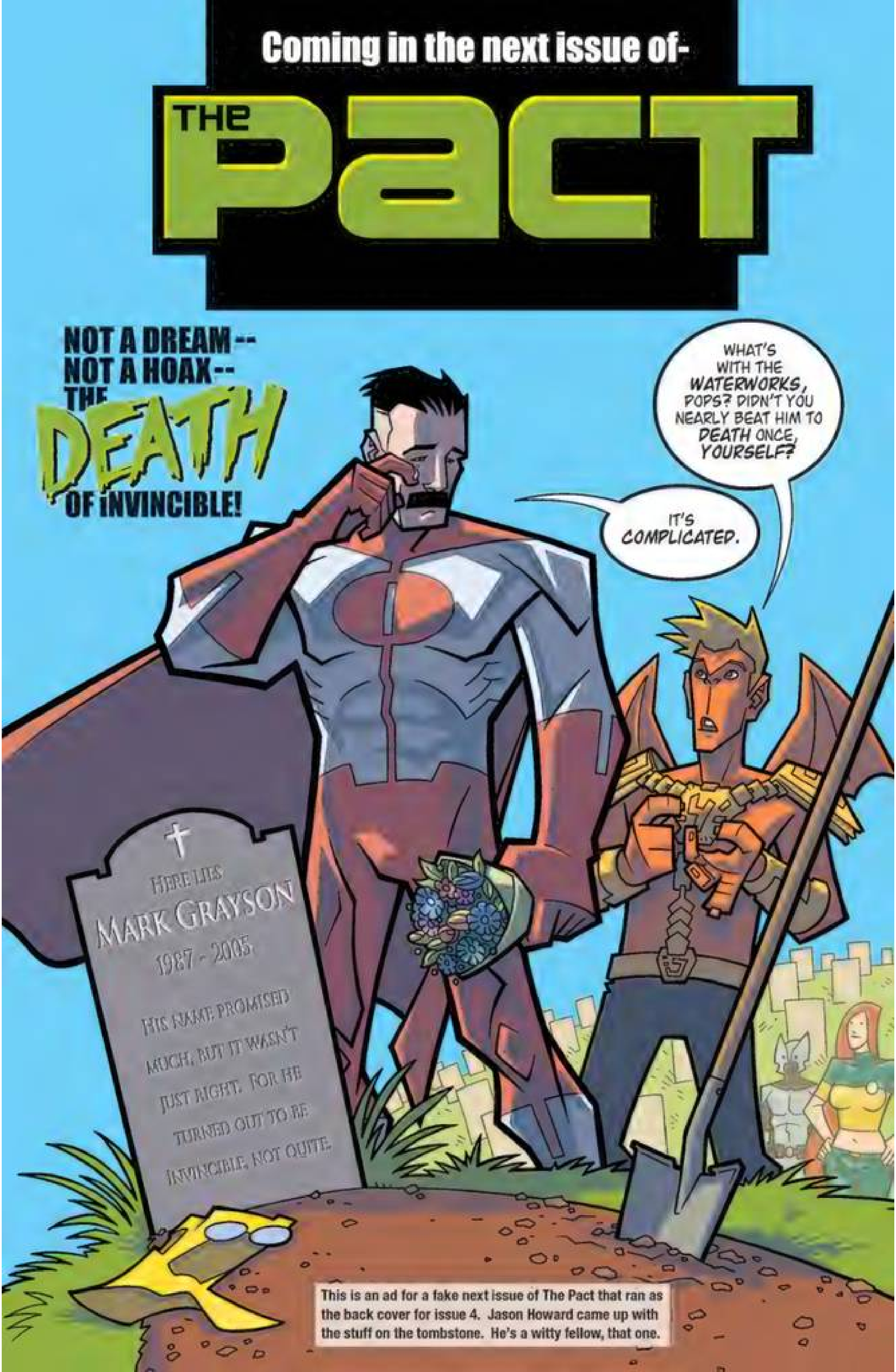

I CAN UNDERSTAND YOU BEING ANGRY BUT IF YOU'LL THINK BACK ON THE EVENTS THAT LED TO YOU LIVING DOWN HERE YOU'LL RECALL I WAS TRYING TO SAVE YOU AT ONE POINT AND YOU SORT OF...
UH.
I OWE YOU A DEBT OF GRATITUDE.
REALLY?
YOUR VILLAINS ALWAYS LIKE THIS?
NO, NEVER. NOT EVEN ONCE.
I PROMISE.
YOU HAVE NO IDEA WHAT MY LIFE WAS LIKE BEFORE I ENCOUNTERED YOU AT MOUNT RUSHMORE THAT DAY.


I WAS OVER THE HILL, PAST MY PRIME-- ALL THAT. MY GLORY DAYS WERE *GONE*. I KNEW IT. I WAS *VERY* BITTER ABOUT IT. I DIDN'T WANT TO ACCEPT IT.
THE FACT IS--I WOULD *NEVER* RULE A SMALL COUNTRY, HAVE A HORDE OF MINIONS, BE RESPECTED IN MY TWILIGHT YEARS THE WAY I THOUGHT I *DESERVED* TO BE.
OR RATHER-- *I WOULDN'T* HAVE--IF YOU HADN'T COME ALONG.
MY COMING DOWN HERE WAS A *GIFT* FROM HEAVEN. I CAN'T COME UP WITH ANY OTHER WAY TO DESCRIBE IT. I AM *BLESSED*.
I HAVE EVERYTHING I COULD EVER WANT.
NOW I *HAVE* MY UNDERGROUND KINGDOM. I TRULY AM *ROYALTY* DOWN HERE. AND I HAVE MY LOYAL SUBJECTS...
...MY *MAGMANITES*.
AND IF I EVER NEED *ANYTHING*--I SIMPLY SEND THEM UP TO THE SURFACE TO TAKE IT. FOOD, MONEY, JEWELRY, *WHATEVER*.
I AM *TRULY* HAPPY HERE. I JUST WANT TO *THANK* YOU FOR THAT.
WOW.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY. REALLY. JUST *WOW*.
I THINK THE ONLY WAY TO RESPOND TO THAT IS WITH A GOOD OLD-FASHIONED...


...INVINCIBLE PUNCH!
OKAY, HE'S OUT--I GUESS WE FIGHT THE ROCK GUYS AGAIN. GET READY--LET'S DO IT RIGHT THIS TIME. WE HIT THEM AS A TEAM AND--
ACTUALLY...
YEAH. LOOKS LIKE THE ROCK GUYS ARE BEATING FEET.
WOW, AND ALL IT TOOK WAS ONE PUNCH. I GUESS THEY FIGURE IF YOU'LL DECK AN OLD MAN LIKE THAT YOU'RE CAPABLE OF ANYTHING.
MAYBE THEY'RE SMARTER THAN WE THOUGHT.

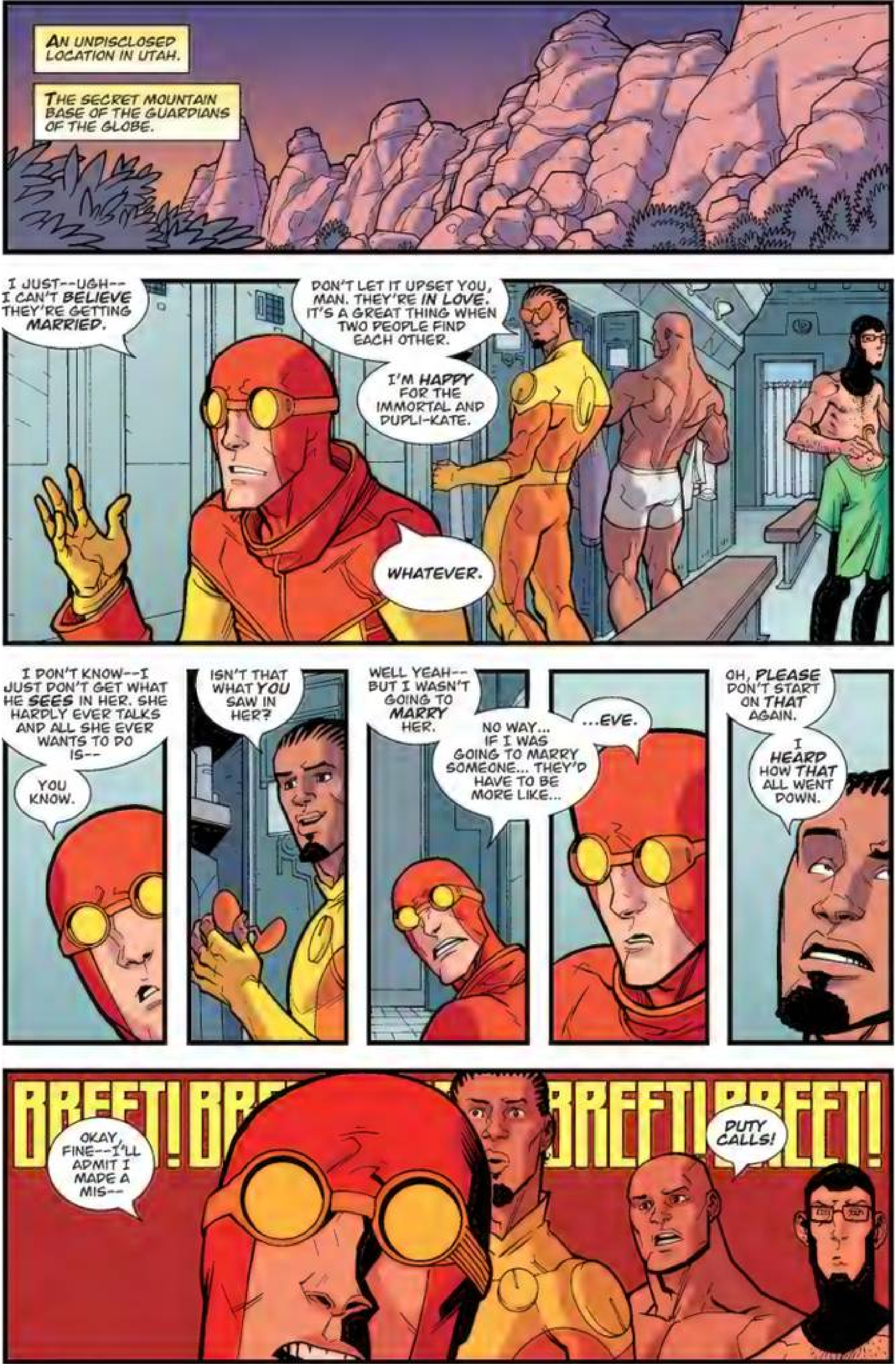

HEY, YOU GUYS DIDN'T FIGHT THIS GUY **BEFORE.** HE'S ***CRAZY,*** TRUST ME. HE WOULD HAVE BROUGHT THIS WHOLE CAVE DOWN ON US ONCE HE REALIZED I WASN'T GOING TO PAT HIM ON THE HEAD AND ALLOW HIM TO KEEP TERRORIZING THAT TOWN UP ABOVE.
THIS COULD HAVE GONE BADLY IF I HADN'T SUCKER PUNCHED HIM. WE COULD HAVE ***ALL*** BEEN HURT.
IF YOU SAY SO "INVINCIBLE."
WHATEVER. LET'S GET HIM UP TO THE SURFACE BEFORE HE WAKES UP. I'VE GOT TO GET HOME.
HEH. "INVINCIBLE PUNCH"?
YOU DON'T LIKE IT? I THOUGHT IT WAS APPROPRIATE.
⪢SIGH⪡
I THINK I'M GOING TO HAVE TO ***RETIRE*** THAT, AFTER ALL. I THINK I'M THE ***ONLY*** ONE WHO THINKS IT'S COOL.
YOU THINK IT'S ***COOL?***
SHUT UP.
I DON'T MEAN TO BE FORWARD OR ANYTHING, BUT... DO YOU MIND IF I CALL YOU? I MEAN, EVEN IF THERE ISN'T ANYTHING WE NEED TO GO FIGHT.
UH... SURE.
THAT'D BE ***OKAY... I GUESS.***

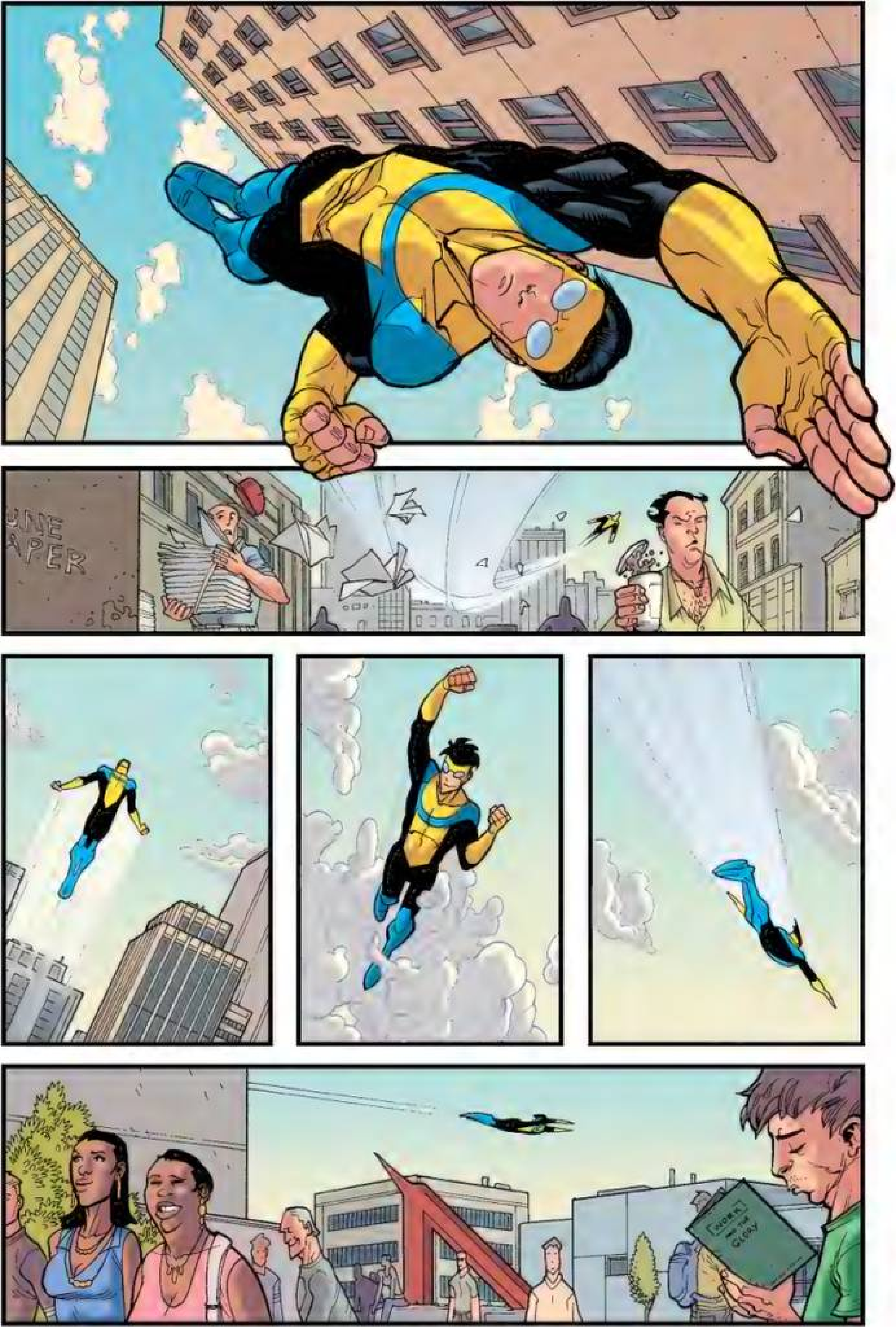

LATER THAT NIGHT.
WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN, YOUNG LADY?
I'VE BEEN OUT DOING SUPERHERO STUFF. IT HAD TO BE ON THE NEWS-- I THOUGHT YOU'D BE PROUD OF ME.
MAYBE IF THE PHONE HADN'T BEEN RINGING OFF THE HOOK FOR THE LAST HOUR.
OH, NO-- YOU'VE GOT TO BE KIDDING ME. HE COULDN'T BE--NOT ALREADY--?
THAT BOY SHADOWHAWK THAT YOU'VE BEEN HANGING OUT WITH. YOU TWO AREN'T--
GOD, NO--ARE YOU KIDDING ME? HE'S A WEIRDO-- LIKE--NOT EVEN IN A GOOD WAY.
GOOD. THAT PUTS MY MIND AT EASE.
WAIT--YOU DON'T LIKE HIM?
HEAVENS, NO. ALL THAT BLACK--THE CREEPY HELMET-- THOSE RED EYES. THE BOY'S PROBABLY A SERIAL KILLER.
IT WOULD DESTROY ME IF YOU WERE TO GO OUT WITH HIM!
HEY, UH, SHADOWHAWK? YEAH, EDDIE, RIGHT? HEY.
IT'S ZEPHYR. YOU GOT TIME TO TALK?

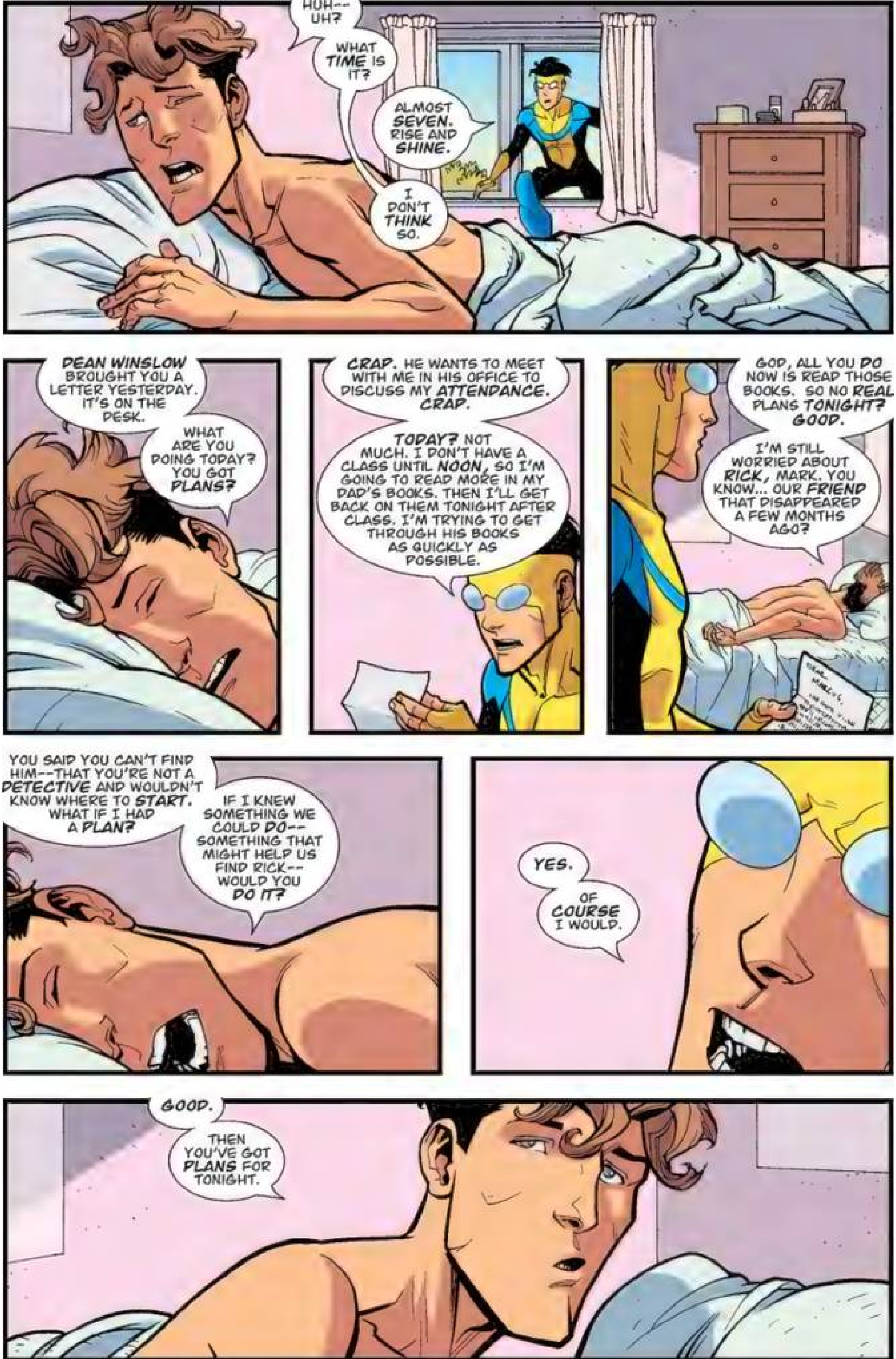

Coming in the next issue of-
THE PACT
NOT A DREAM -- NOT A HOAX -- THE DEATH OF INVINCIBLE!
WHAT'S WITH THE WATERWORKS, POPS? DIDN'T YOU NEARLY BEAT HIM TO DEATH ONCE, YOURSELF?
IT'S COMPLICATED.
HERE LIES
MARK GRAYSON
1987 - 2005
HIS NAME PROMISED MUCH, BUT IT WASN'T JUST RIGHT. FOR HE TURNED OUT TO BE INVINCIBLE, NOT QUITE.

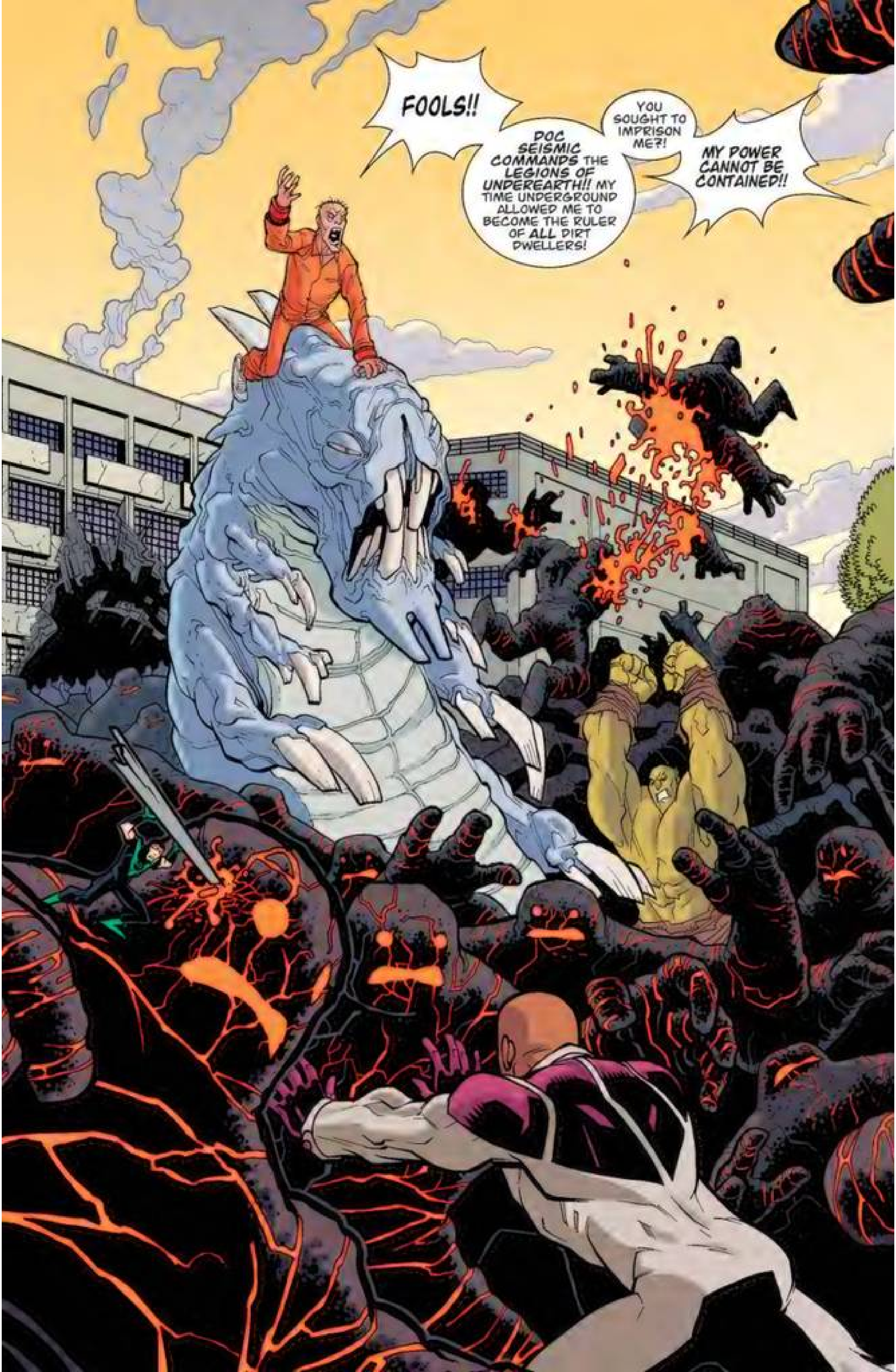
This is an ad for a fake next issue of The Pact that ran as the back cover for issue 4. Jason Howard came up with the stuff on the tombstone. He's a witty fellow, that one.

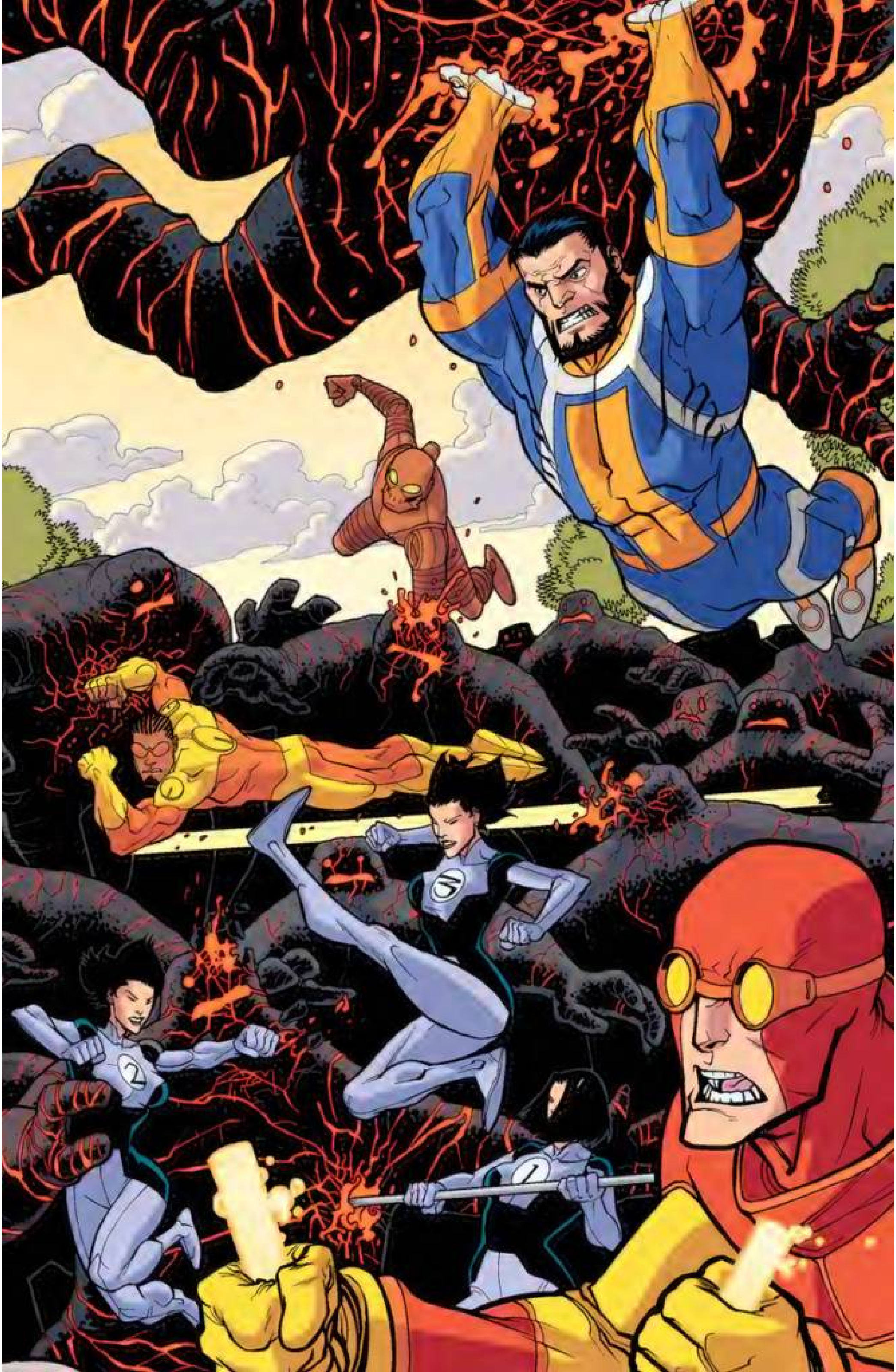
ISSUE THIRTY-SIX

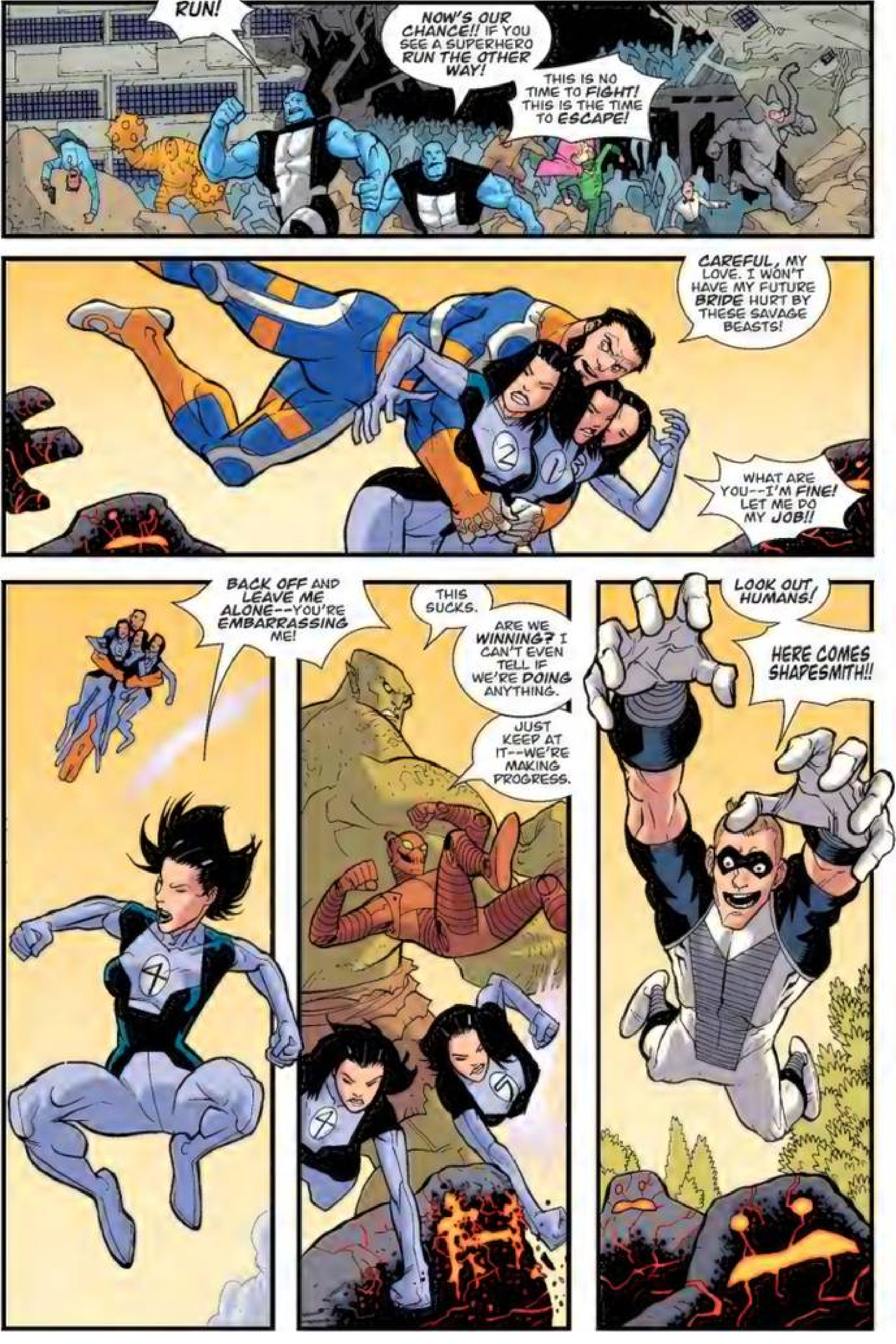

AN UNDISCLOSED LOCATION IN UTAH.
THE SECRET MOUNTAIN BASE OF THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE.
I JUST--UGH-- I CAN'T BELIEVE THEY'RE GETTING MARRIED.
DON'T LET IT UPSET YOU, MAN. THEY'RE IN LOVE. IT'S A GREAT THING WHEN TWO PEOPLE FIND EACH OTHER.
I'M HAPPY FOR THE IMMORTAL AND DUPLI-KATE.
WHATEVER.
I DON'T KNOW--I JUST DON'T GET WHAT HE SEES IN HER. SHE HARDLY EVER TALKS AND ALL SHE EVER WANTS TO DO IS--
YOU KNOW.
ISN'T THAT WHAT YOU SAW IN HER?
WELL YEAH-- BUT I WASN'T GOING TO MARRY HER.
NO WAY... IF I WAS GOING TO MARRY SOMEONE... THEY'D HAVE TO BE MORE LIKE...
...EVE.
OH, PLEASE DON'T START ON THAT AGAIN.
I HEARD HOW THAT ALL WENT DOWN.
BREET! BR
BREET! BREET!
OKAY, FINE--I'LL ADMIT I MADE A MIS--
DUTY CALLS!

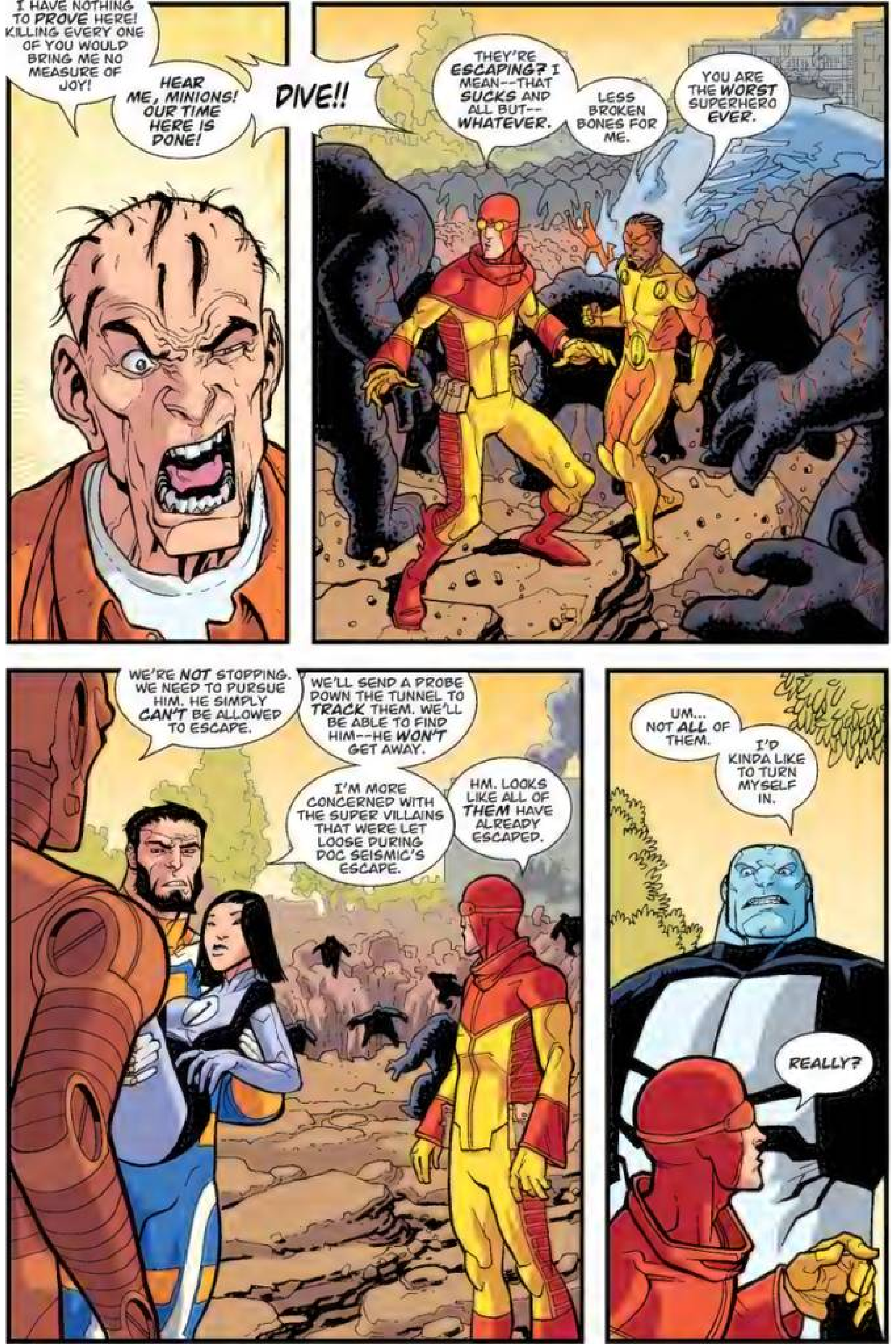

UNE
APER
WORK AND THE GLORY

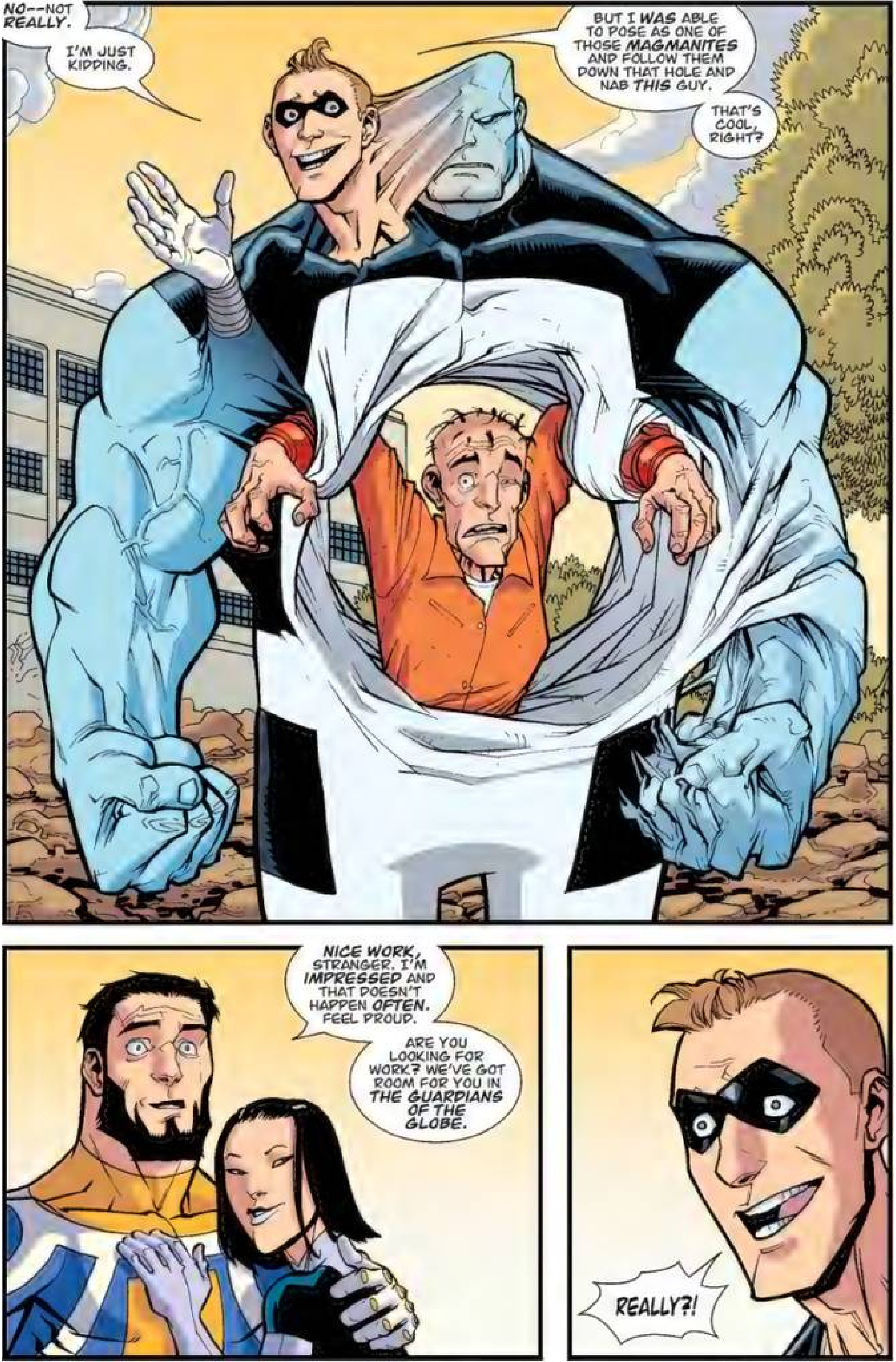

HUH-- UH?
WHAT TIME IS IT?
ALMOST SEVEN. RISE AND SHINE.
I DON'T THINK SO.
DEAN WINSLOW BROUGHT YOU A LETTER YESTERDAY. IT'S ON THE DESK.
WHAT ARE YOU DOING TODAY? YOU GOT PLANS?
CRAP. HE WANTS TO MEET WITH ME IN HIS OFFICE TO DISCUSS MY ATTENDANCE. CRAP.
TODAY? NOT MUCH. I DON'T HAVE A CLASS UNTIL NOON, SO I'M GOING TO READ MORE IN MY DAD'S BOOKS. THEN I'LL GET BACK ON THEM TONIGHT AFTER CLASS. I'M TRYING TO GET THROUGH HIS BOOKS AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE.
GOD, ALL YOU DO NOW IS READ THOSE BOOKS. SO NO REAL PLANS TONIGHT? GOOD.
I'M STILL WORRIED ABOUT RICK, MARK. YOU KNOW... OUR FRIEND THAT DISAPPEARED A FEW MONTHS AGO?
YOU SAID YOU CAN'T FIND HIM--THAT YOU'RE NOT A DETECTIVE AND WOULDN'T KNOW WHERE TO START. WHAT IF I HAD A PLAN?
IF I KNEW SOMETHING WE COULD DO-- SOMETHING THAT MIGHT HELP US FIND RICK-- WOULD YOU DO IT?
YES.
OF COURSE I WOULD.
GOOD.
THEN YOU'VE GOT PLANS FOR TONIGHT.

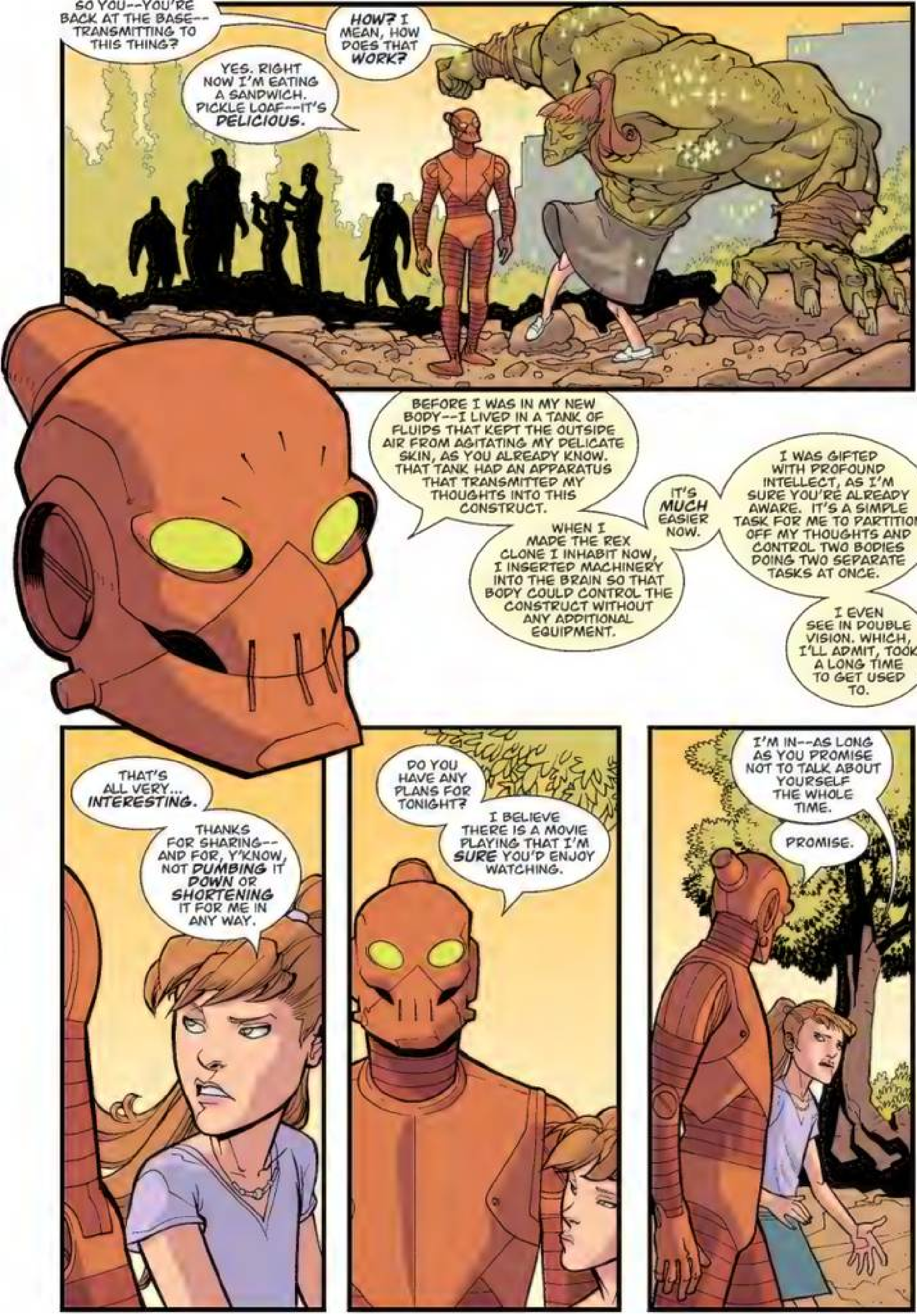

FOOLS!!
DOC SEISMIC COMMANDS THE LEGIONS OF UNDEREARTH!! MY TIME UNDERGROUND ALLOWED ME TO BECOME THE RULER OF ALL DIRT DWELLERS!
YOU SOUGHT TO IMPRISON ME?!
MY POWER CANNOT BE CONTAINED!!

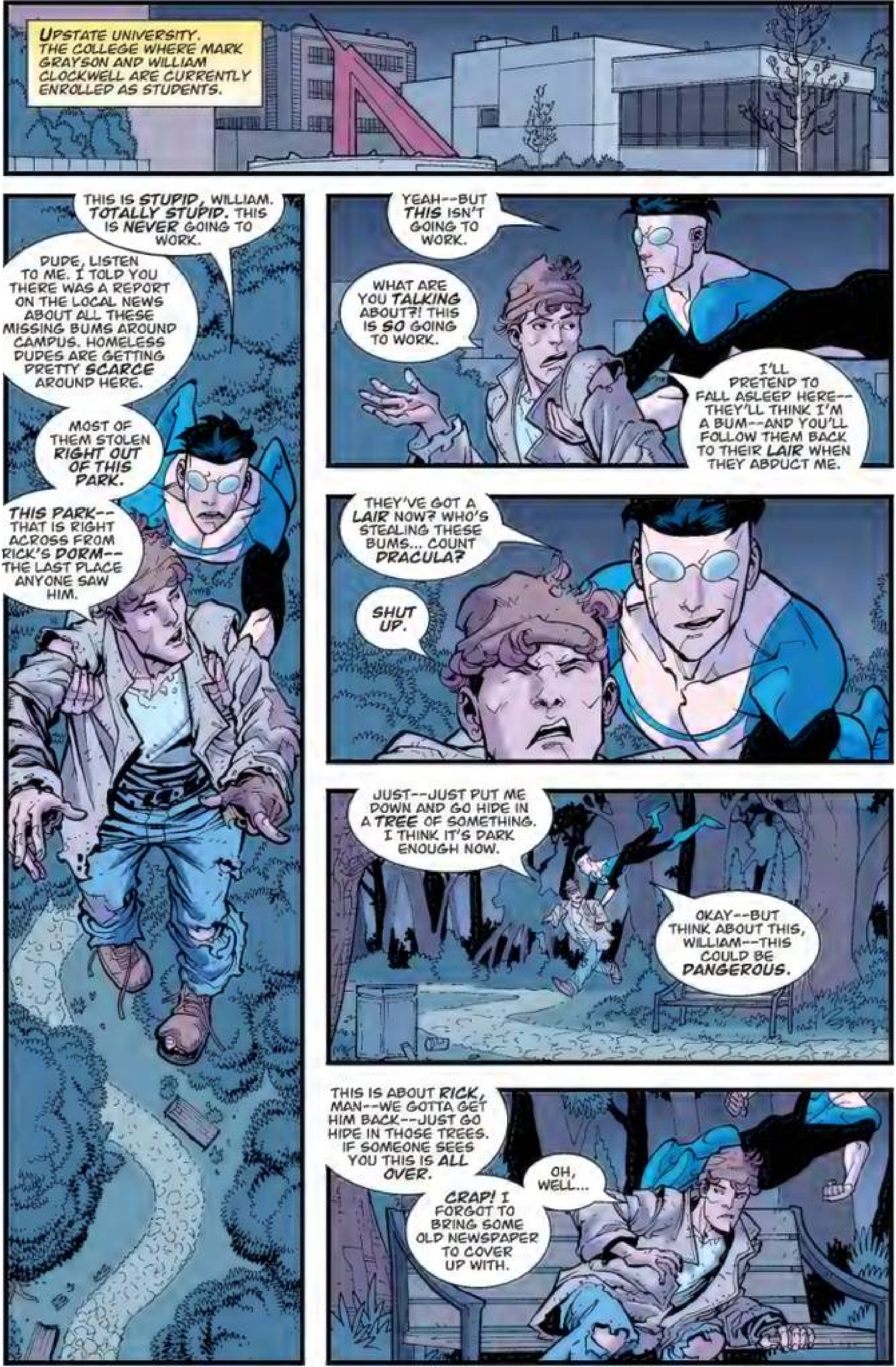


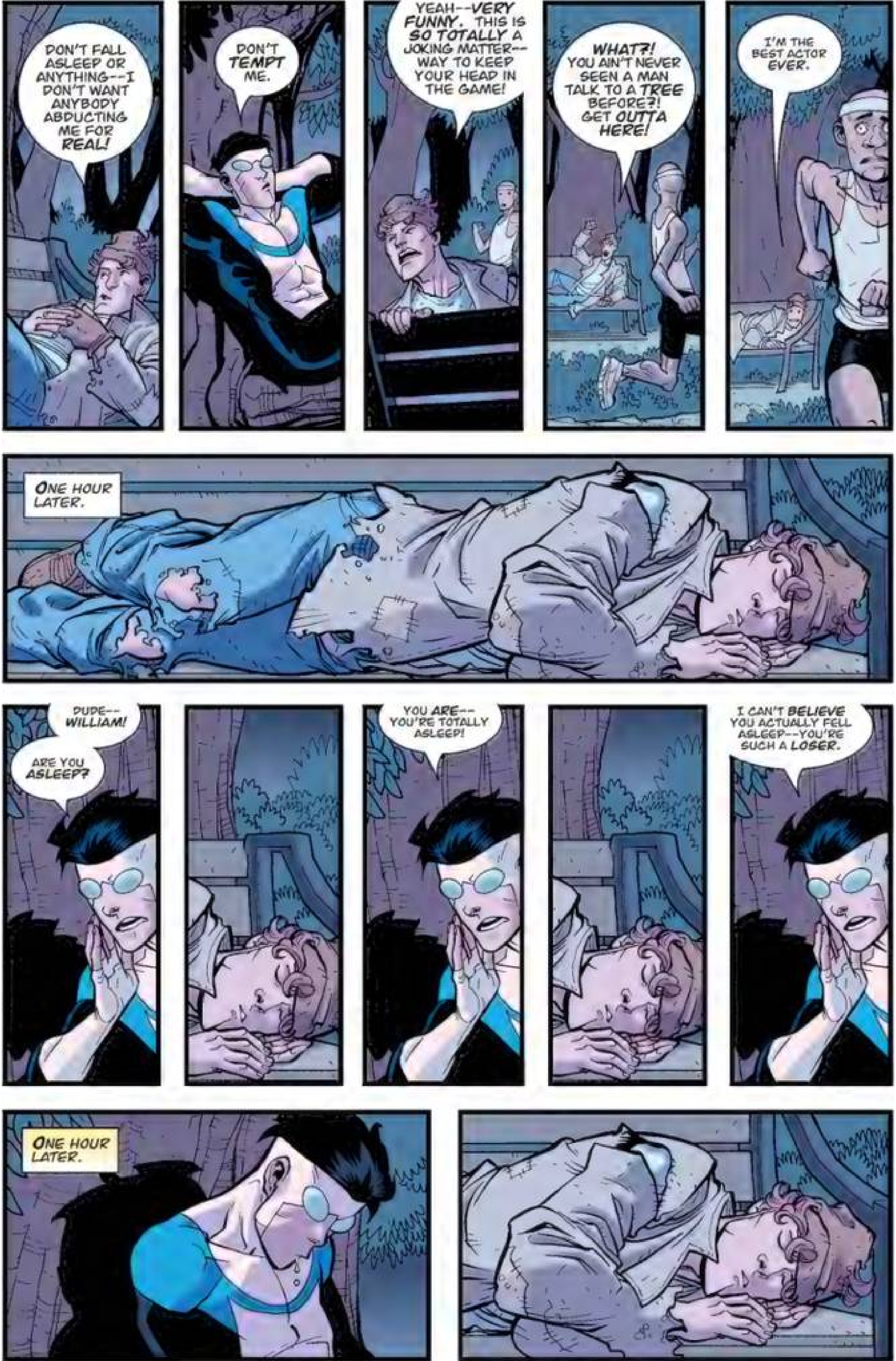

RUN!
NOW'S OUR CHANCE!! IF YOU SEE A SUPERHERO RUN THE OTHER WAY!
THIS IS NO TIME TO FIGHT! THIS IS THE TIME TO ESCAPE!
CAREFUL, MY LOVE. I WON'T HAVE MY FUTURE BRIDE HURT BY THESE SAVAGE BEASTS!
WHAT ARE YOU--I'M FINE! LET ME DO MY JOB!!
BACK OFF AND LEAVE ME ALONE--YOU'RE EMBARRASSING ME!
THIS SUCKS.
ARE WE WINNING? I CAN'T EVEN TELL IF WE'RE DOING ANYTHING.
JUST KEEP AT IT--WE'RE MAKING PROGRESS.
LOOK OUT, HUMANS!
HERE COMES SHAPESMITH!!

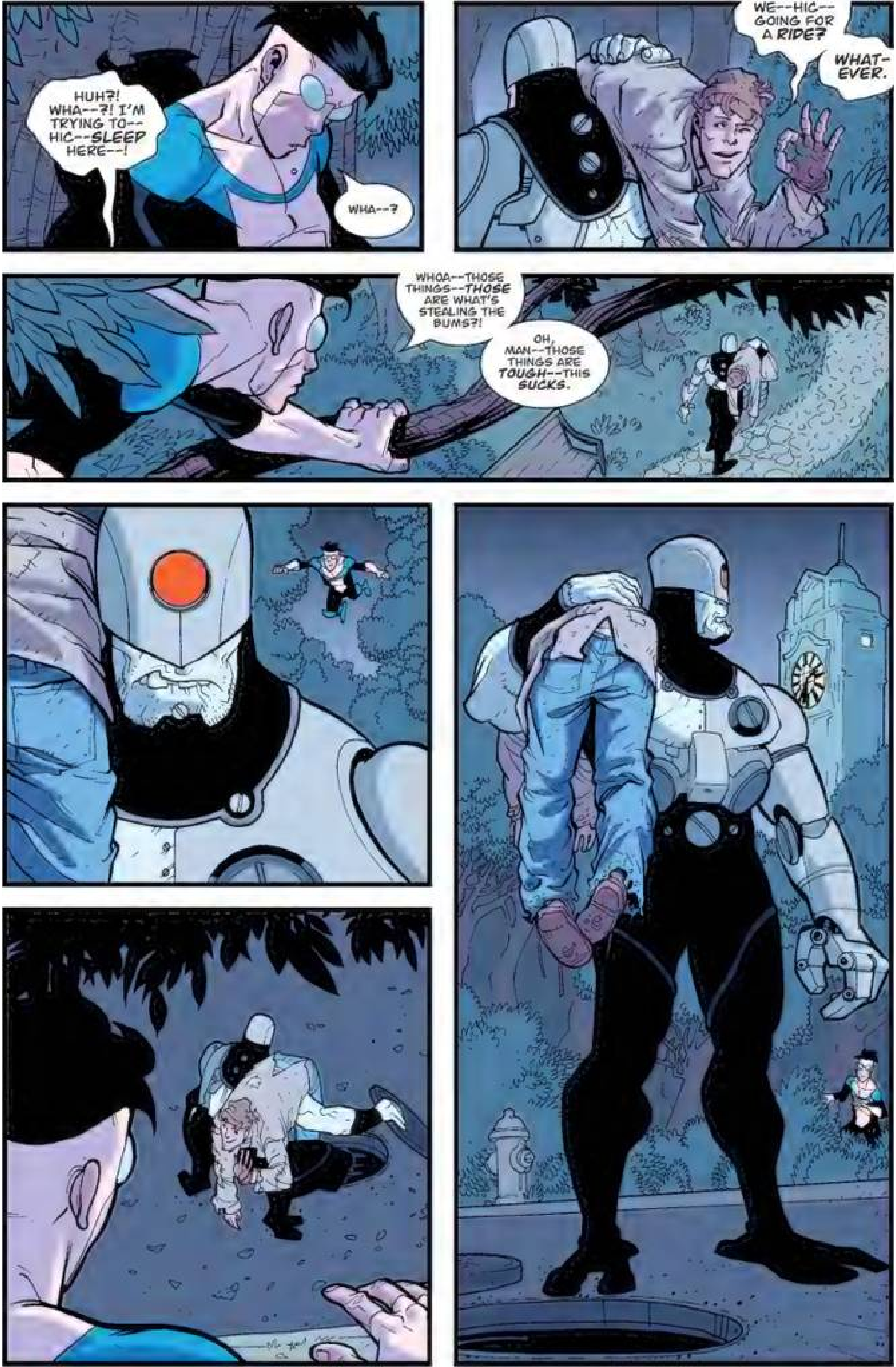

I HAVE NOTHING TO PROVE HERE! KILLING EVERY ONE OF YOU WOULD BRING ME NO MEASURE OF JOY!
HEAR ME, MINIONS! OUR TIME HERE IS DONE!
DIVE!!
THEY'RE ESCAPING? I MEAN--THAT SUCKS AND ALL BUT--WHATEVER.
LESS BROKEN BONES FOR ME.
YOU ARE THE WORST SUPERHERO EVER.
WE'RE NOT STOPPING. WE NEED TO PURSUE HIM. HE SIMPLY CAN'T BE ALLOWED TO ESCAPE.
WE'LL SEND A PROBE DOWN THE TUNNEL TO TRACK THEM. WE'LL BE ABLE TO FIND HIM--HE WON'T GET AWAY.
I'M MORE CONCERNED WITH THE SUPER VILLAINS THAT WERE LET LOOSE DURING DOC SEISMIC'S ESCAPE.
HM. LOOKS LIKE ALL OF THEM HAVE ALREADY ESCAPED.
UM... NOT ALL OF THEM.
I'D KINDA LIKE TO TURN MYSELF IN.
REALLY?

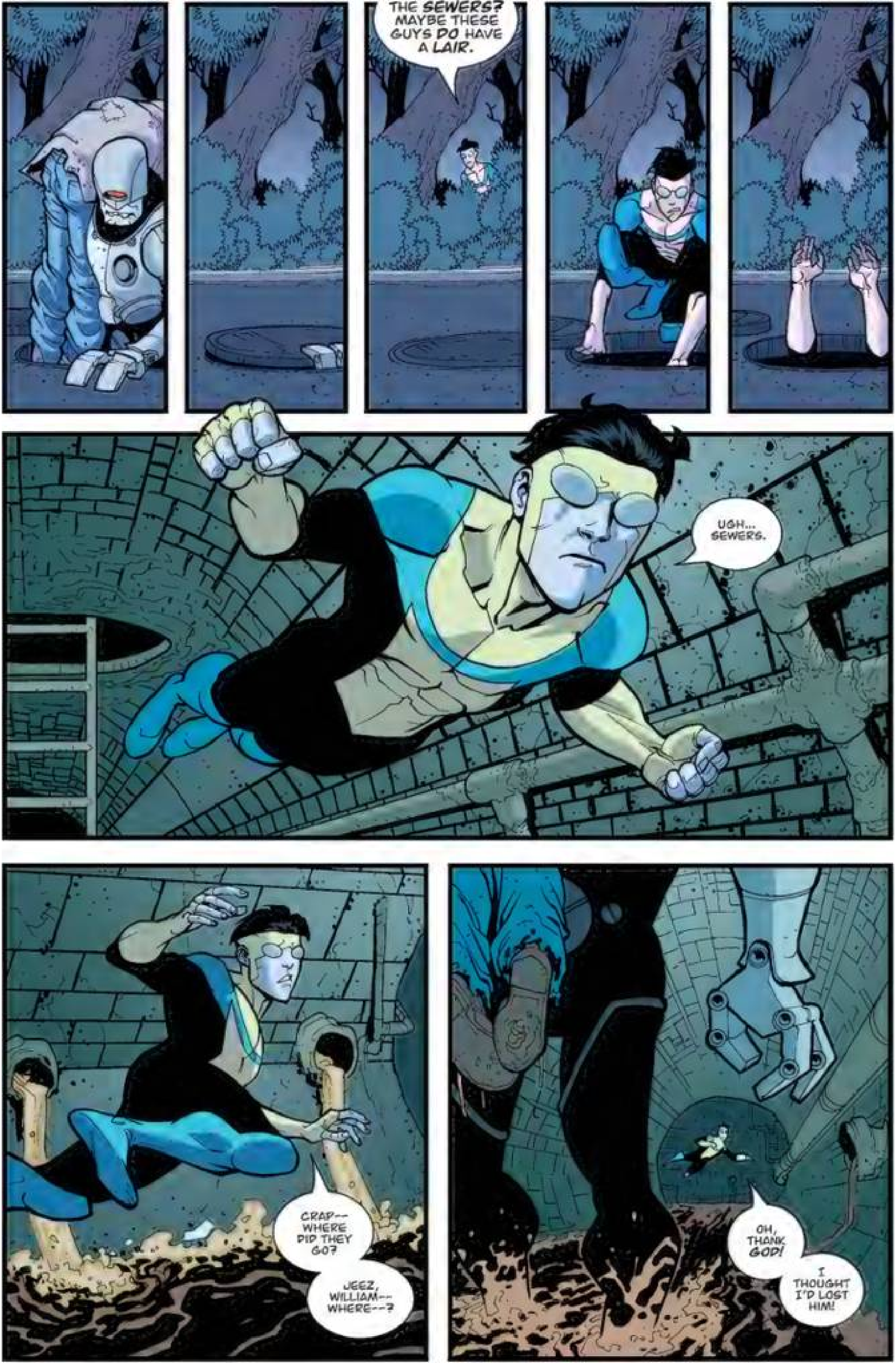

NO--NOT REALLY.
I'M JUST KIDDING.
BUT I WAS ABLE TO POSE AS ONE OF THOSE MAGMANITES AND FOLLOW THEM DOWN THAT HOLE AND NAB THIS GUY.
THAT'S COOL, RIGHT?
NICE WORK, STRANGER. I'M IMPRESSED AND THAT DOESN'T HAPPEN OFTEN. FEEL PROUD.
ARE YOU LOOKING FOR WORK? WE'VE GOT ROOM FOR YOU IN THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE.
REALLY?!

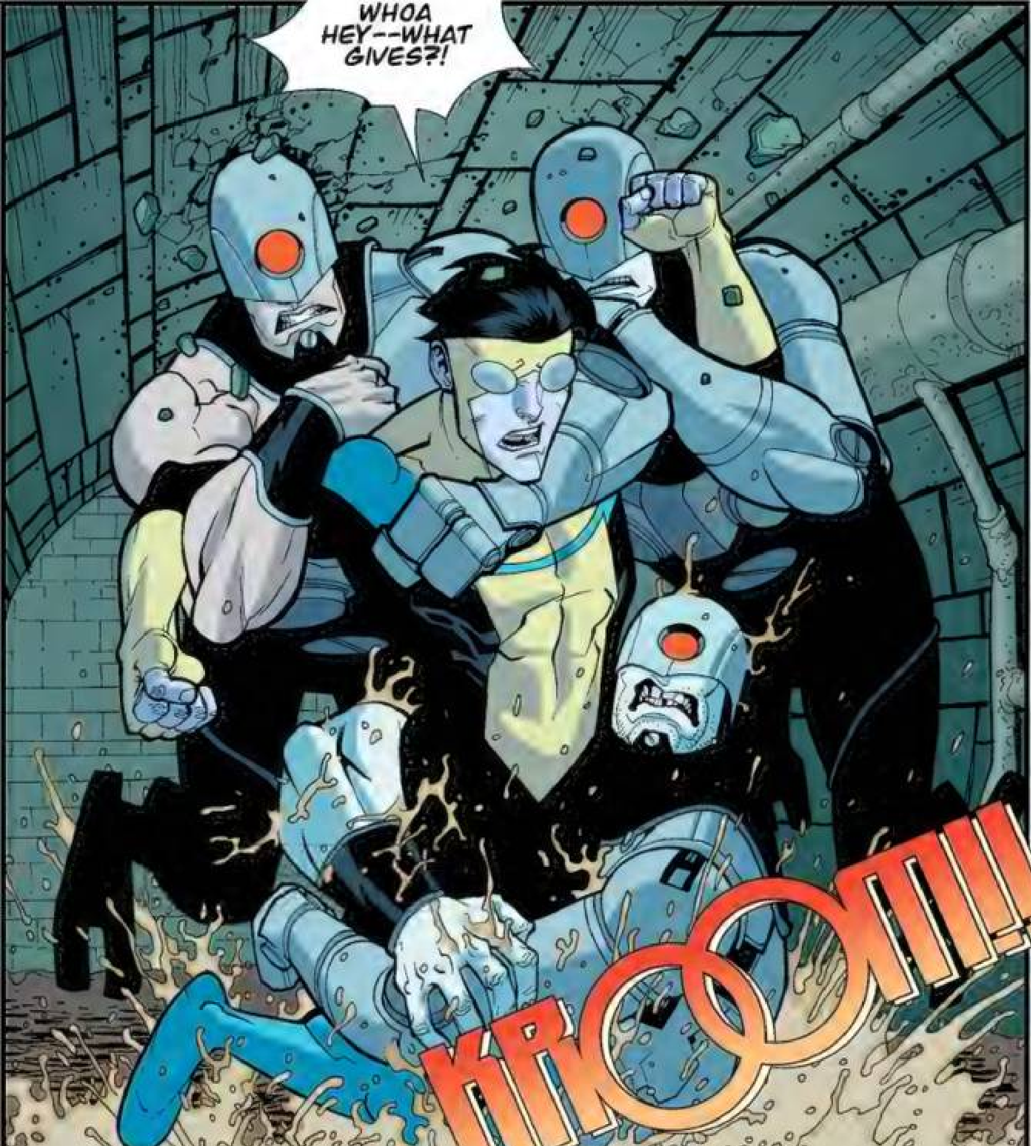

SO YOU--YOU'RE BACK AT THE BASE--TRANSMITTING TO THIS THING?
HOW? I MEAN, HOW DOES THAT WORK?
YES. RIGHT NOW I'M EATING A SANDWICH. PICKLE LOAF--IT'S DELICIOUS.
BEFORE I WAS IN MY NEW BODY--I LIVED IN A TANK OF FLUIDS THAT KEPT THE OUTSIDE AIR FROM AGITATING MY DELICATE SKIN, AS YOU ALREADY KNOW. THAT TANK HAD AN APPARATUS THAT TRANSMITTED MY THOUGHTS INTO THIS CONSTRUCT.
WHEN I MADE THE REX CLONE I INHABIT NOW, I INSERTED MACHINERY INTO THE BRAIN SO THAT BODY COULD CONTROL THE CONSTRUCT WITHOUT ANY ADDITIONAL EQUIPMENT.
IT'S MUCH EASIER NOW.
I WAS GIFTED WITH PROFOUND INTELLECT, AS I'M SURE YOU'RE ALREADY AWARE. IT'S A SIMPLE TASK FOR ME TO PARTITION OFF MY THOUGHTS AND CONTROL TWO BODIES DOING TWO SEPARATE TASKS AT ONCE.
I EVEN SEE IN DOUBLE VISION. WHICH, I'LL ADMIT, TOOK A LONG TIME TO GET USED TO.
THAT'S ALL VERY... INTERESTING.
THANKS FOR SHARING--AND FOR, Y'KNOW, NOT DUMBING IT DOWN OR SHORTENING IT FOR ME IN ANY WAY.
DO YOU HAVE ANY PLANS FOR TONIGHT?
I BELIEVE THERE IS A MOVIE PLAYING THAT I'M SURE YOU'D ENJOY WATCHING.
I'M IN--AS LONG AS YOU PROMISE NOT TO TALK ABOUT YOURSELF THE WHOLE TIME.
PROMISE.

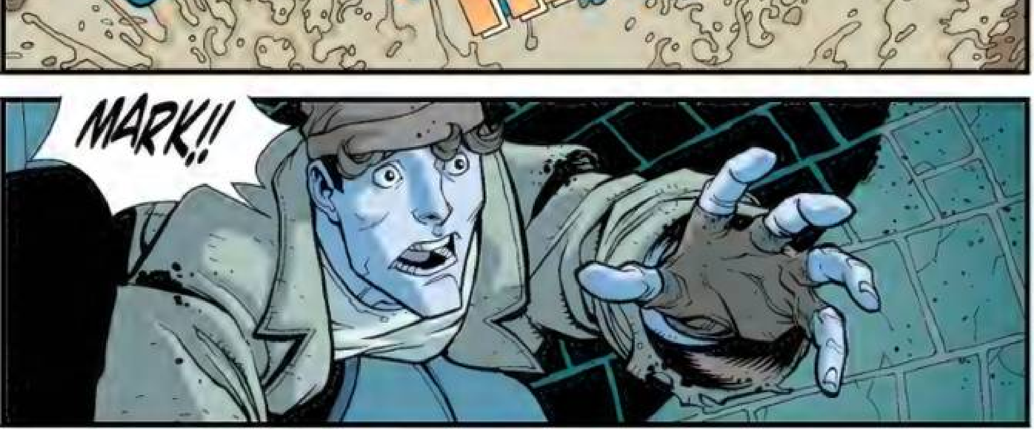

UPSTATE UNIVERSITY. THE COLLEGE WHERE MARK GRAYSON AND WILLIAM CLOCKWELL ARE CURRENTLY ENROLLED AS STUDENTS.
THIS IS STUPID, WILLIAM. TOTALLY STUPID. THIS IS NEVER GOING TO WORK.
DUDE, LISTEN TO ME. I TOLD YOU THERE WAS A REPORT ON THE LOCAL NEWS ABOUT ALL THESE MISSING BUMS AROUND CAMPUS. HOMELESS DUDES ARE GETTING PRETTY SCARCE AROUND HERE.
MOST OF THEM STOLEN RIGHT OUT OF THIS PARK.
THIS PARK-- THAT IS RIGHT ACROSS FROM RICK'S DORM-- THE LAST PLACE ANYONE SAW HIM.
YEAH--BUT THIS ISN'T GOING TO WORK.
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?! THIS IS SO GOING TO WORK.
I'LL PRETEND TO FALL ASLEEP HERE--THEY'LL THINK I'M A BUM--AND YOU'LL FOLLOW THEM BACK TO THEIR LAIR WHEN THEY ABDUCT ME.
THEY'VE GOT A LAIR NOW? WHO'S STEALING THESE BUMS... COUNT DRACULA?
SHUT UP.
JUST--JUST PUT ME DOWN AND GO HIDE IN A TREE OF SOMETHING. I THINK IT'S DARK ENOUGH NOW.
OKAY--BUT THINK ABOUT THIS, WILLIAM--THIS COULD BE DANGEROUS.
THIS IS ABOUT RICK, MAN--WE GOTTA GET HIM BACK--JUST GO HIDE IN THOSE TREES. IF SOMEONE SEES YOU THIS IS ALL OVER.
OH, WELL...
CRAP! I FORGOT TO BRING SOME OLD NEWSPAPER TO COVER UP WITH.

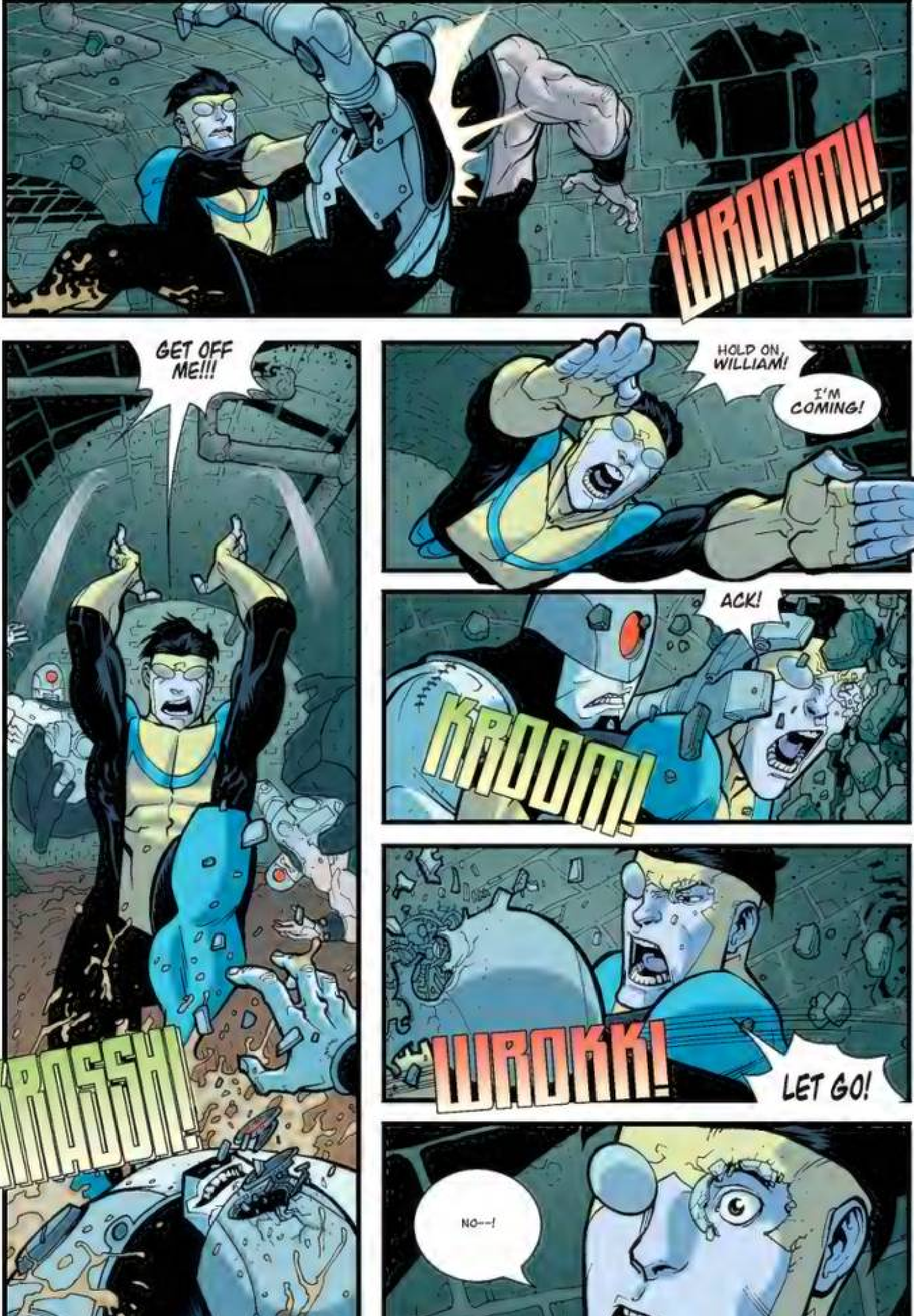

DON'T FALL ASLEEP OR ANYTHING--I DON'T WANT ANYBODY ABDUCTING ME FOR REAL!
DON'T TEMPT ME.
YEAH--VERY FUNNY. THIS IS SO TOTALLY A JOKING MATTER--WAY TO KEEP YOUR HEAD IN THE GAME!
WHAT?! YOU AIN'T NEVER SEEN A MAN TALK TO A TREE BEFORE?! GET OUTTA HERE!
I'M THE BEST ACTOR EVER.
ONE HOUR LATER.
DUDE--WILLIAM!
ARE YOU ASLEEP?
YOU ARE--YOU'RE TOTALLY ASLEEP!
I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU ACTUALLY FELL ASLEEP--YOU'RE SUCH A LOSER.
ONE HOUR LATER.

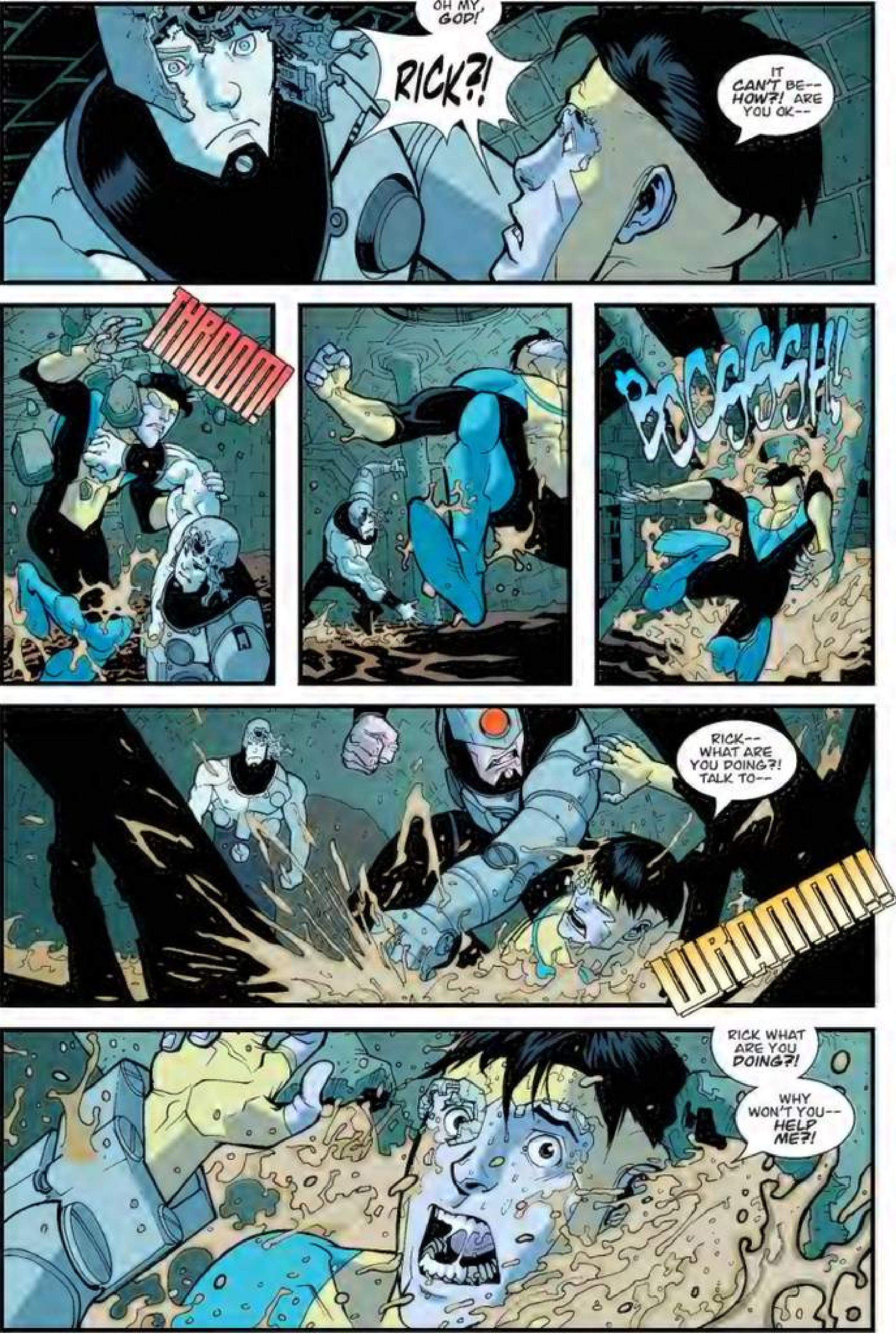

HUH?! WHA--?! I'M TRYING TO-- HIC--*SLEEP* HERE--!
WHA--?
WE--HIC-- GOING FOR A *RIDE?*
WHAT-EVER.
WHOA--THOSE THINGS--*THOSE* ARE WHAT'S STEALING THE BUMS?!
OH, MAN--THOSE THINGS ARE *TOUGH*--THIS *SUCKS.*

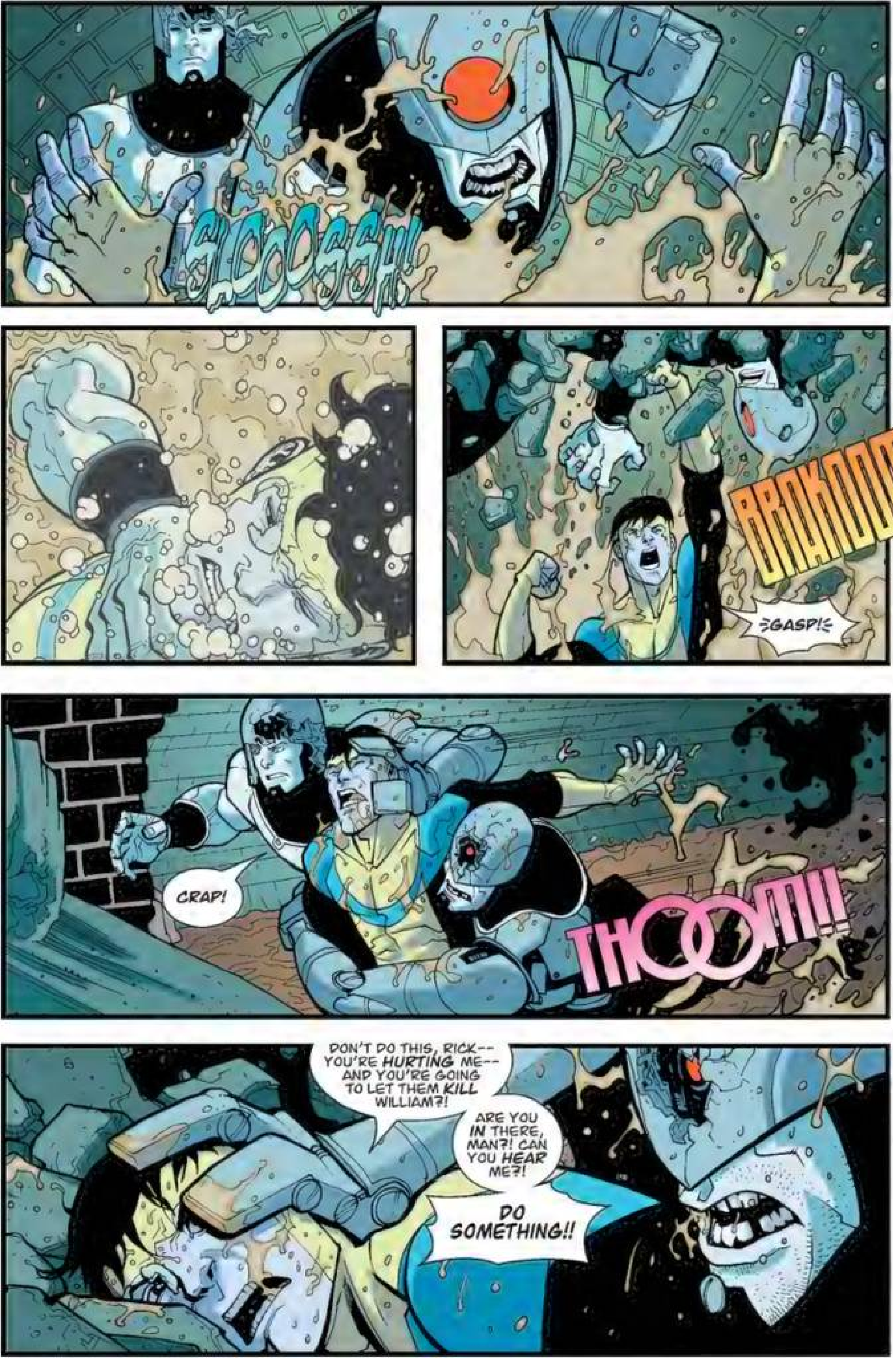

THE SEWERS? MAYBE THESE GUYS DO HAVE A LAIR.
UGH... SEWERS.
CRAP-- WHERE DID THEY GO?
JEEZ, WILLIAM-- WHERE--?
OH, THANK GOD!
I THOUGHT I'D LOST HIM!

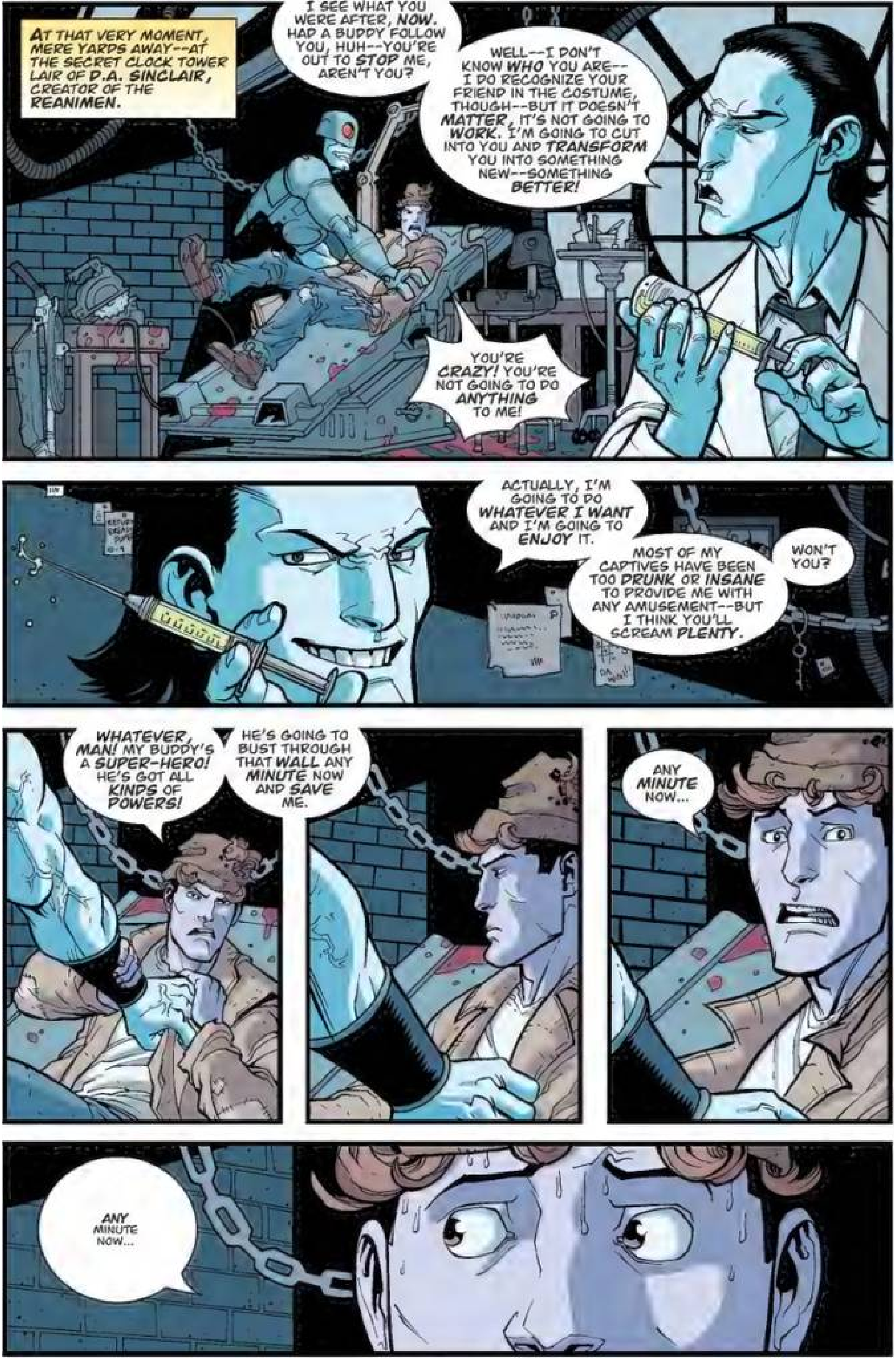

WHOA HEY--WHAT GIVES?!
KROOM!!!


MARK!!

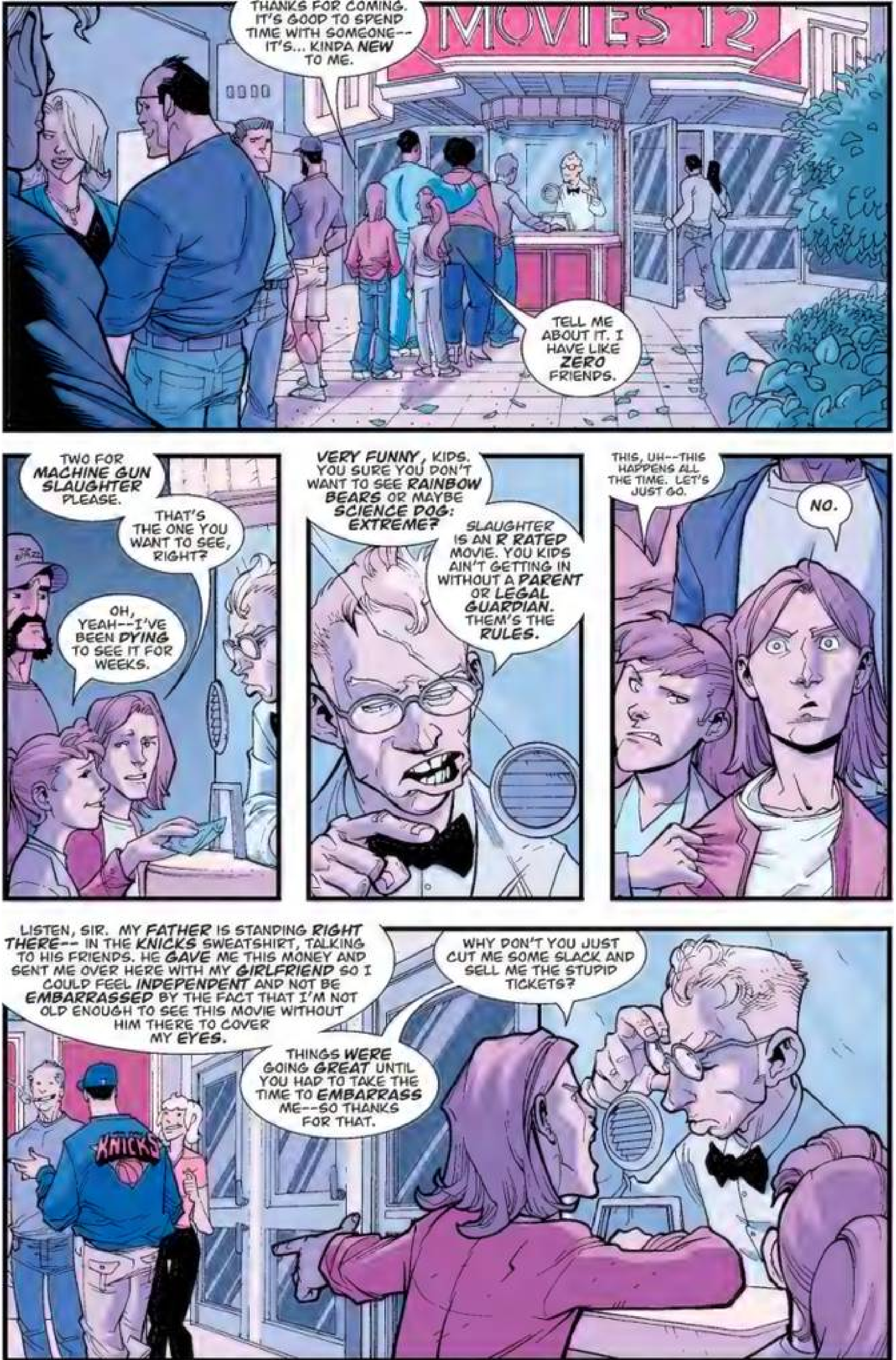

WRAMM!!
GET OFF ME!!!
KRASSH!
HOLD ON, WILLIAM!
I'M COMING!
ACK!
KROOM!
WROKK!
LET GO!
NO--!

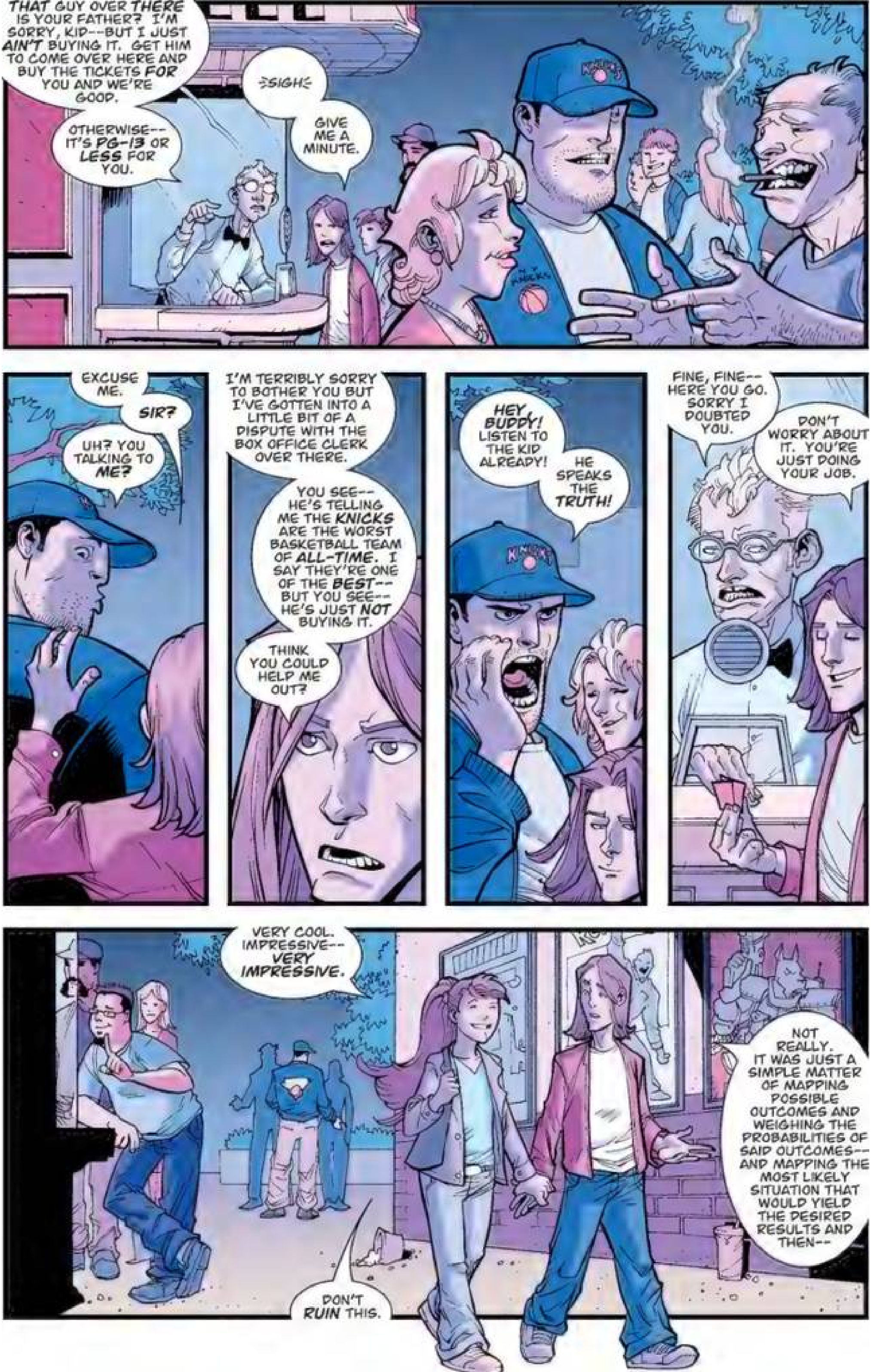

OH MY, GOD!
RICK?!
IT CAN'T BE-- HOW?! ARE YOU OK--
THROOM!
BOOSSH!
RICK-- WHAT ARE YOU DOING?! TALK TO--
THROOOOM!!
RICK WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!
WHY WON'T YOU-- HELP ME?!

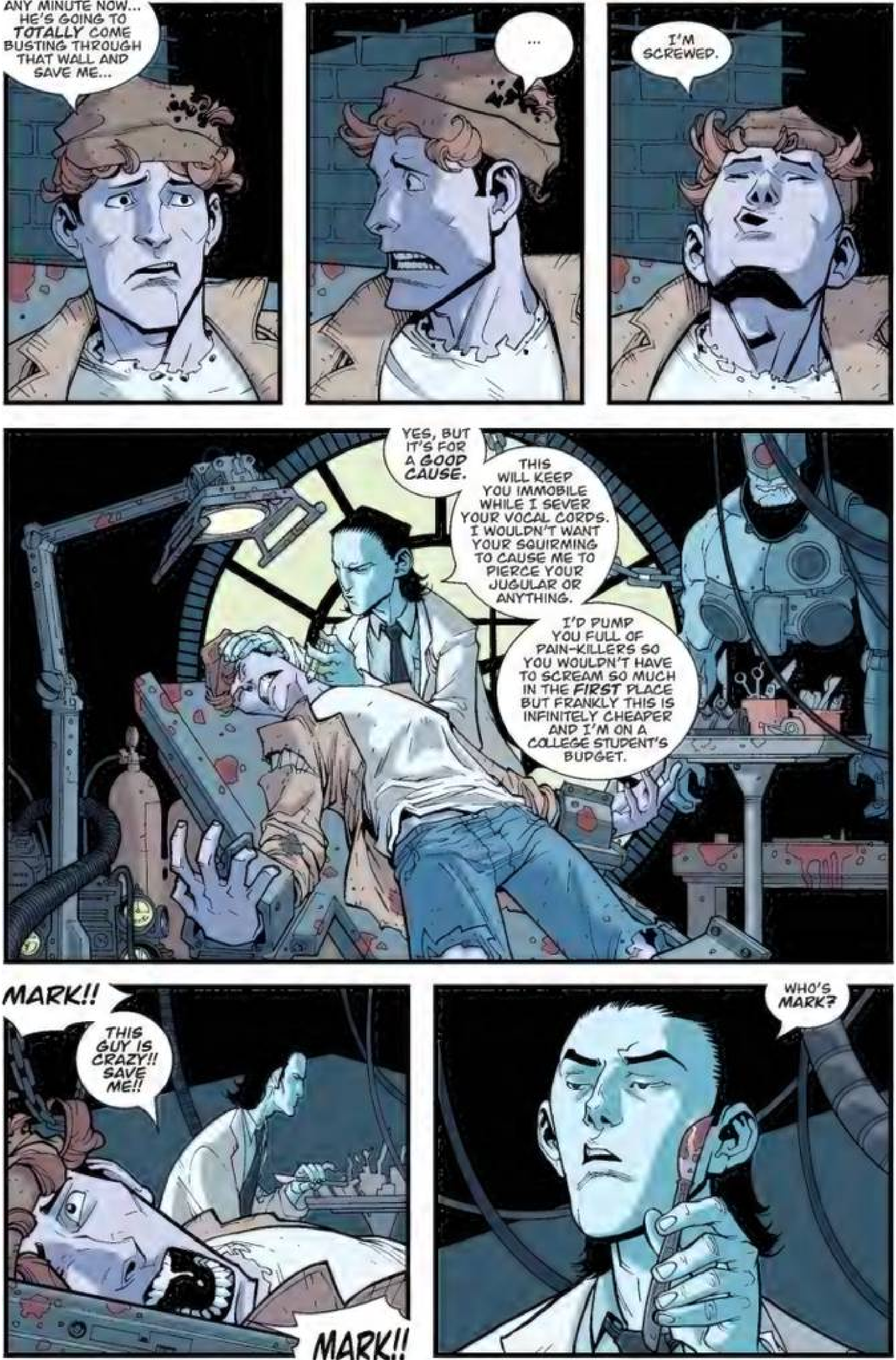

SLOOOSSH!!
BRAKOOM!
GASP!
CRAP!
THOOOM!!
DON'T DO THIS, RICK-- YOU'RE HURTING ME-- AND YOU'RE GOING TO LET THEM KILL WILLIAM?!
ARE YOU IN THERE, MAN?! CAN YOU HEAR ME?!
DO SOMETHING!!

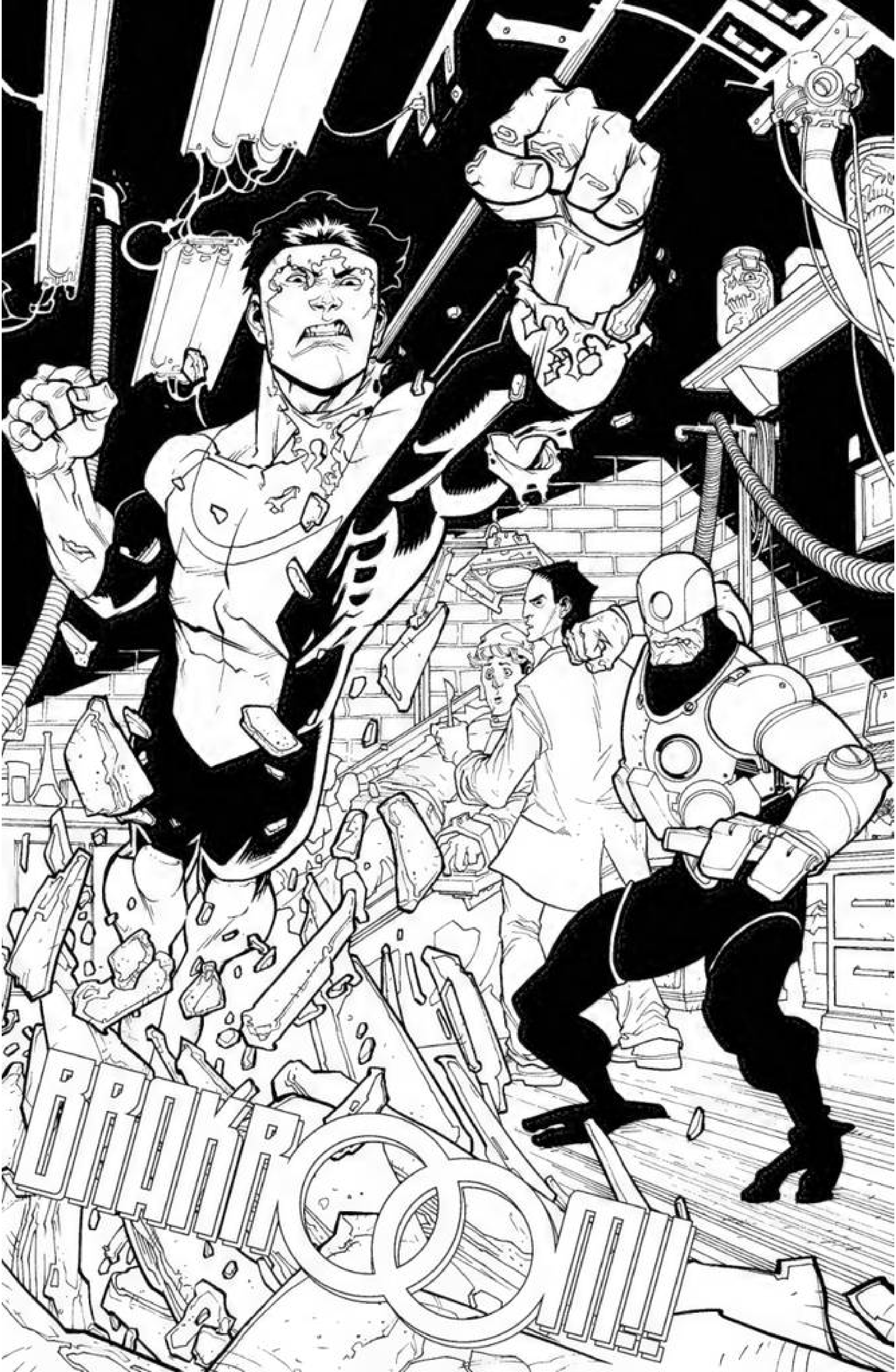

AT THAT VERY MOMENT, MERE YARDS AWAY--AT THE SECRET CLOCK TOWER LAIR OF D.A. SINCLAIR, CREATOR OF THE REANIMEN.
I SEE WHAT YOU WERE AFTER, NOW. HAD A BUDDY FOLLOW YOU, HUH--YOU'RE OUT TO STOP ME, AREN'T YOU?
WELL--I DON'T KNOW WHO YOU ARE--I DO RECOGNIZE YOUR FRIEND IN THE COSTUME, THOUGH--BUT IT DOESN'T MATTER, IT'S NOT GOING TO WORK. I'M GOING TO CUT INTO YOU AND TRANSFORM YOU INTO SOMETHING NEW--SOMETHING BETTER!
YOU'RE CRAZY! YOU'RE NOT GOING TO DO ANYTHING TO ME!
ACTUALLY, I'M GOING TO DO WHATEVER I WANT AND I'M GOING TO ENJOY IT.
MOST OF MY CAPTIVES HAVE BEEN TOO DRUNK OR INSANE TO PROVIDE ME WITH ANY AMUSEMENT--BUT I THINK YOU'LL SCREAM PLENTY.
WON'T YOU?
WHATEVER, MAN! MY BUDDY'S A SUPER-HERO! HE'S GOT ALL KINDS OF POWERS!
HE'S GOING TO BUST THROUGH THAT WALL ANY MINUTE NOW AND SAVE ME.
ANY MINUTE NOW...
ANY MINUTE NOW...

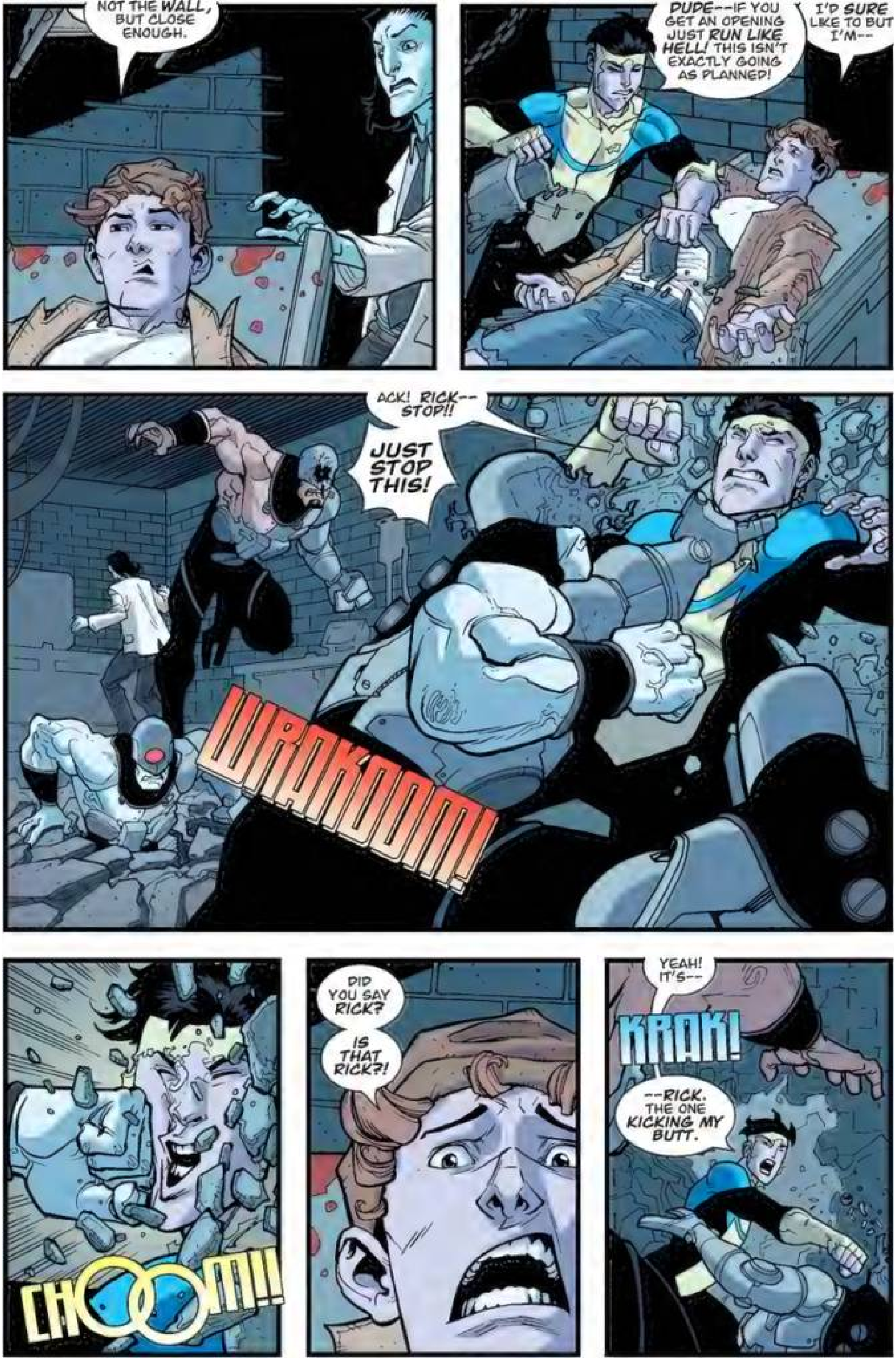
ISSUE THIRTY-SEVEN

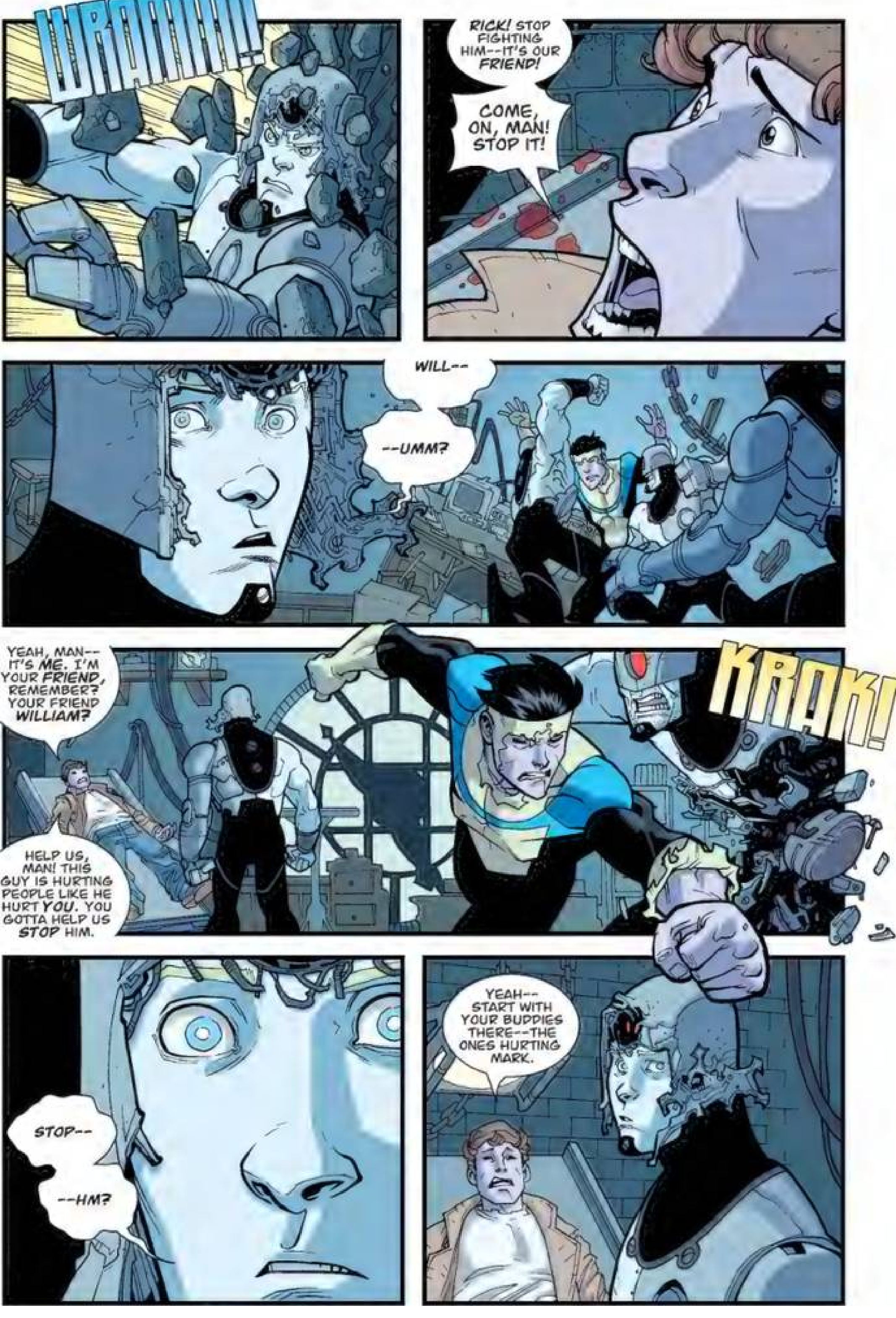

MOVIES 12
THANKS FOR COMING. IT'S GOOD TO SPEND TIME WITH SOMEONE-- IT'S... KINDA **NEW** TO ME.
TELL ME ABOUT IT. I HAVE LIKE **ZERO** FRIENDS.
TWO FOR **MACHINE GUN SLAUGHTER** PLEASE.
THAT'S THE ONE YOU WANT TO SEE, RIGHT?
OH, YEAH--I'VE BEEN **DYING** TO SEE IT FOR WEEKS.
VERY FUNNY, KIDS. YOU SURE YOU DON'T WANT TO SEE **RAINBOW BEARS** OR MAYBE **SCIENCE DOG: EXTREME?**
SLAUGHTER IS AN **R RATED** MOVIE. YOU KIDS AIN'T GETTING IN WITHOUT A **PARENT** OR **LEGAL GUARDIAN**. THEM'S THE **RULES**.
THIS, UH--THIS HAPPENS ALL THE TIME. LET'S JUST GO.
NO.
LISTEN, SIR. MY **FATHER** IS STANDING **RIGHT THERE**-- IN THE **KNICKS** SWEATSHIRT, TALKING TO HIS FRIENDS. HE **GAVE** ME THIS MONEY AND SENT ME OVER HERE WITH MY **GIRLFRIEND** SO I COULD FEEL **INDEPENDENT** AND NOT BE **EMBARRASSED** BY THE FACT THAT I'M NOT OLD ENOUGH TO SEE THIS MOVIE WITHOUT HIM THERE TO COVER MY **EYES**.
WHY DON'T YOU JUST CUT ME SOME SLACK AND SELL ME THE STUPID TICKETS?
THINGS **WERE** GOING **GREAT** UNTIL YOU HAD TO TAKE THE TIME TO **EMBARRASS** ME--SO THANKS FOR THAT.
KNICKS

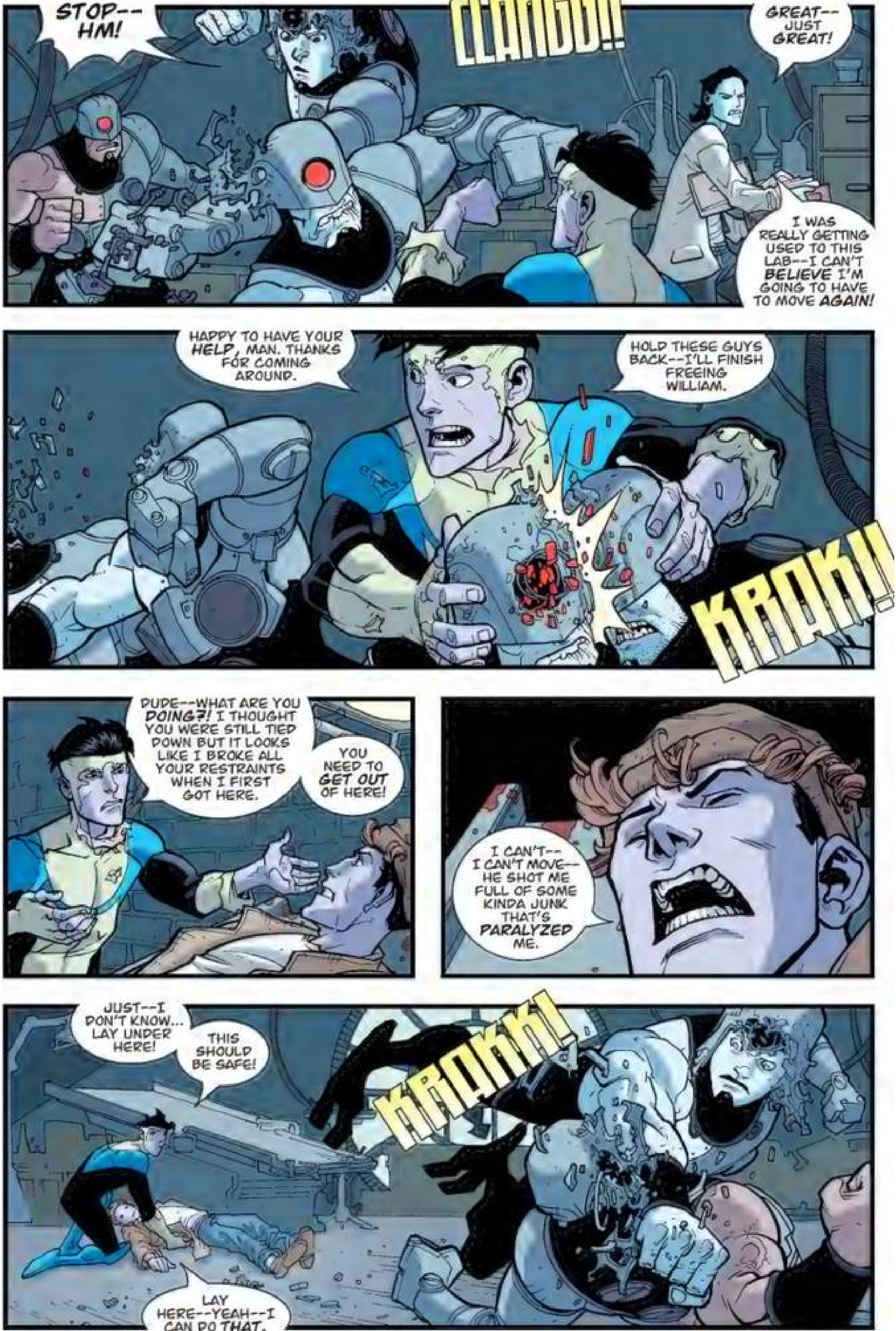

THAT GUY OVER THERE IS YOUR FATHER? I'M SORRY, KID--BUT I JUST AIN'T BUYING IT. GET HIM TO COME OVER HERE AND BUY THE TICKETS FOR YOU AND WE'RE GOOD.
OTHERWISE-- IT'S PG-13 OR LESS FOR YOU.
SIGH
GIVE ME A MINUTE.
EXCUSE ME.
SIR?
UH? YOU TALKING TO ME?
I'M TERRIBLY SORRY TO BOTHER YOU BUT I'VE GOTTEN INTO A LITTLE BIT OF A DISPUTE WITH THE BOX OFFICE CLERK OVER THERE.
YOU SEE-- HE'S TELLING ME THE KNICKS ARE THE WORST BASKETBALL TEAM OF ALL-TIME. I SAY THEY'RE ONE OF THE BEST-- BUT YOU SEE-- HE'S JUST NOT BUYING IT.
THINK YOU COULD HELP ME OUT?
HEY, BUDDY! LISTEN TO THE KID ALREADY!
HE SPEAKS THE TRUTH!
FINE, FINE-- HERE YOU GO. SORRY I DOUBTED YOU.
DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT. YOU'RE JUST DOING YOUR JOB.
VERY COOL. IMPRESSIVE-- VERY IMPRESSIVE.
NOT REALLY. IT WAS JUST A SIMPLE MATTER OF MAPPING POSSIBLE OUTCOMES AND WEIGHING THE PROBABILITIES OF SAID OUTCOMES-- AND MAPPING THE MOST LIKELY SITUATION THAT WOULD YIELD THE DESIRED RESULTS AND THEN--
DON'T RUIN THIS.

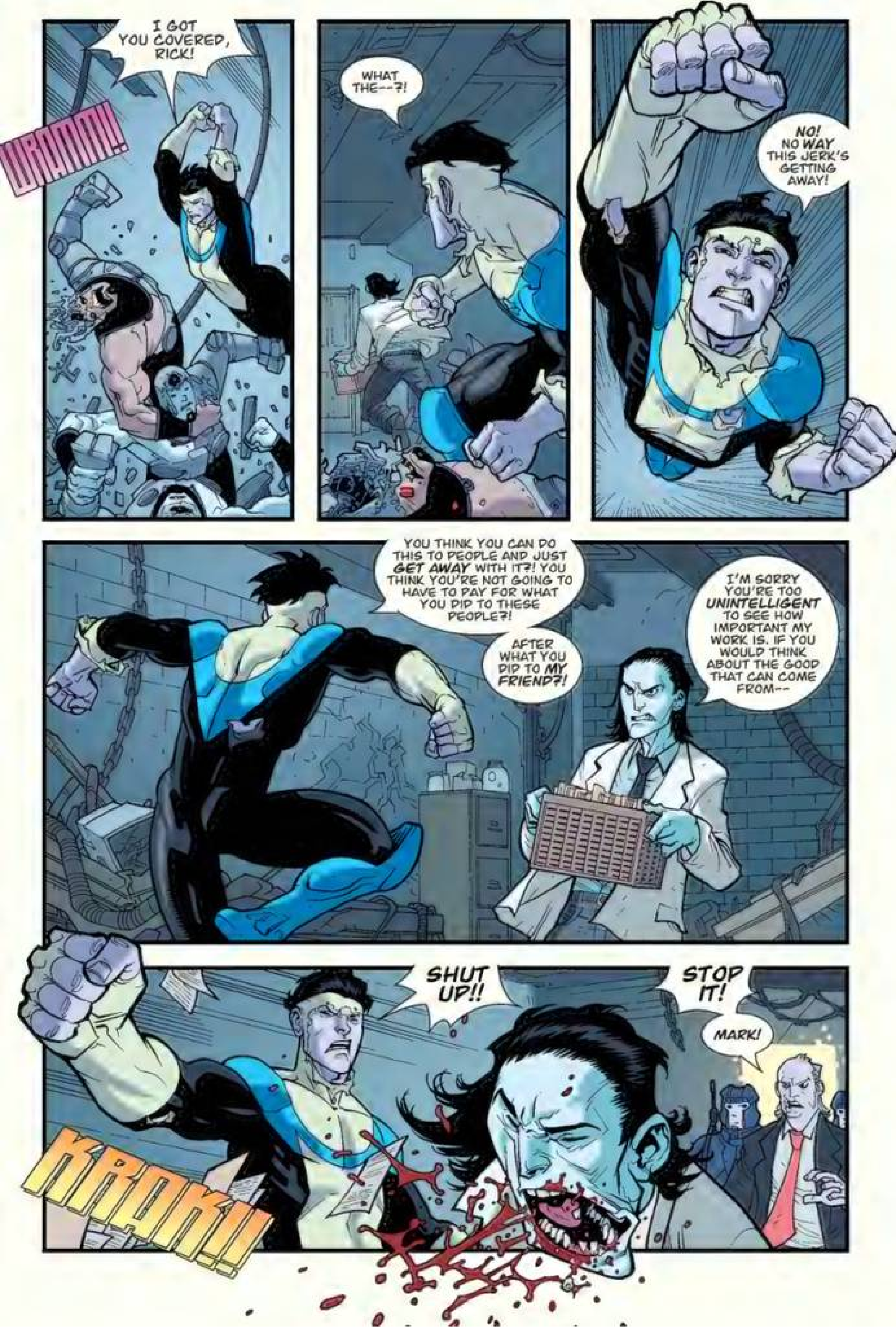

ANY MINUTE NOW... HE'S GOING TO TOTALLY COME BUSTING THROUGH THAT WALL AND SAVE ME...
...
I'M SCREWED.
YES, BUT IT'S FOR A GOOD CAUSE.
THIS WILL KEEP YOU IMMOBILE WHILE I SEVER YOUR VOCAL CORDS. I WOULDN'T WANT YOUR SQUIRMING TO CAUSE ME TO PIERCE YOUR JUGULAR OR ANYTHING.
I'D PUMP YOU FULL OF PAIN-KILLERS SO YOU WOULDN'T HAVE TO SCREAM SO MUCH IN THE FIRST PLACE BUT FRANKLY THIS IS INFINITELY CHEAPER AND I'M ON A COLLEGE STUDENT'S BUDGET.
MARK!!
THIS GUY IS CRAZY!! SAVE ME!!
MARK!!
WHO'S MARK?

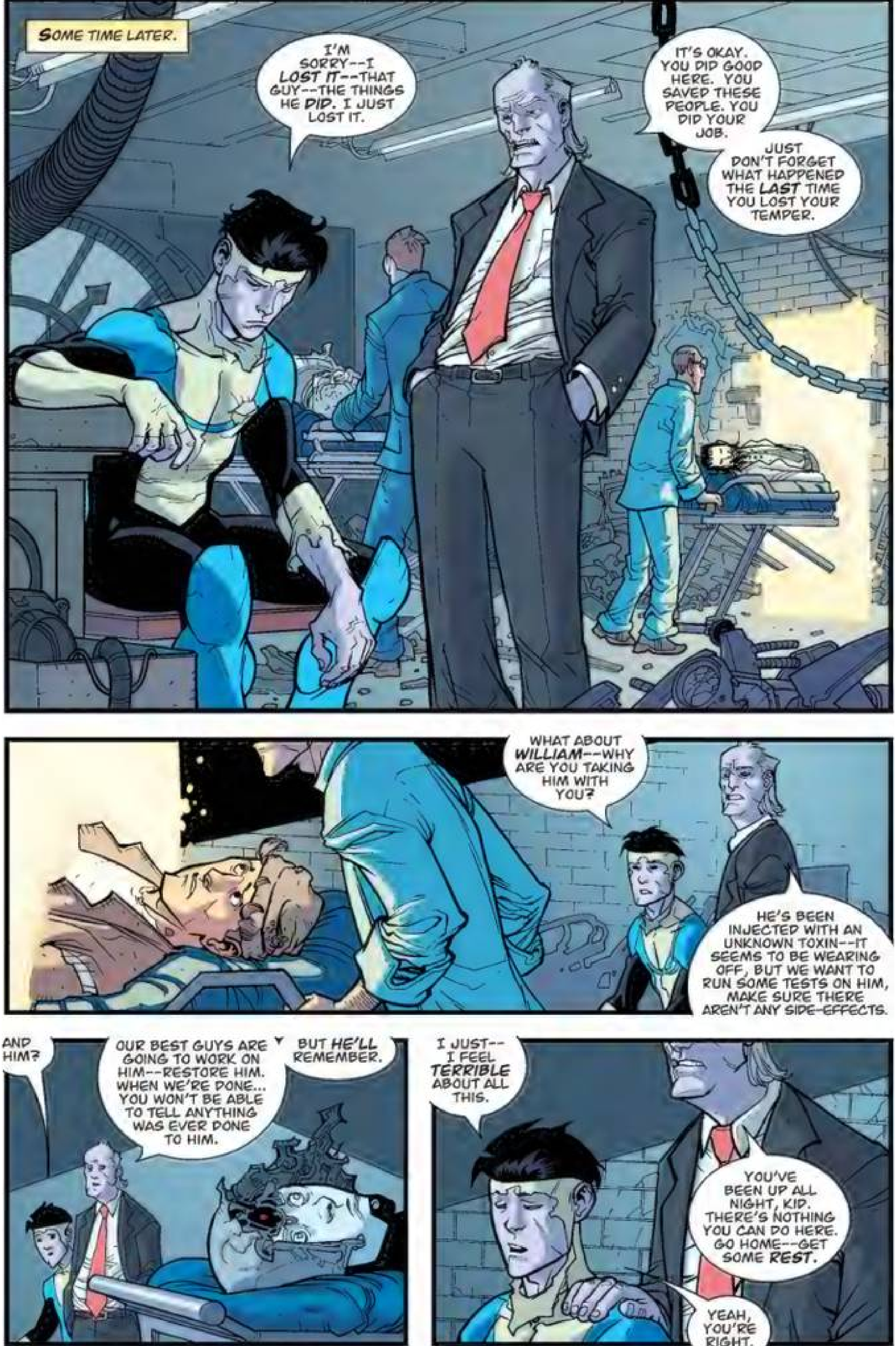

BRAAKOOM!!

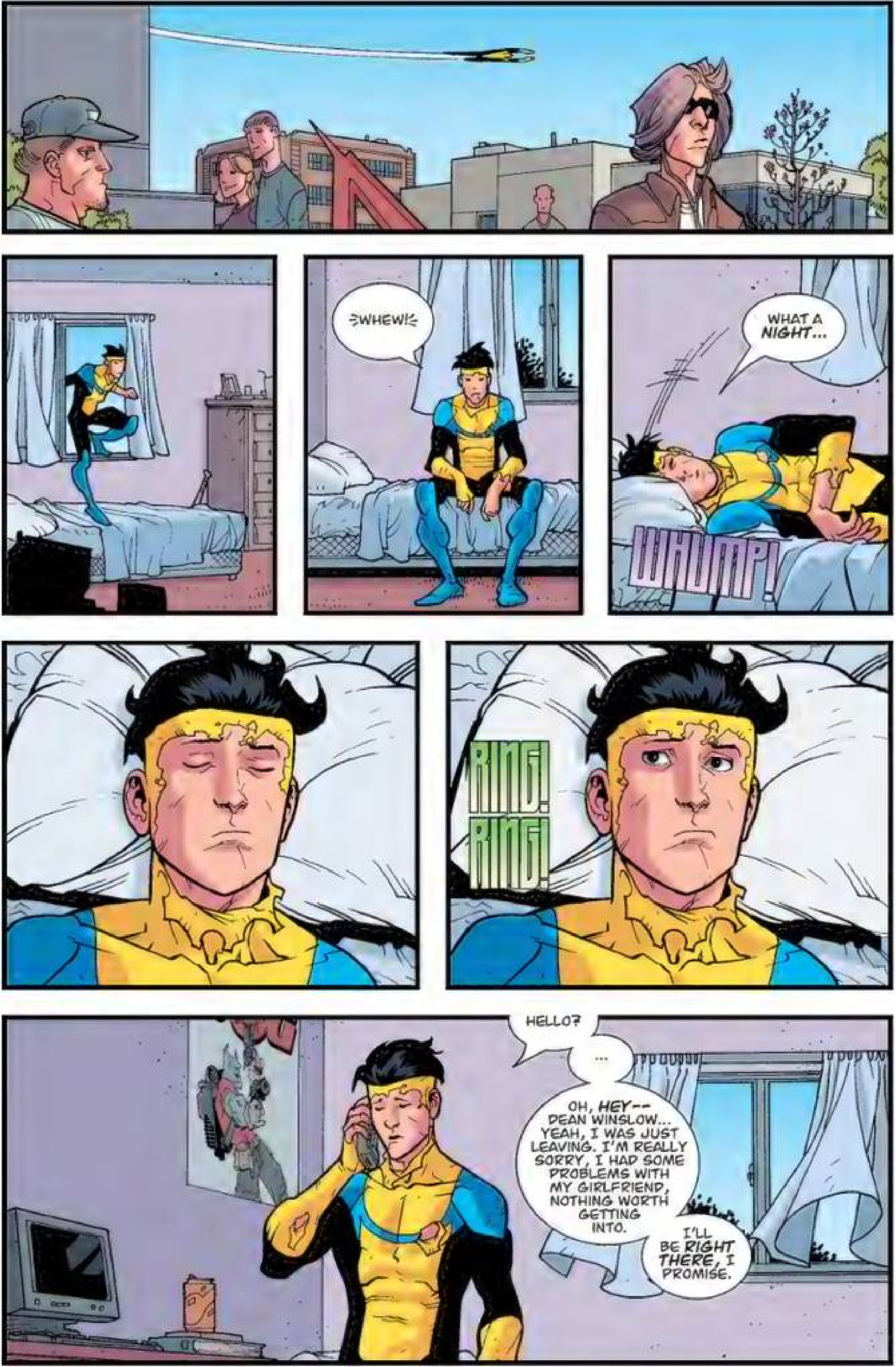

NOT THE WALL, BUT CLOSE ENOUGH.
DUDE--IF YOU GET AN OPENING JUST RUN LIKE HELL! THIS ISN'T EXACTLY GOING AS PLANNED!
I'D SURE LIKE TO BUT I'M--
ACK! RICK-- STOP!!
JUST STOP THIS!
WRKOOM!
CHOOOM!!
DID YOU SAY RICK?
IS THAT RICK?!
YEAH! IT'S--
KRAK!
--RICK. THE ONE KICKING MY BUTT.

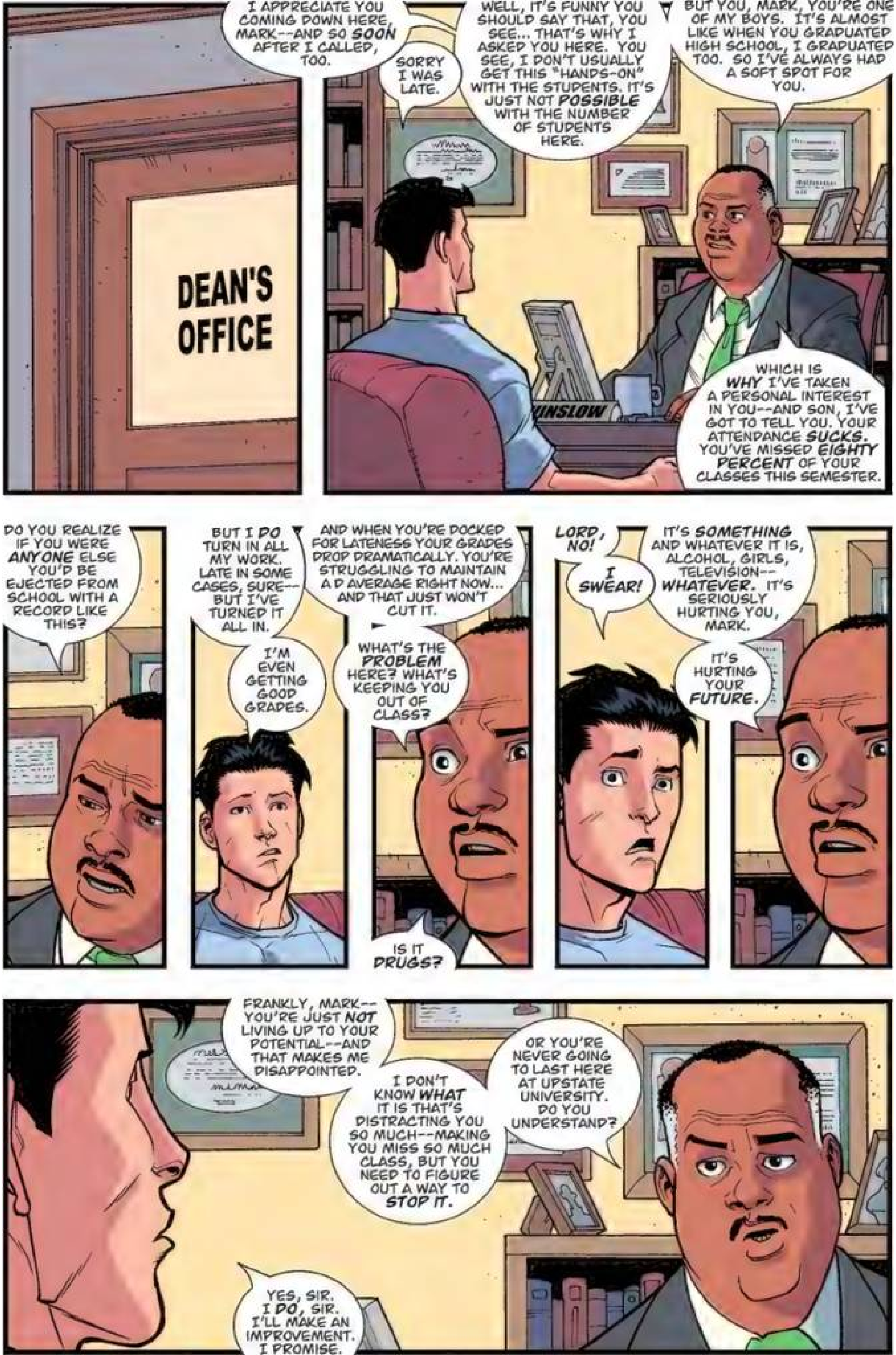

WRAMM!!
RICK! STOP FIGHTING HIM--IT'S OUR FRIEND!
COME, ON, MAN! STOP IT!
WILL--
--UMM?
YEAH, MAN-- IT'S ME. I'M YOUR FRIEND, REMEMBER? YOUR FRIEND WILLIAM?
HELP US, MAN! THIS GUY IS HURTING PEOPLE LIKE HE HURT YOU. YOU GOTTA HELP US STOP HIM.
KRAK!
STOP--
--HM?
YEAH-- START WITH YOUR BUDDIES THERE--THE ONES HURTING MARK.

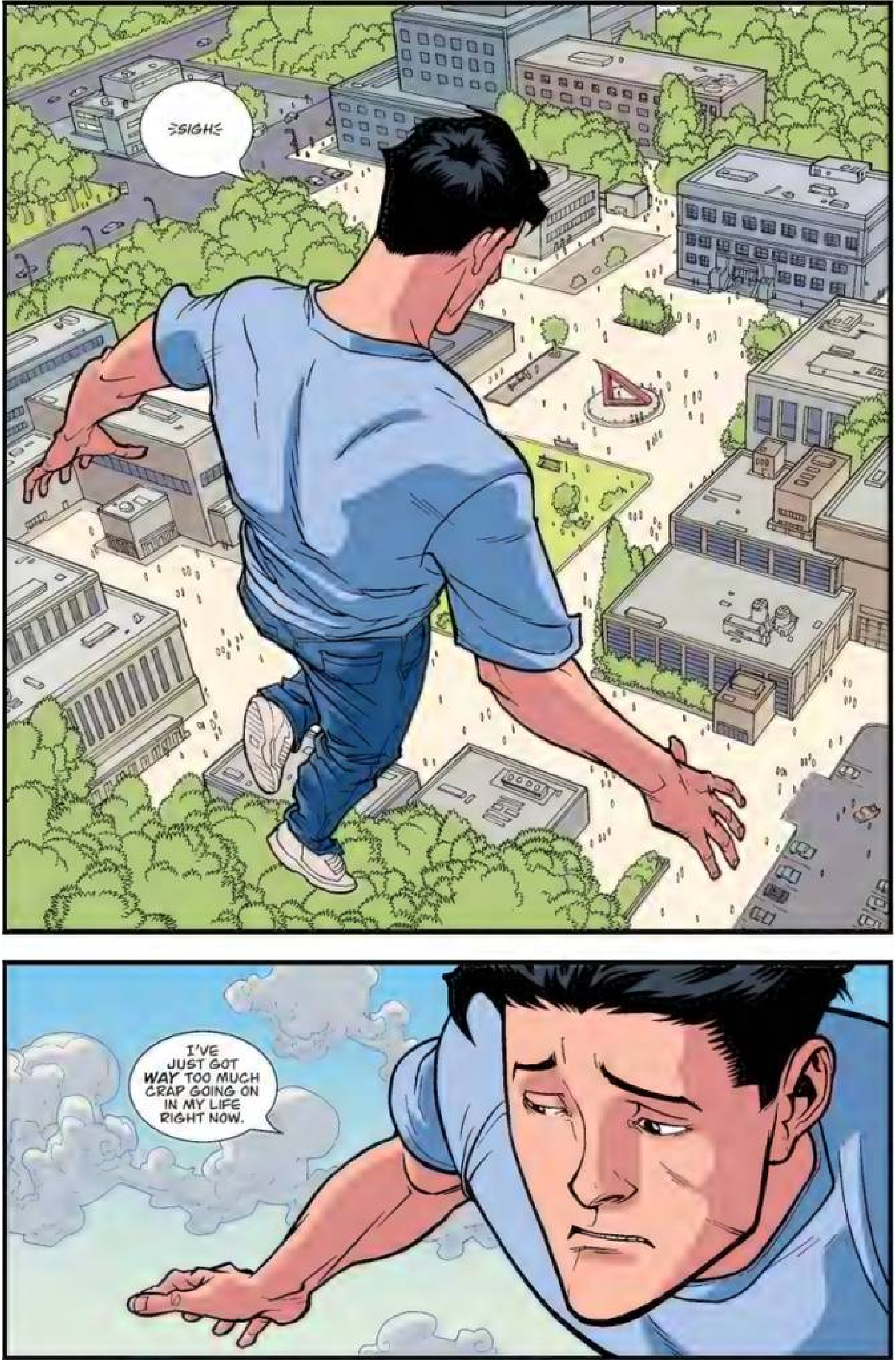

STOP-- HM!
CLANGG!!
GREAT-- JUST GREAT!
I WAS REALLY GETTING USED TO THIS LAB--I CAN'T BELIEVE I'M GOING TO HAVE TO MOVE AGAIN!
HAPPY TO HAVE YOUR HELP, MAN. THANKS FOR COMING AROUND.
HOLD THESE GUYS BACK--I'LL FINISH FREEING WILLIAM.
KROK!!
DUDE--WHAT ARE YOU DOING?! I THOUGHT YOU WERE STILL TIED DOWN BUT IT LOOKS LIKE I BROKE ALL YOUR RESTRAINTS WHEN I FIRST GOT HERE.
YOU NEED TO GET OUT OF HERE!
I CAN'T-- I CAN'T MOVE-- HE SHOT ME FULL OF SOME KINDA JUNK THAT'S PARALYZED ME.
JUST--I DON'T KNOW... LAY UNDER HERE!
THIS SHOULD BE SAFE!
KROKK!
LAY HERE--YEAH--I CAN DO THAT.

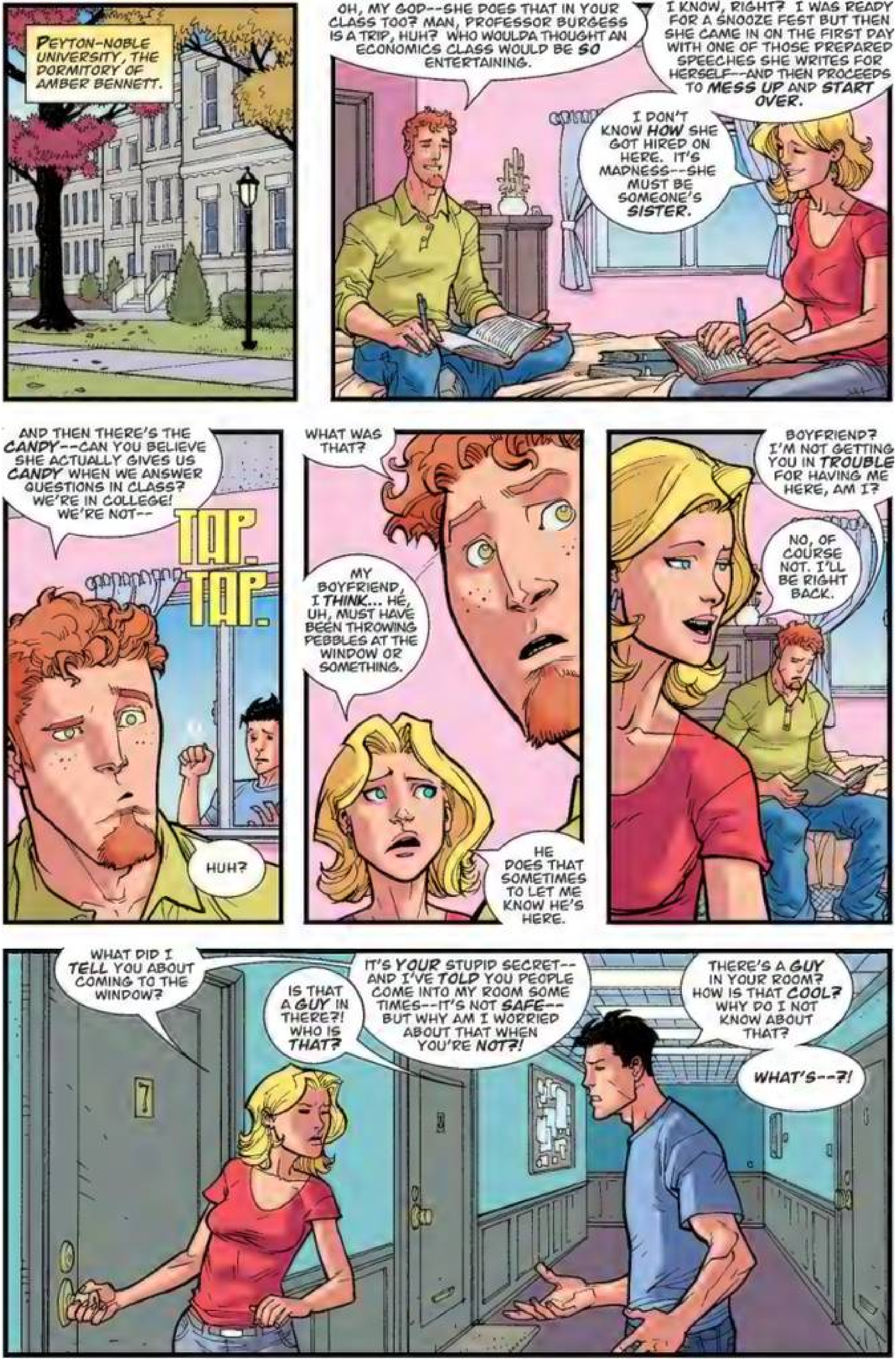

DRAMM!!
I GOT YOU COVERED, RICK!
WHAT THE--?!
NO! NO WAY THIS JERK'S GETTING AWAY!
YOU THINK YOU CAN DO THIS TO PEOPLE AND JUST GET AWAY WITH IT?! YOU THINK YOU'RE NOT GOING TO HAVE TO PAY FOR WHAT YOU DID TO THESE PEOPLE?!
AFTER WHAT YOU DID TO MY FRIEND?!
I'M SORRY YOU'RE TOO UNINTELLIGENT TO SEE HOW IMPORTANT MY WORK IS. IF YOU WOULD THINK ABOUT THE GOOD THAT CAN COME FROM--
SHUT UP!!
STOP IT!
MARK!
KRAK!!

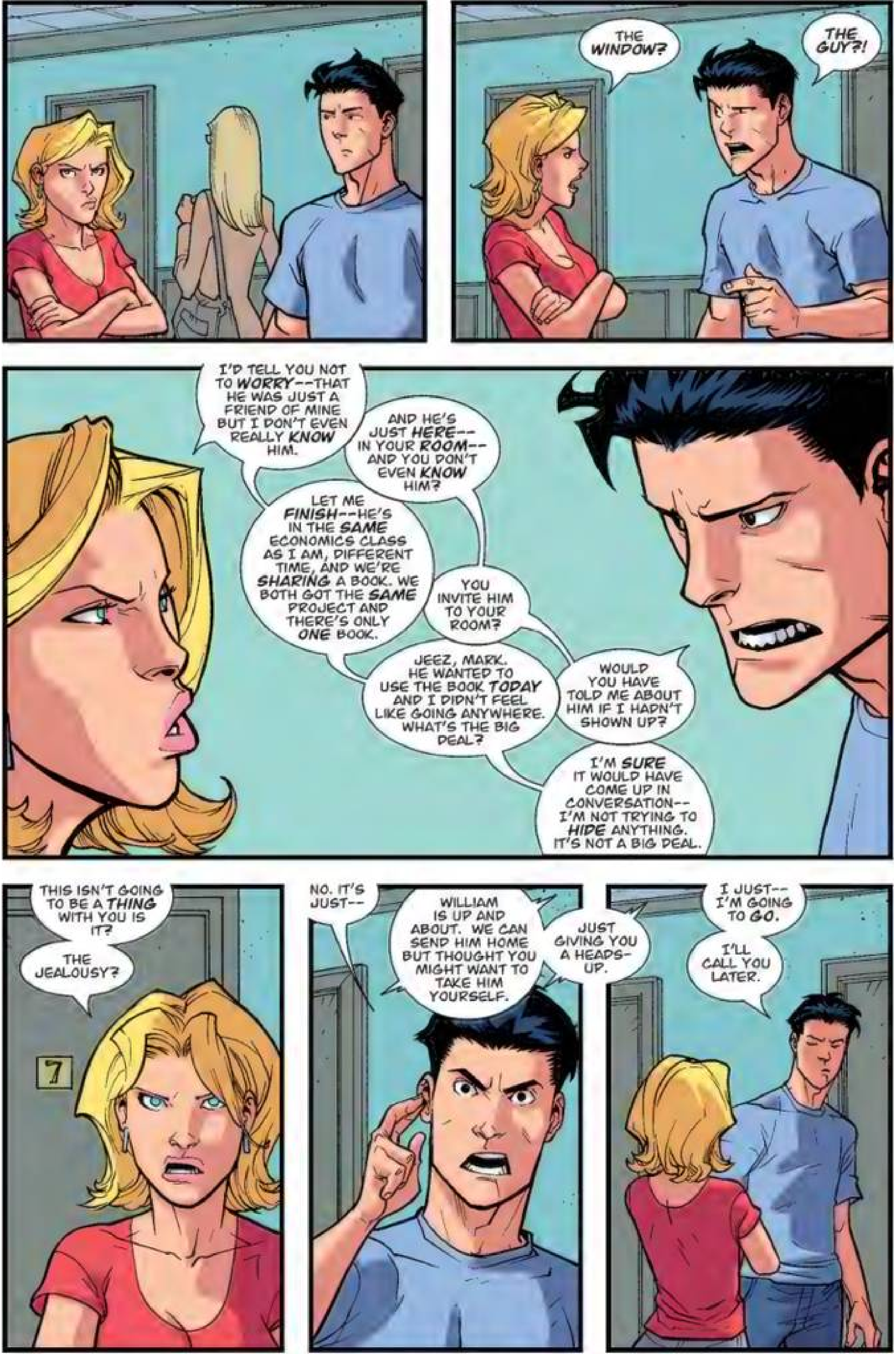

SOME TIME LATER.
I'M SORRY--I LOST IT--THAT GUY--THE THINGS HE DID. I JUST LOST IT.
IT'S OKAY. YOU DID GOOD HERE. YOU SAVED THESE PEOPLE. YOU DID YOUR JOB.
JUST DON'T FORGET WHAT HAPPENED THE LAST TIME YOU LOST YOUR TEMPER.
WHAT ABOUT WILLIAM--WHY ARE YOU TAKING HIM WITH YOU?
HE'S BEEN INJECTED WITH AN UNKNOWN TOXIN--IT SEEMS TO BE WEARING OFF, BUT WE WANT TO RUN SOME TESTS ON HIM, MAKE SURE THERE AREN'T ANY SIDE-EFFECTS.
AND HIM?
OUR BEST GUYS ARE GOING TO WORK ON HIM--RESTORE HIM. WHEN WE'RE DONE... YOU WON'T BE ABLE TO TELL ANYTHING WAS EVER DONE TO HIM.
BUT HE'LL REMEMBER.
I JUST-- I FEEL TERRIBLE ABOUT ALL THIS.
YOU'VE BEEN UP ALL NIGHT, KID. THERE'S NOTHING YOU CAN DO HERE. GO HOME--GET SOME REST.
YEAH, YOU'RE RIGHT.

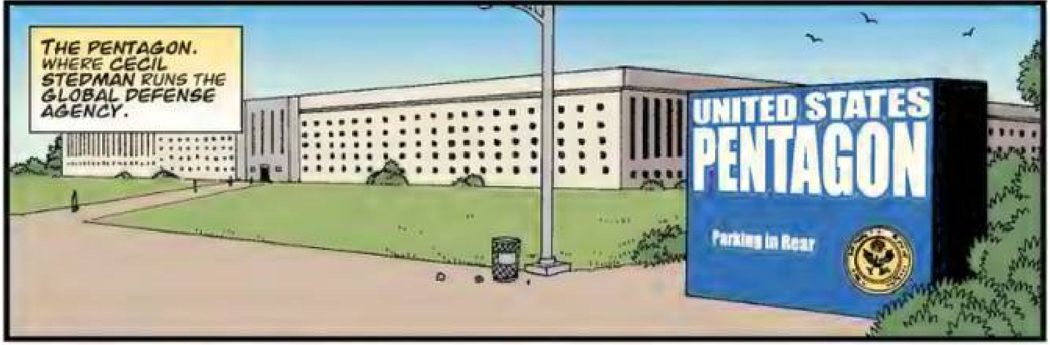

WHEW!
WHAT A NIGHT...
WHUMP!
RING! RING!
HELLO?
...
OH, HEY-- DEAN WINSLOW... YEAH, I WAS JUST LEAVING. I'M REALLY SORRY, I HAD SOME PROBLEMS WITH MY GIRLFRIEND, NOTHING WORTH GETTING INTO.
I'LL BE RIGHT THERE, I PROMISE.

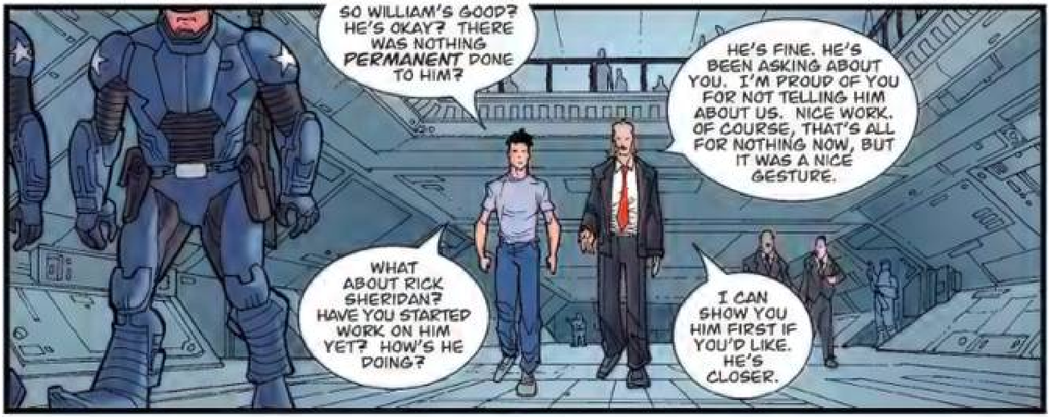

DEAN'S OFFICE
I APPRECIATE YOU COMING DOWN HERE, MARK--AND SO **SOON** AFTER I CALLED, TOO.
SORRY I WAS LATE.
WELL, IT'S FUNNY YOU SHOULD SAY THAT, YOU SEE... THAT'S WHY I ASKED YOU HERE. YOU SEE, I DON'T USUALLY GET THIS "HANDS-ON" WITH THE STUDENTS. IT'S JUST NOT **POSSIBLE** WITH THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS HERE.
BUT YOU, MARK, YOU'RE ONE OF MY BOYS. IT'S ALMOST LIKE WHEN YOU GRADUATED HIGH SCHOOL, I GRADUATED TOO. SO I'VE ALWAYS HAD A SOFT SPOT FOR YOU.
INSLOW
WHICH IS **WHY** I'VE TAKEN A PERSONAL INTEREST IN YOU--AND SON, I'VE GOT TO TELL YOU. YOUR ATTENDANCE **SUCKS.** YOU'VE MISSED **EIGHTY PERCENT** OF YOUR CLASSES THIS SEMESTER.
DO YOU REALIZE IF YOU WERE **ANYONE** ELSE YOU'D BE EJECTED FROM SCHOOL WITH A RECORD LIKE THIS?
BUT I **DO** TURN IN ALL MY WORK. LATE IN SOME CASES, SURE-- BUT I'VE TURNED IT ALL IN.
I'M EVEN GETTING GOOD GRADES.
AND WHEN YOU'RE DOCKED FOR LATENESS YOUR GRADES DROP DRAMATICALLY. YOU'RE STRUGGLING TO MAINTAIN A D AVERAGE RIGHT NOW... AND THAT JUST WON'T CUT IT.
WHAT'S THE **PROBLEM** HERE? WHAT'S KEEPING YOU OUT OF CLASS?
IS IT **DRUGS?**
LORD, NO!
I SWEAR!
IT'S **SOMETHING** AND WHATEVER IT IS, ALCOHOL, GIRLS, TELEVISION-- **WHATEVER.** IT'S SERIOUSLY HURTING YOU, MARK.
IT'S HURTING YOUR **FUTURE.**
FRANKLY, MARK-- YOU'RE JUST **NOT** LIVING UP TO YOUR POTENTIAL--AND THAT MAKES ME DISAPPOINTED.
I DON'T KNOW **WHAT** IT IS THAT'S DISTRACTING YOU SO MUCH--MAKING YOU MISS SO MUCH CLASS, BUT YOU NEED TO FIGURE OUT A WAY TO **STOP IT.**
OR YOU'RE NEVER GOING TO LAST HERE AT UPSTATE UNIVERSITY. DO YOU UNDERSTAND?
YES, SIR. I **DO**, SIR. I'LL MAKE AN IMPROVEMENT. I PROMISE.

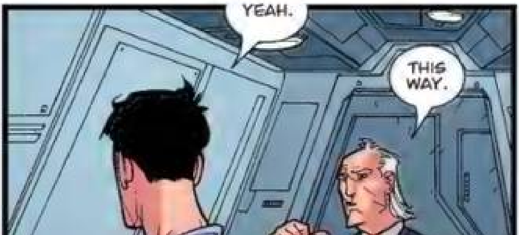

≷SIGH≶
I'VE JUST GOT WAY TOO MUCH CRAP GOING ON IN MY LIFE RIGHT NOW.

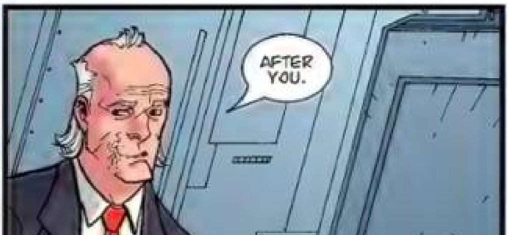

PEYTON-NOBLE UNIVERSITY, THE DORMITORY OF AMBER BENNETT.
OH, MY GOD--SHE DOES THAT IN YOUR CLASS TOO? MAN, PROFESSOR BURGESS IS A TRIP, HUH? WHO WOULDA THOUGHT AN ECONOMICS CLASS WOULD BE SO ENTERTAINING.
I KNOW, RIGHT? I WAS READY FOR A SNOOZE FEST BUT THEN SHE CAME IN ON THE FIRST DAY WITH ONE OF THOSE PREPARED SPEECHES SHE WRITES FOR HERSELF--AND THEN PROCEEDS TO MESS UP AND START OVER.
I DON'T KNOW HOW SHE GOT HIRED ON HERE. IT'S MADNESS--SHE MUST BE SOMEONE'S SISTER.
AND THEN THERE'S THE CANDY--CAN YOU BELIEVE SHE ACTUALLY GIVES US CANDY WHEN WE ANSWER QUESTIONS IN CLASS? WE'RE IN COLLEGE! WE'RE NOT--
TAP. TAP.
HUH?
WHAT WAS THAT?
MY BOYFRIEND, I THINK... HE, UH, MUST HAVE BEEN THROWING PEBBLES AT THE WINDOW OR SOMETHING.
HE DOES THAT SOMETIMES TO LET ME KNOW HE'S HERE.
BOYFRIEND? I'M NOT GETTING YOU IN TROUBLE FOR HAVING ME HERE, AM I?
NO, OF COURSE NOT. I'LL BE RIGHT BACK.
WHAT DID I TELL YOU ABOUT COMING TO THE WINDOW?
IS THAT A GUY IN THERE?! WHO IS THAT?
IT'S YOUR STUPID SECRET--AND I'VE TOLD YOU PEOPLE COME INTO MY ROOM SOME TIMES--IT'S NOT SAFE--BUT WHY AM I WORRIED ABOUT THAT WHEN YOU'RE NOT?!
THERE'S A GUY IN YOUR ROOM? HOW IS THAT COOL? WHY DO I NOT KNOW ABOUT THAT?
WHAT'S--?!
7

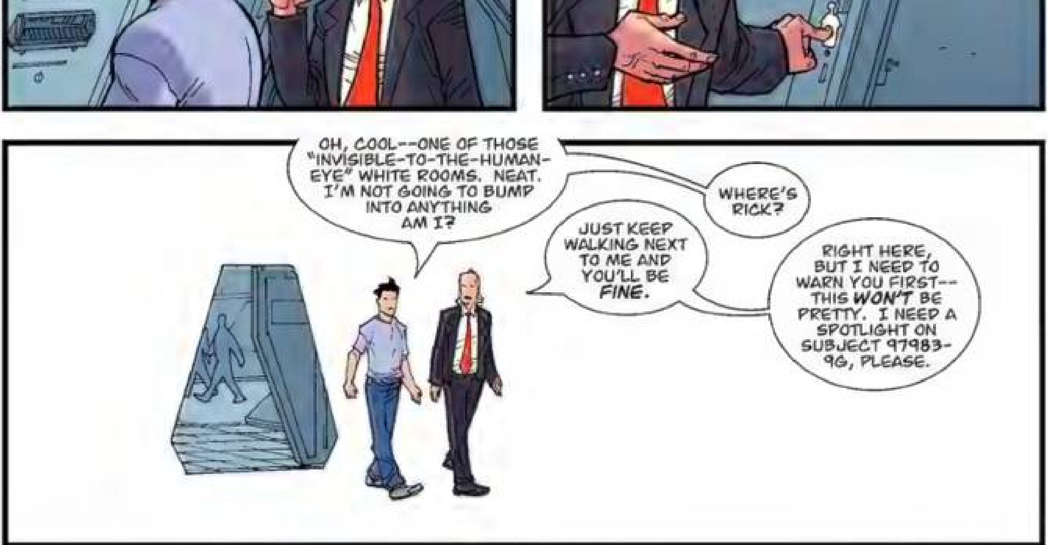

THE WINDOW?
THE GUY?!
I'D TELL YOU NOT TO WORRY--THAT HE WAS JUST A FRIEND OF MINE BUT I DON'T EVEN REALLY KNOW HIM.
AND HE'S JUST HERE-- IN YOUR ROOM-- AND YOU DON'T EVEN KNOW HIM?
LET ME FINISH--HE'S IN THE SAME ECONOMICS CLASS AS I AM, DIFFERENT TIME, AND WE'RE SHARING A BOOK. WE BOTH GOT THE SAME PROJECT AND THERE'S ONLY ONE BOOK.
YOU INVITE HIM TO YOUR ROOM?
JEEZ, MARK. HE WANTED TO USE THE BOOK TODAY AND I DIDN'T FEEL LIKE GOING ANYWHERE. WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?
WOULD YOU HAVE TOLD ME ABOUT HIM IF I HADN'T SHOWN UP?
I'M SURE IT WOULD HAVE COME UP IN CONVERSATION-- I'M NOT TRYING TO HIDE ANYTHING. IT'S NOT A BIG DEAL.
THIS ISN'T GOING TO BE A THING WITH YOU IS IT?
THE JEALOUSY?
7
NO. IT'S JUST--
WILLIAM IS UP AND ABOUT. WE CAN SEND HIM HOME BUT THOUGHT YOU MIGHT WANT TO TAKE HIM YOURSELF.
JUST GIVING YOU A HEADS-UP.
I JUST-- I'M GOING TO GO.
I'LL CALL YOU LATER.

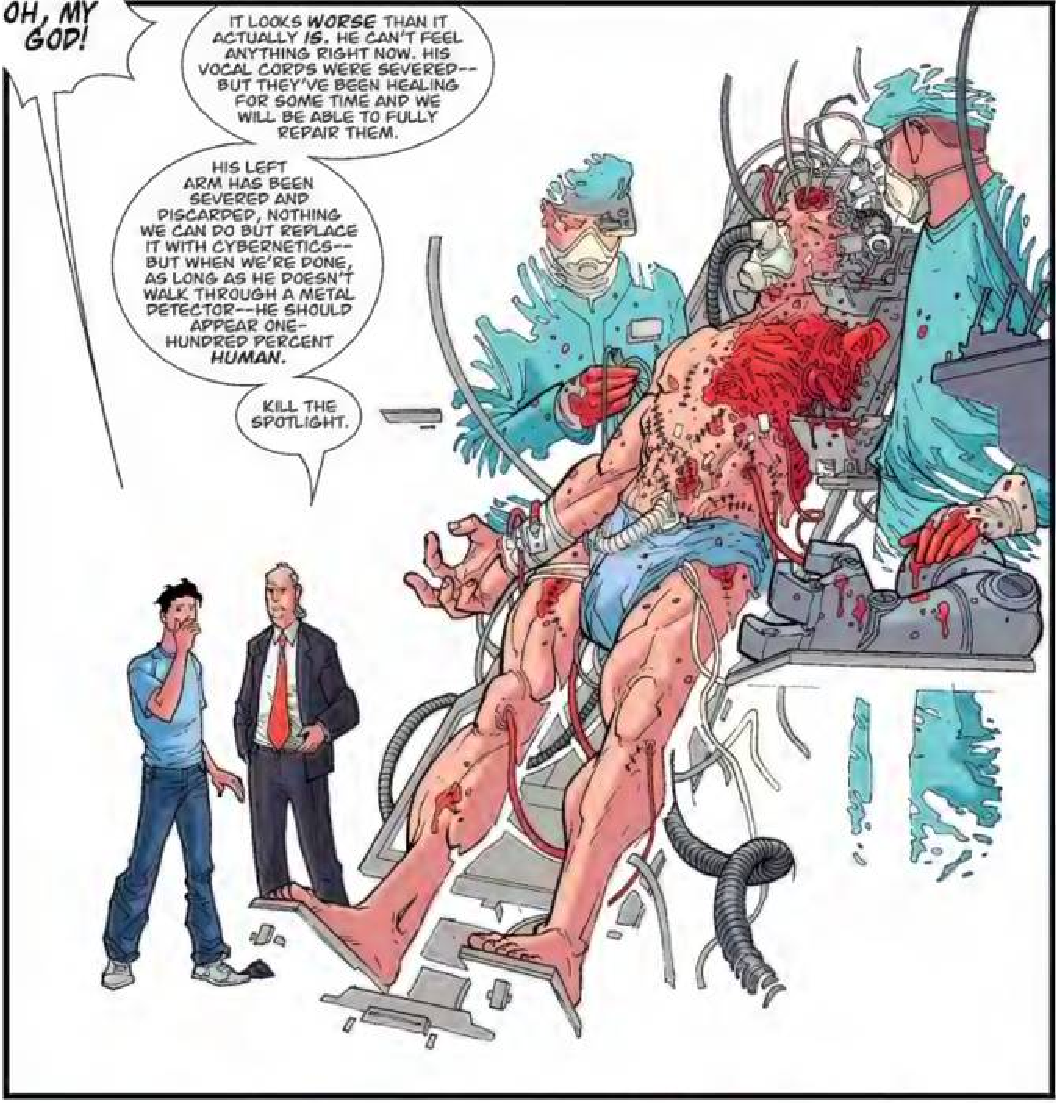

THE PENTAGON. WHERE CECIL STEDMAN RUNS THE GLOBAL DEFENSE AGENCY.
UNITED STATES PENTAGON
Parking in Rear

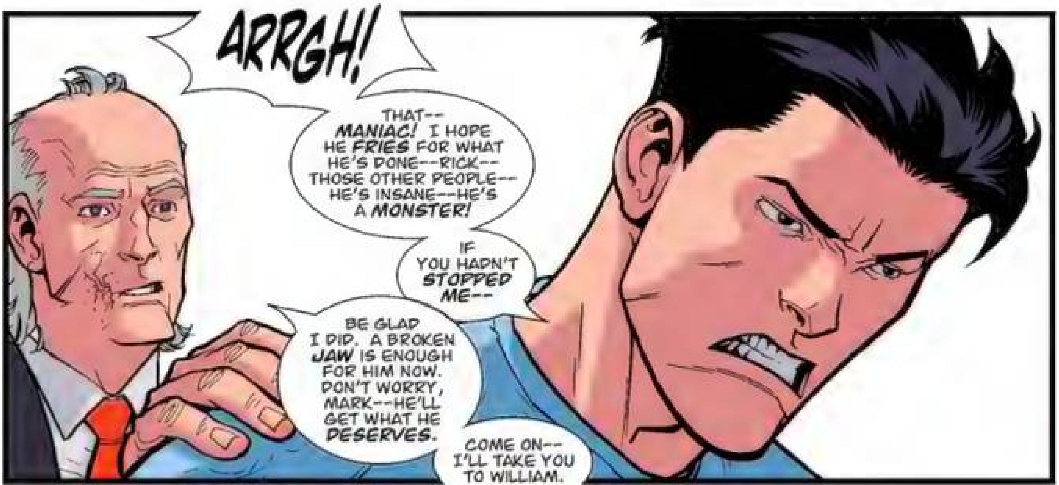

SO WILLIAM'S GOOD? HE'S OKAY? THERE WAS NOTHING PERMANENT DONE TO HIM?
HE'S FINE. HE'S BEEN ASKING ABOUT YOU. I'M PROUD OF YOU FOR NOT TELLING HIM ABOUT US. NICE WORK. OF COURSE, THAT'S ALL FOR NOTHING NOW, BUT IT WAS A NICE GESTURE.
WHAT ABOUT RICK SHERIDAN? HAVE YOU STARTED WORK ON HIM YET? HOW'S HE DOING?
I CAN SHOW YOU HIM FIRST IF YOU'D LIKE. HE'S CLOSER.

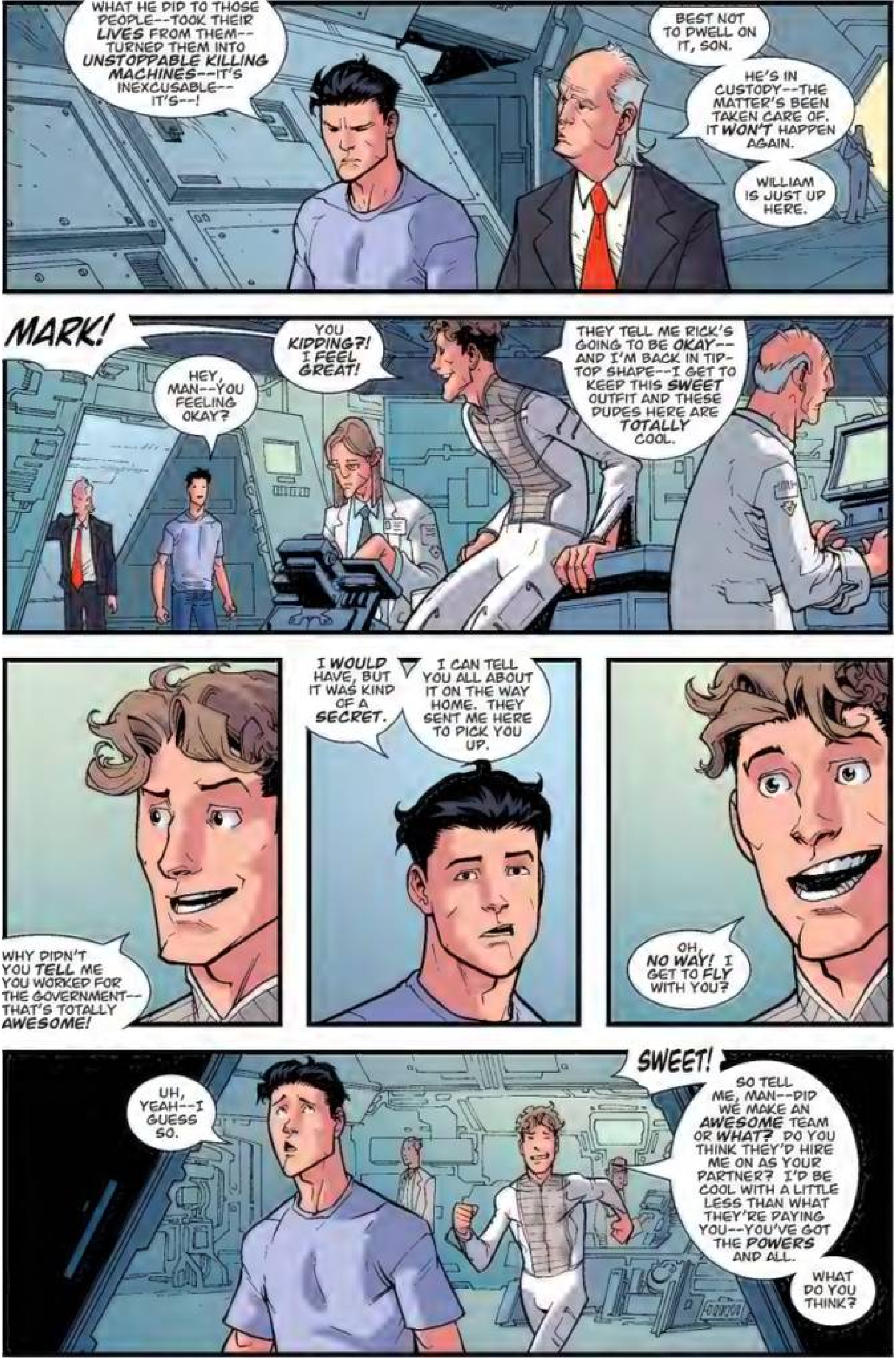

YEAH.
THIS WAY.

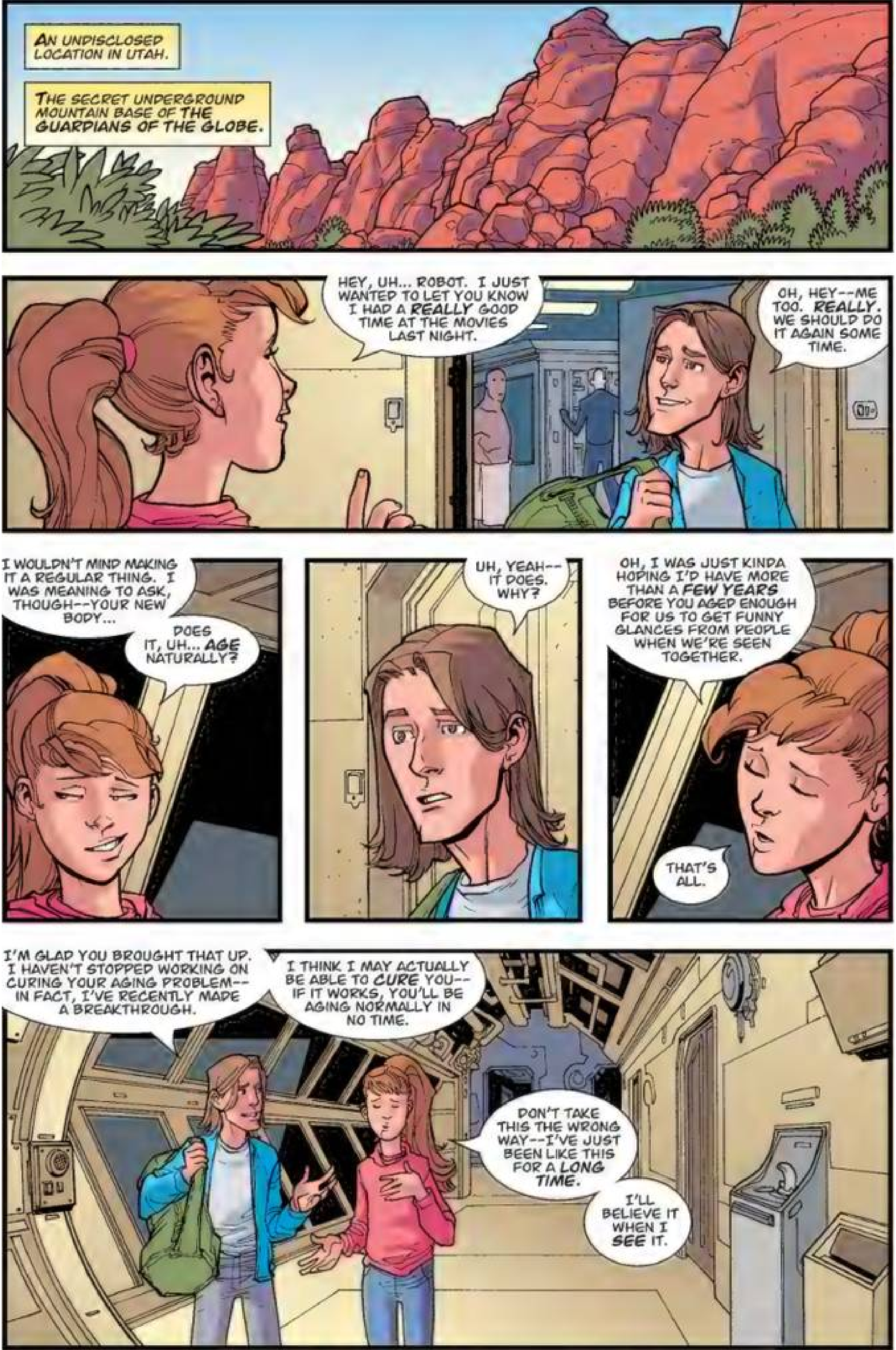

AFTER YOU.

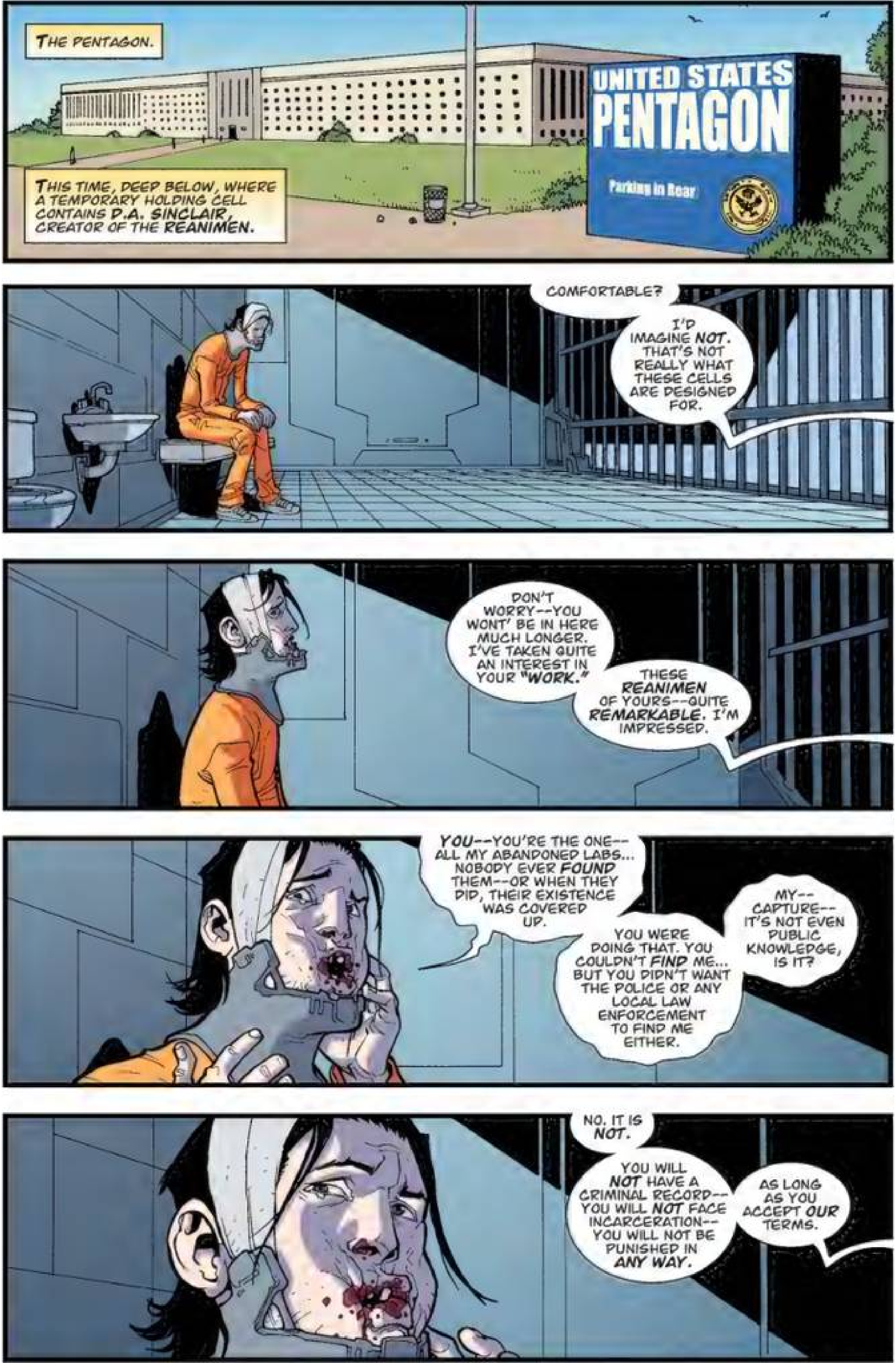

OH, COOL--ONE OF THOSE "INVISIBLE-TO-THE-HUMAN-EYE" WHITE ROOMS. NEAT. I'M NOT GOING TO BUMP INTO ANYTHING AM I?
WHERE'S RICK?
JUST KEEP WALKING NEXT TO ME AND YOU'LL BE FINE.
RIGHT HERE, BUT I NEED TO WARN YOU FIRST--THIS WON'T BE PRETTY. I NEED A SPOTLIGHT ON SUBJECT 97983-9G, PLEASE.

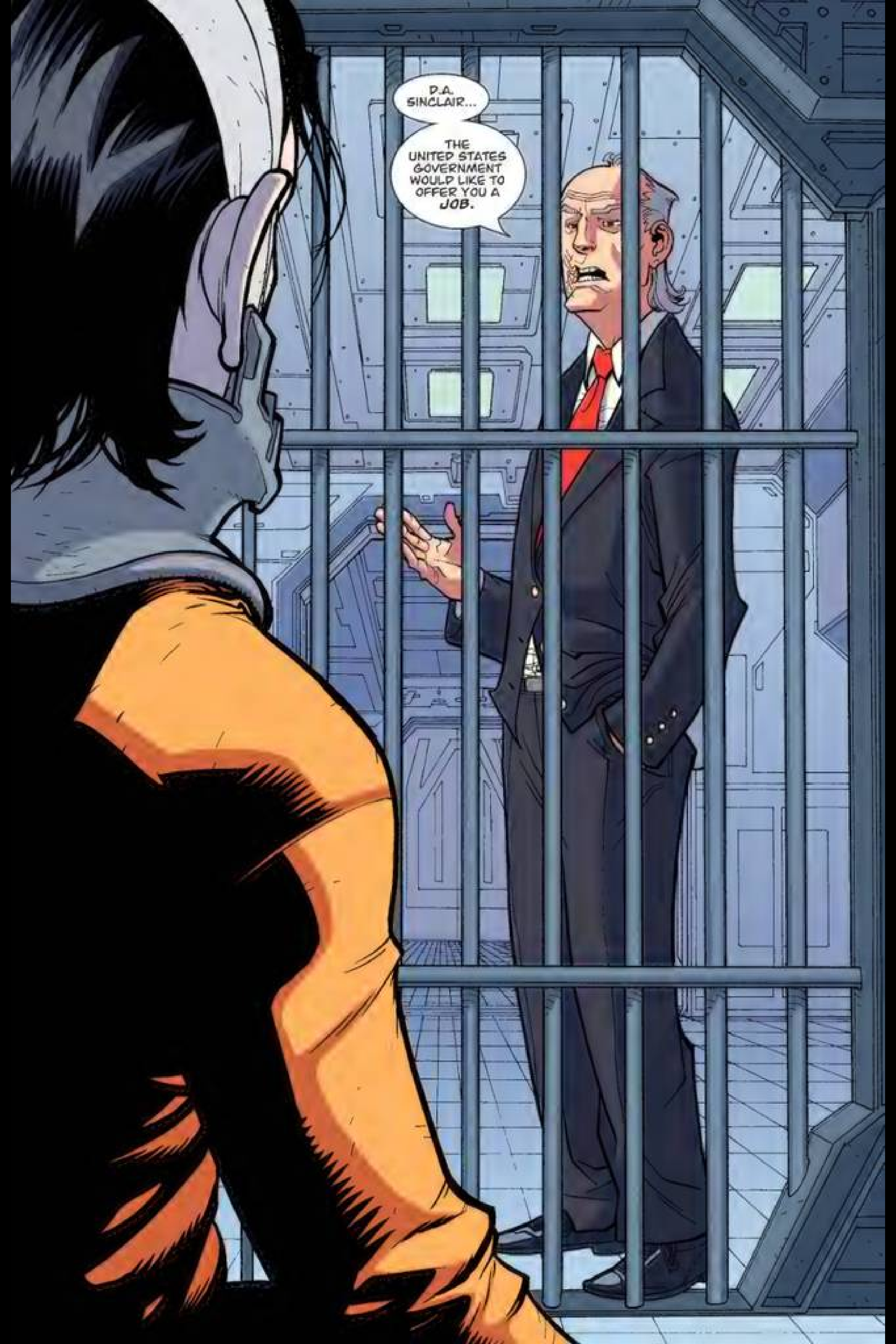

OH, MY GOD!
IT LOOKS WORSE THAN IT ACTUALLY IS. HE CAN'T FEEL ANYTHING RIGHT NOW. HIS VOCAL CORDS WERE SEVERED-- BUT THEY'VE BEEN HEALING FOR SOME TIME AND WE WILL BE ABLE TO FULLY REPAIR THEM.
HIS LEFT ARM HAS BEEN SEVERED AND DISCARDED, NOTHING WE CAN DO BUT REPLACE IT WITH CYBERNETICS-- BUT WHEN WE'RE DONE, AS LONG AS HE DOESN'T WALK THROUGH A METAL DETECTOR--HE SHOULD APPEAR ONE-HUNDRED PERCENT HUMAN.
KILL THE SPOTLIGHT.

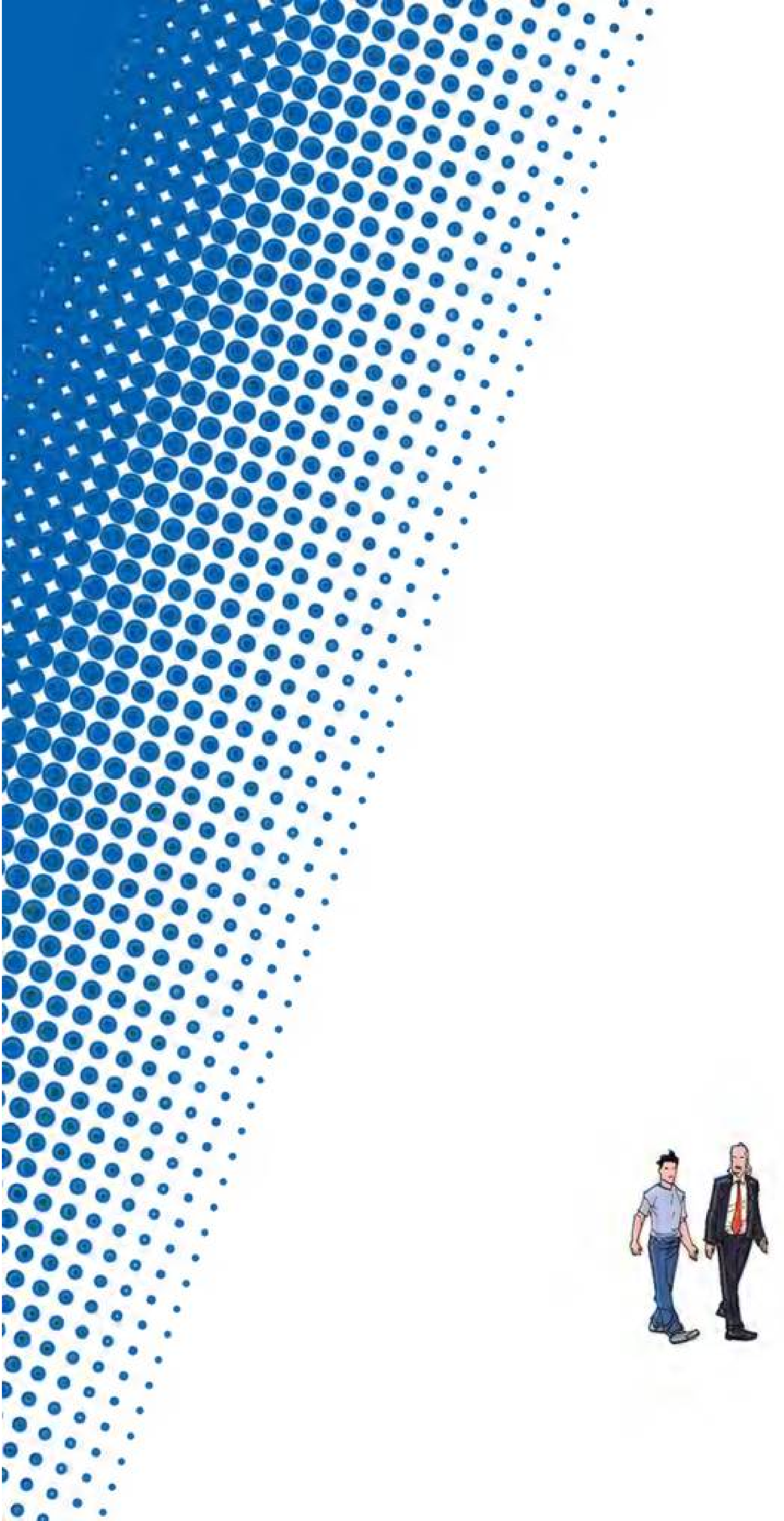

ARRGH!
THAT-- MANIAC! I HOPE HE FRIES FOR WHAT HE'S DONE--RICK-- THOSE OTHER PEOPLE-- HE'S INSANE--HE'S A MONSTER!
IF YOU HADN'T STOPPED ME--
BE GLAD I DID. A BROKEN JAW IS ENOUGH FOR HIM NOW. DON'T WORRY, MARK--HE'LL GET WHAT HE DESERVES.
COME ON-- I'LL TAKE YOU TO WILLIAM.


WHAT HE DID TO THOSE PEOPLE--TOOK THEIR LIVES FROM THEM--TURNED THEM INTO UNSTOPPABLE KILLING MACHINES--IT'S INEXCUSABLE--IT'S--!
BEST NOT TO DWELL ON IT, SON.
HE'S IN CUSTODY--THE MATTER'S BEEN TAKEN CARE OF. IT WON'T HAPPEN AGAIN.
WILLIAM IS JUST UP HERE.
MARK!
HEY, MAN--YOU FEELING OKAY?
YOU KIDDING?! I FEEL GREAT!
THEY TELL ME RICK'S GOING TO BE OKAY--AND I'M BACK IN TIP-TOP SHAPE--I GET TO KEEP THIS SWEET OUTFIT AND THESE DUDES HERE ARE TOTALLY COOL.
WHY DIDN'T YOU TELL ME YOU WORKED FOR THE GOVERNMENT--THAT'S TOTALLY AWESOME!
I WOULD HAVE, BUT IT WAS KIND OF A SECRET.
I CAN TELL YOU ALL ABOUT IT ON THE WAY HOME. THEY SENT ME HERE TO PICK YOU UP.
OH, NO WAY! I GET TO FLY WITH YOU?
UH, YEAH--I GUESS SO.
SWEET!
SO TELL ME, MAN--DID WE MAKE AN AWESOME TEAM OR WHAT? DO YOU THINK THEY'D HIRE ME ON AS YOUR PARTNER? I'D BE COOL WITH A LITTLE LESS THAN WHAT THEY'RE PAYING YOU--YOU'VE GOT THE POWERS AND ALL.
WHAT DO YOU THINK?

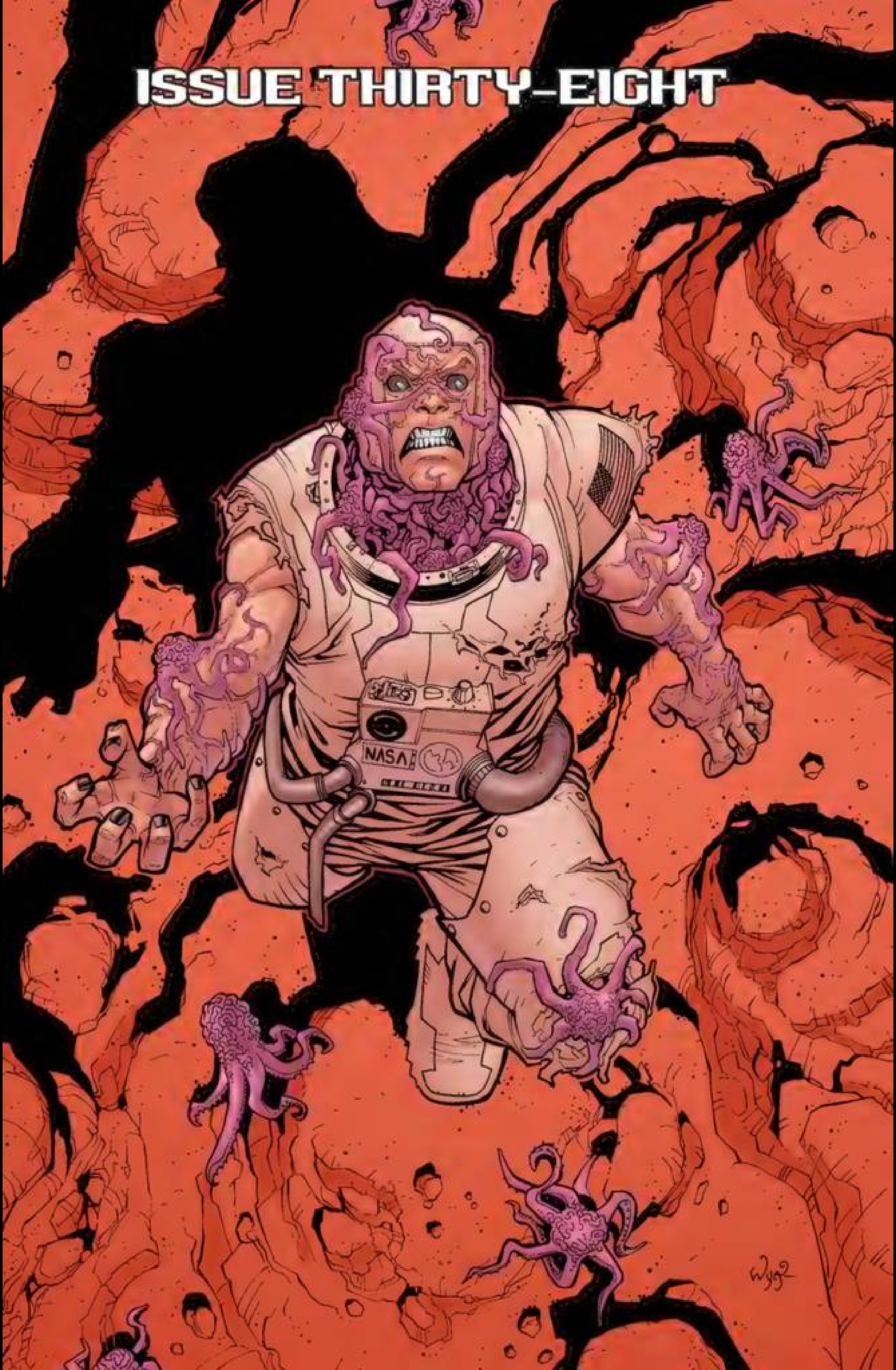

AN UNDISCLOSED LOCATION IN UTAH.
THE SECRET UNDERGROUND MOUNTAIN BASE OF THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE.
HEY, UH... ROBOT. I JUST WANTED TO LET YOU KNOW I HAD A REALLY GOOD TIME AT THE MOVIES LAST NIGHT.
OH, HEY--ME TOO. REALLY. WE SHOULD DO IT AGAIN SOME TIME.
I WOULDN'T MIND MAKING IT A REGULAR THING. I WAS MEANING TO ASK, THOUGH--YOUR NEW BODY...
DOES IT, UH... AGE NATURALLY?
UH, YEAH--IT DOES. WHY?
OH, I WAS JUST KINDA HOPING I'D HAVE MORE THAN A FEW YEARS BEFORE YOU AGED ENOUGH FOR US TO GET FUNNY GLANCES FROM PEOPLE WHEN WE'RE SEEN TOGETHER.
THAT'S ALL.
I'M GLAD YOU BROUGHT THAT UP. I HAVEN'T STOPPED WORKING ON CURING YOUR AGING PROBLEM--IN FACT, I'VE RECENTLY MADE A BREAKTHROUGH.
I THINK I MAY ACTUALLY BE ABLE TO CURE YOU--IF IT WORKS, YOU'LL BE AGING NORMALLY IN NO TIME.
DON'T TAKE THIS THE WRONG WAY--I'VE JUST BEEN LIKE THIS FOR A LONG TIME.
I'LL BELIEVE IT WHEN I SEE IT.

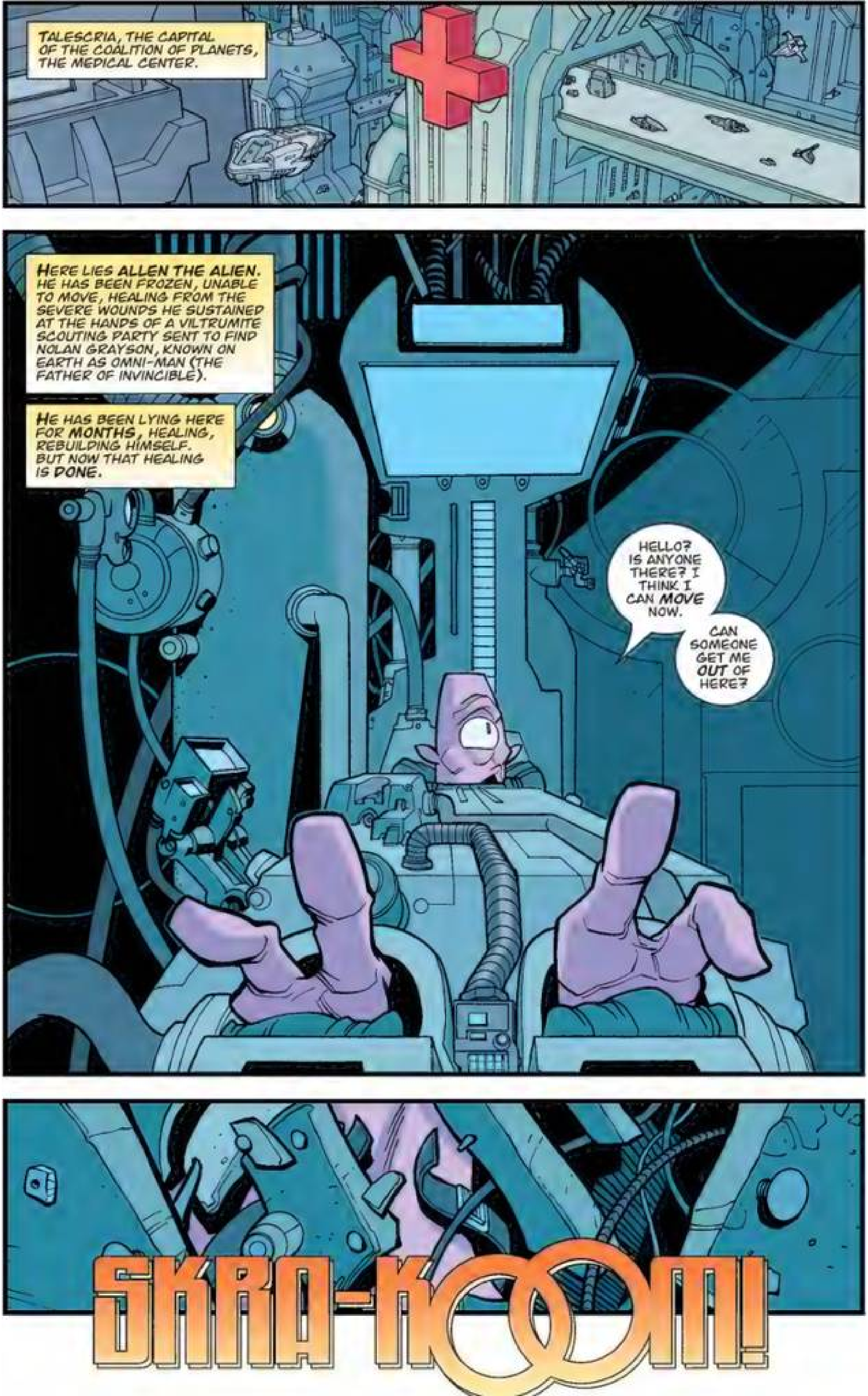

THE PENTAGON.
UNITED STATES PENTAGON
Parking in Rear
THIS TIME, DEEP BELOW, WHERE A TEMPORARY HOLDING CELL CONTAINS D.A. SINCLAIR, CREATOR OF THE REANIMEN.
COMFORTABLE?
I'D IMAGINE NOT. THAT'S NOT REALLY WHAT THESE CELLS ARE DESIGNED FOR.
DON'T WORRY--YOU WONT' BE IN HERE MUCH LONGER. I'VE TAKEN QUITE AN INTEREST IN YOUR "WORK."
THESE REANIMEN OF YOURS--QUITE REMARKABLE. I'M IMPRESSED.
YOU--YOU'RE THE ONE-- ALL MY ABANDONED LABS... NOBODY EVER FOUND THEM--OR WHEN THEY DID, THEIR EXISTENCE WAS COVERED UP.
YOU WERE DOING THAT. YOU COULDN'T FIND ME... BUT YOU DIDN'T WANT THE POLICE OR ANY LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT TO FIND ME EITHER.
MY-- CAPTURE-- IT'S NOT EVEN PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE, IS IT?
NO. IT IS NOT.
YOU WILL NOT HAVE A CRIMINAL RECORD-- YOU WILL NOT FACE INCARCERATION-- YOU WILL NOT BE PUNISHED IN ANY WAY.
AS LONG AS YOU ACCEPT OUR TERMS.

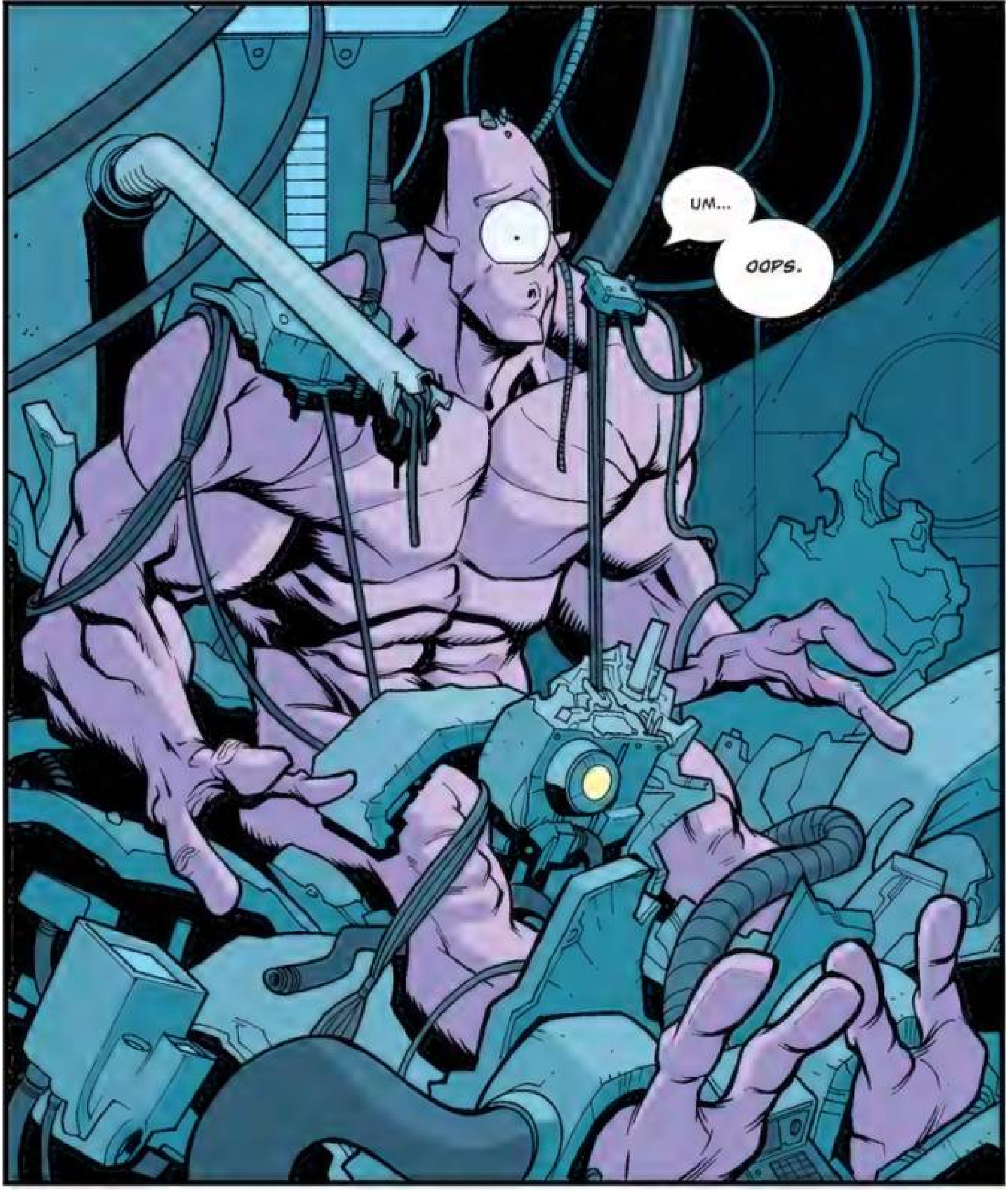

D.A. SINCLAIR...
THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT WOULD LIKE TO OFFER YOU A *JOB*.

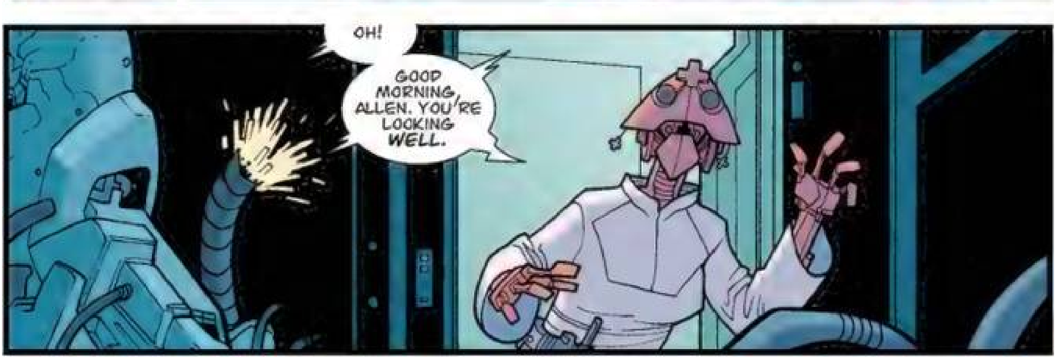


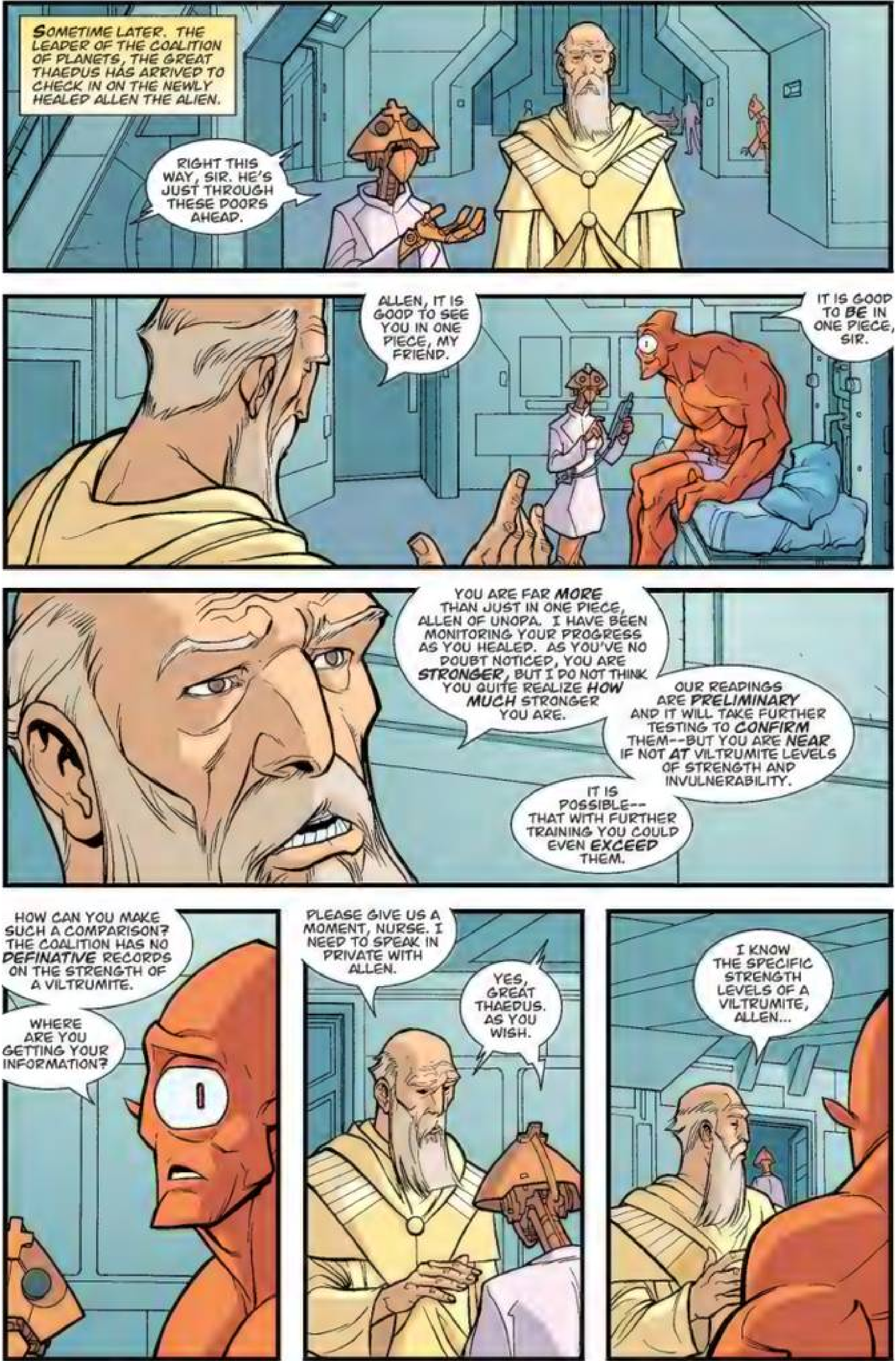
ISSUE THIRTY-EIGHT

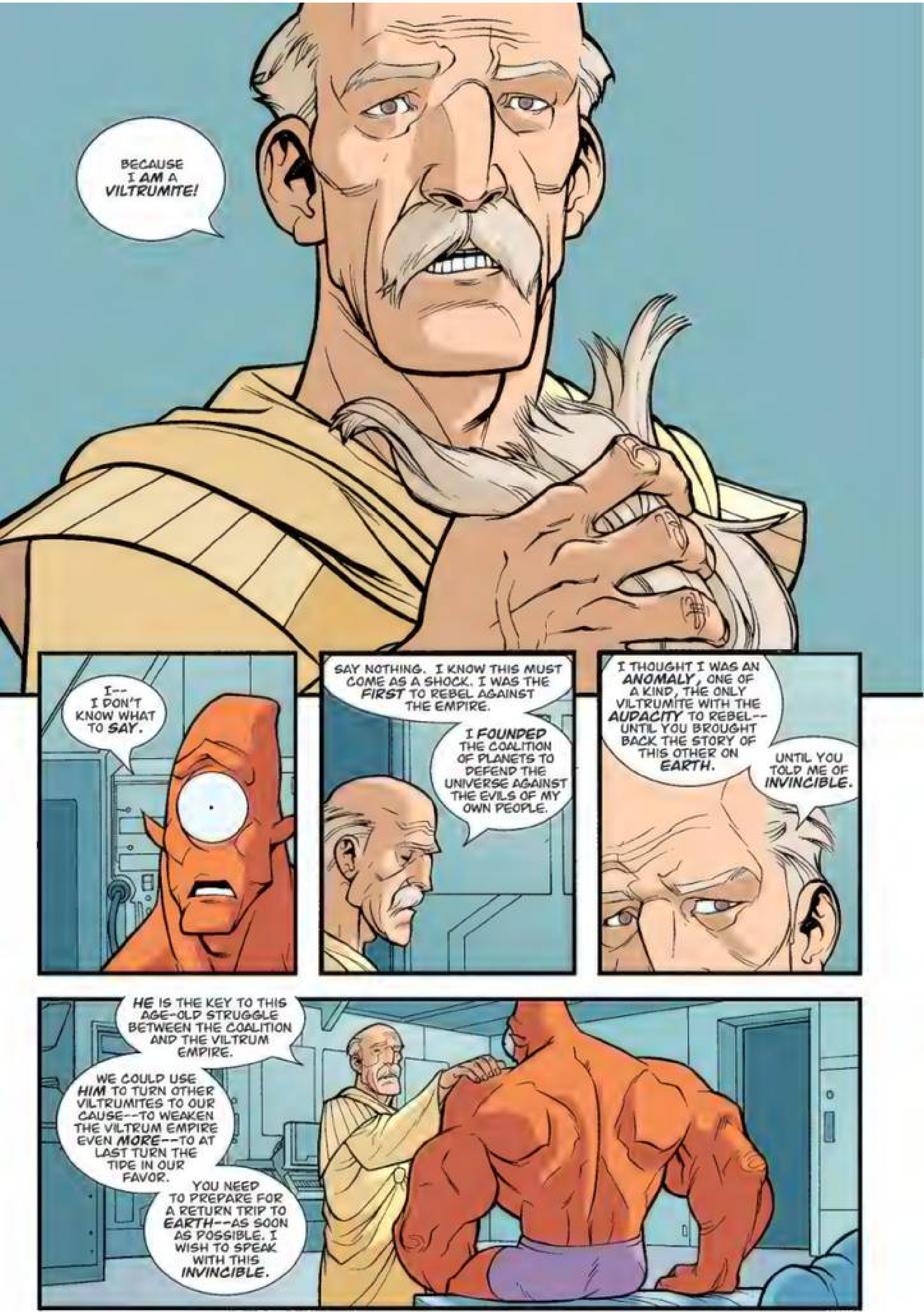


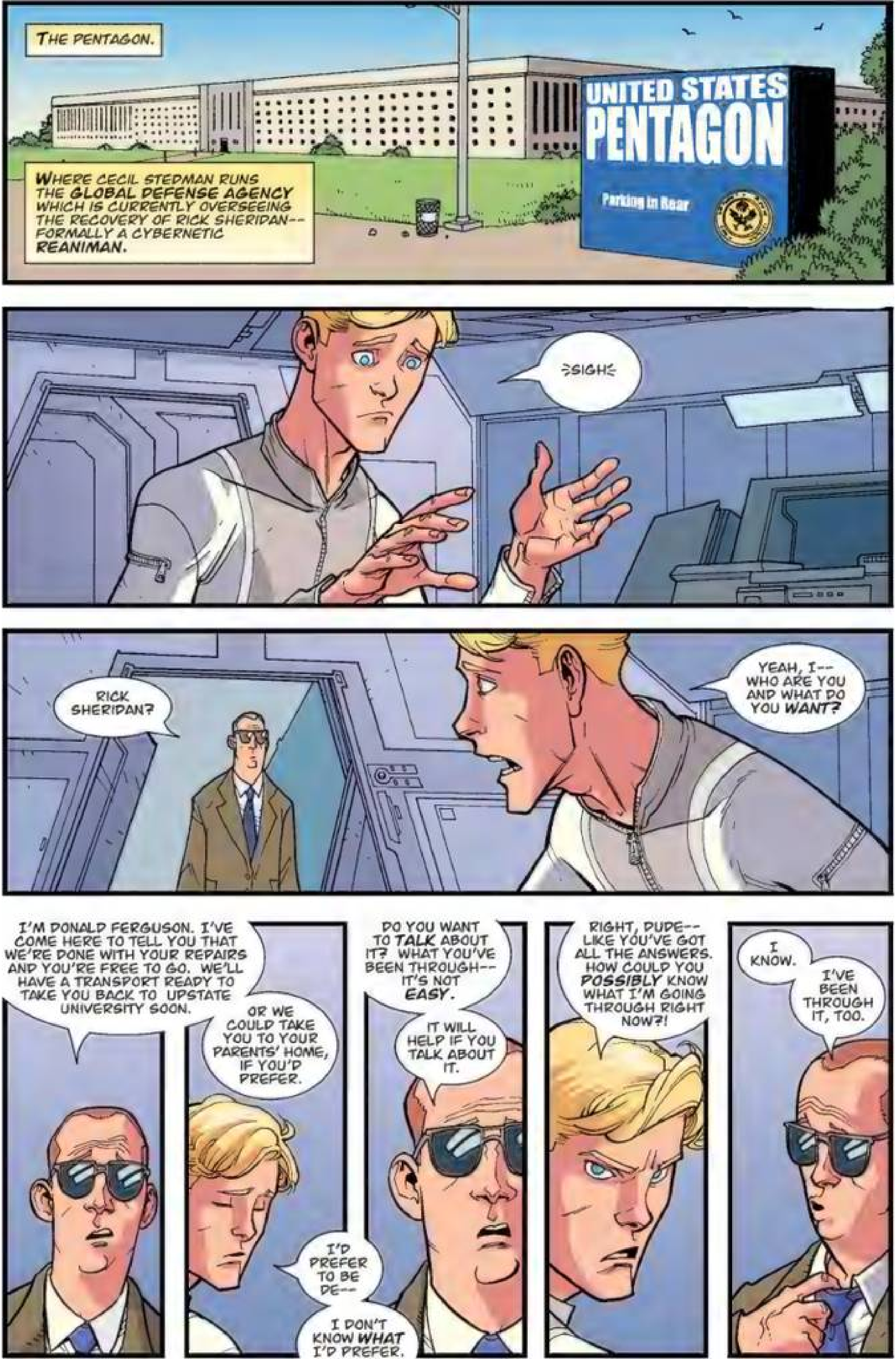

TALESCRIA, THE CAPITAL OF THE COALITION OF PLANETS, THE MEDICAL CENTER.
HERE LIES ALLEN THE ALIEN. HE HAS BEEN FROZEN, UNABLE TO MOVE, HEALING FROM THE SEVERE WOUNDS HE SUSTAINED AT THE HANDS OF A VILTRUMITE SCOUTING PARTY SENT TO FIND NOLAN GRAYSON, KNOWN ON EARTH AS OMNI-MAN (THE FATHER OF INVINCIBLE).
HE HAS BEEN LYING HERE FOR MONTHS, HEALING, REBUILDING HIMSELF. BUT NOW THAT HEALING IS DONE.
HELLO? IS ANYONE THERE? I THINK I CAN MOVE NOW.
CAN SOMEONE GET ME OUT OF HERE?
SKRA-KOOM!

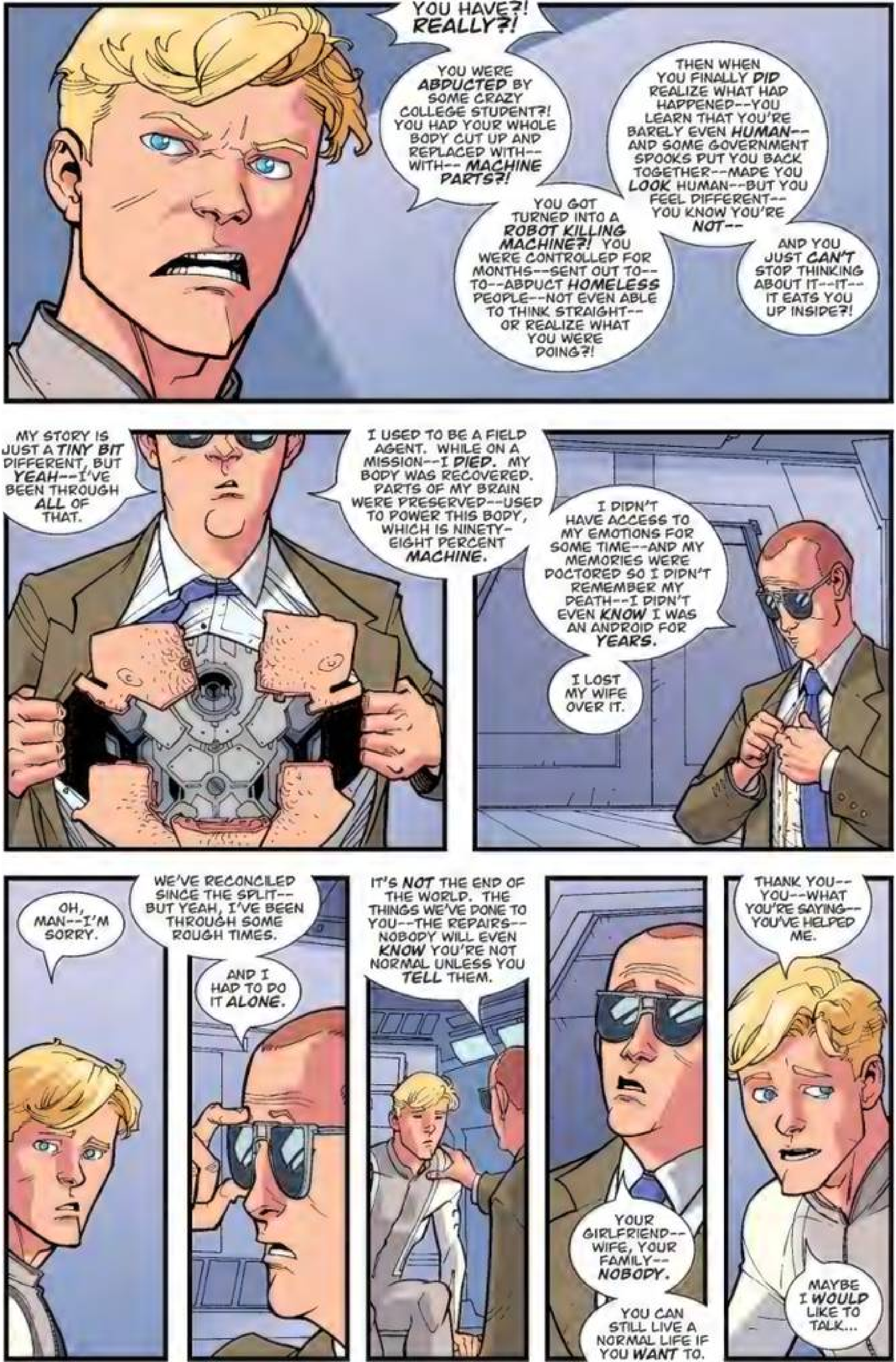

UM...
OOPS.

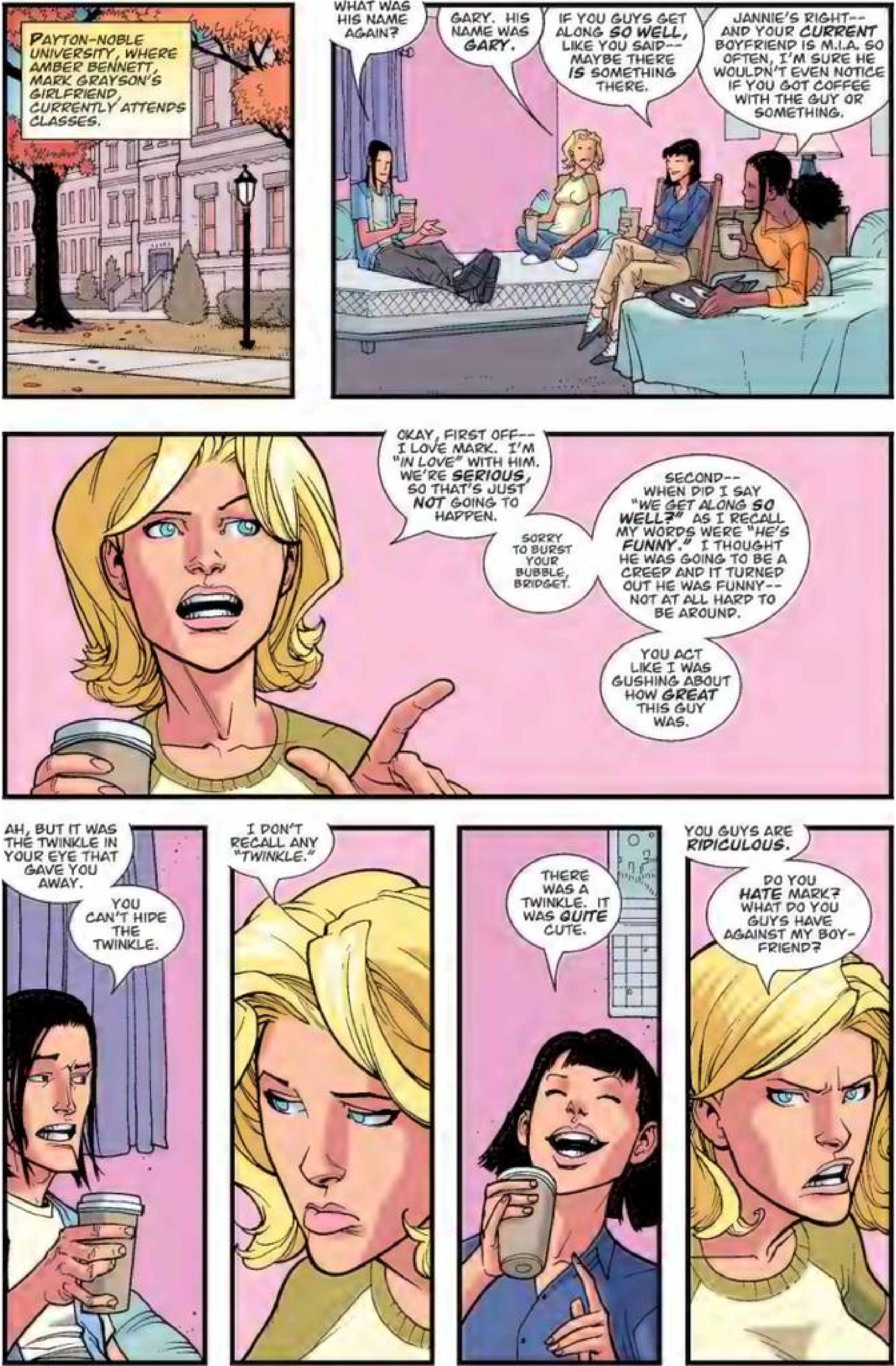

OH!
GOOD MORNING, ALLEN. YOU'RE LOOKING WELL.

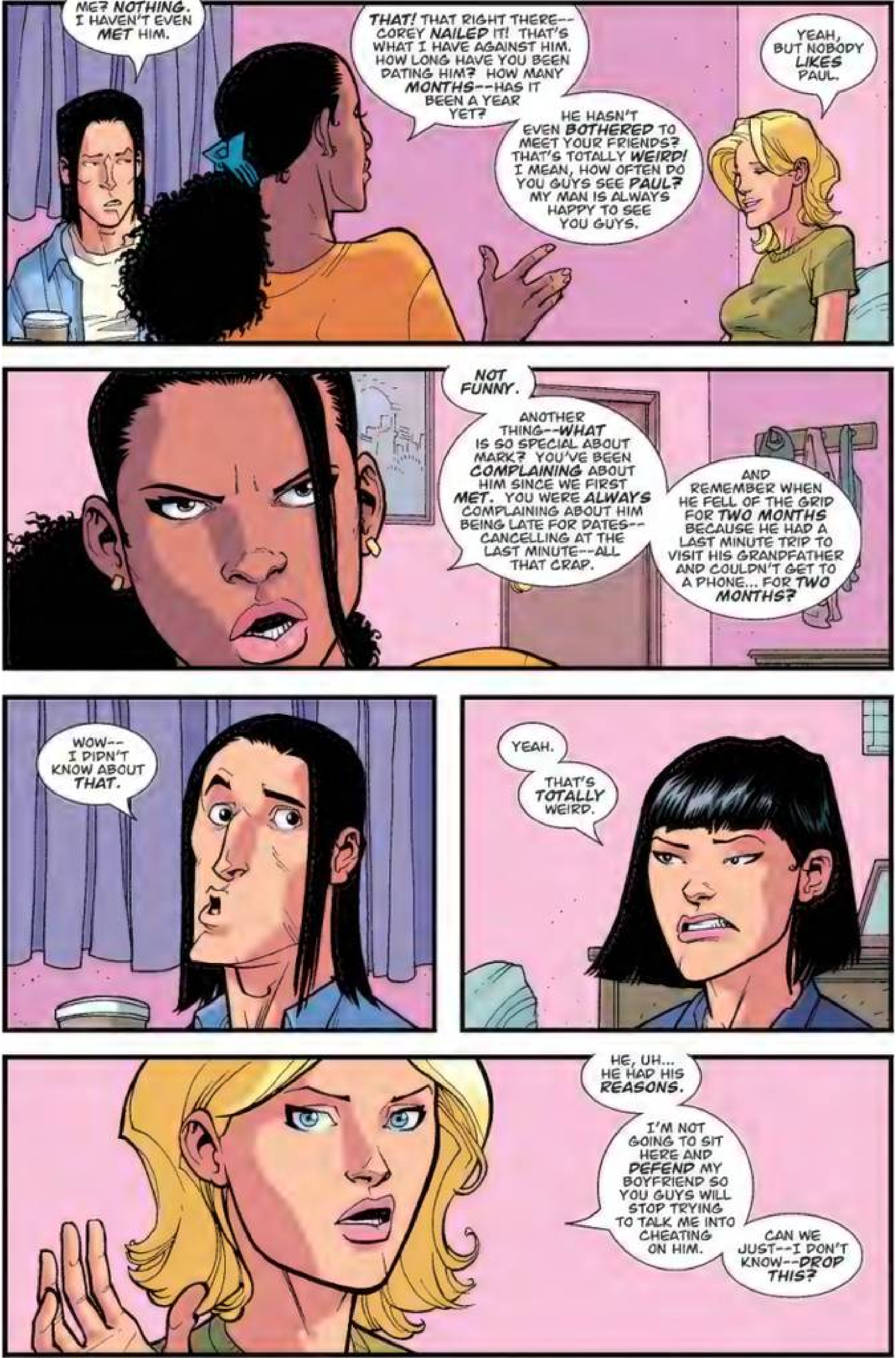

SOMETIME LATER. THE LEADER OF THE COALITION OF PLANETS, THE GREAT THAEDUS HAS ARRIVED TO CHECK IN ON THE NEWLY HEALED ALLEN THE ALIEN.
RIGHT THIS WAY, SIR. HE'S JUST THROUGH THESE DOORS AHEAD.
ALLEN, IT IS GOOD TO SEE YOU IN ONE PIECE, MY FRIEND.
IT IS GOOD TO *BE* IN ONE PIECE, SIR.
YOU ARE FAR *MORE* THAN JUST IN ONE PIECE, ALLEN OF UNOPA. I HAVE BEEN MONITORING YOUR PROGRESS AS YOU HEALED. AS YOU'VE NO DOUBT NOTICED, YOU ARE *STRONGER*, BUT I DO NOT THINK YOU QUITE REALIZE *HOW MUCH* STRONGER YOU ARE.
OUR READINGS ARE *PRELIMINARY* AND IT WILL TAKE FURTHER TESTING TO *CONFIRM* THEM--BUT YOU ARE *NEAR* IF NOT *AT* VILTRUMITE LEVELS OF STRENGTH AND INVULNERABILITY.
IT IS POSSIBLE-- THAT WITH FURTHER TRAINING YOU COULD EVEN *EXCEED* THEM.
HOW CAN YOU MAKE SUCH A COMPARISON? THE COALITION HAS NO *DEFINATIVE* RECORDS ON THE STRENGTH OF A VILTRUMITE.
WHERE ARE YOU GETTING YOUR INFORMATION?
PLEASE GIVE US A MOMENT, NURSE. I NEED TO SPEAK IN PRIVATE WITH ALLEN.
YES, GREAT THAEDUS. AS YOU WISH.
I KNOW THE SPECIFIC STRENGTH LEVELS OF A VILTRUMITE, ALLEN...

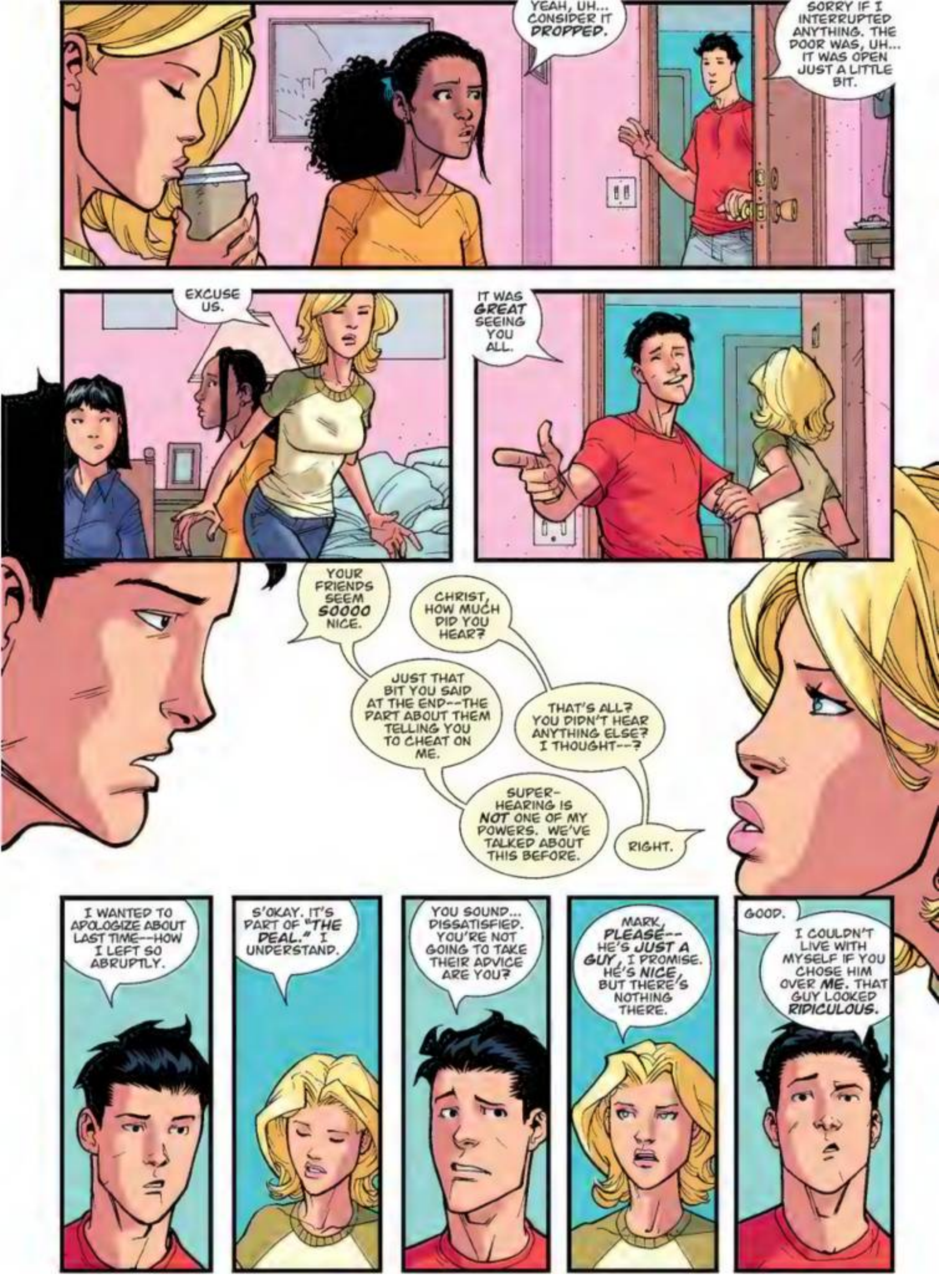

BECAUSE I *AM* A *VILTRUMITE!*
I-- I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO *SAY*.
SAY NOTHING. I KNOW THIS MUST COME AS A SHOCK. I WAS THE *FIRST* TO REBEL AGAINST THE EMPIRE.
I *FOUNDED* THE COALITION OF PLANETS TO DEFEND THE UNIVERSE AGAINST THE EVILS OF MY OWN PEOPLE.
I THOUGHT I WAS AN *ANOMALY*, ONE OF A KIND, THE ONLY VILTRUMITE WITH THE *AUDACITY* TO REBEL-- UNTIL YOU BROUGHT BACK THE STORY OF THIS OTHER ON *EARTH*.
UNTIL YOU TOLD ME OF *INVINCIBLE*.
HE IS THE KEY TO THIS AGE-OLD STRUGGLE BETWEEN THE COALITION AND THE VILTRUM EMPIRE.
WE COULD USE *HIM* TO TURN OTHER VILTRUMITES TO OUR CAUSE--TO WEAKEN THE VILTRUM EMPIRE EVEN *MORE*--TO AT LAST TURN THE TIDE IN OUR FAVOR.
YOU NEED TO PREPARE FOR A RETURN TRIP TO *EARTH*--AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. I WISH TO SPEAK WITH THIS *INVINCIBLE*.

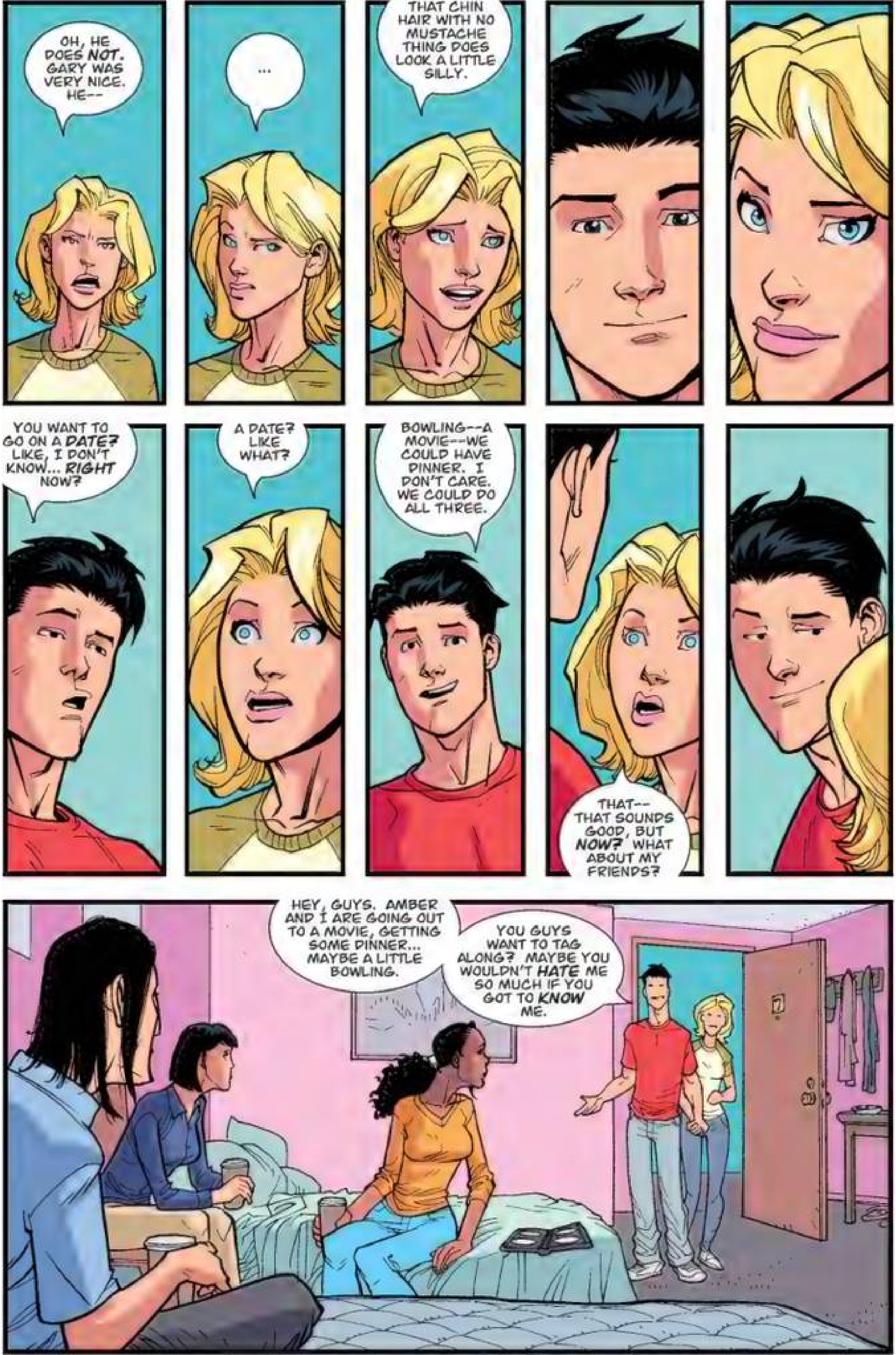

THE PENTAGON.
UNITED STATES PENTAGON
Parking in Rear
WHERE CECIL STEDMAN RUNS THE **GLOBAL DEFENSE AGENCY** WHICH IS CURRENTLY OVERSEEING THE RECOVERY OF RICK SHERIDAN-- FORMALLY A CYBERNETIC **REANIMAN.**
SIGH
RICK SHERIDAN?
YEAH, I-- WHO ARE YOU AND WHAT DO YOU ***WANT?***
I'M DONALD FERGUSON. I'VE COME HERE TO TELL YOU THAT WE'RE DONE WITH YOUR REPAIRS AND YOU'RE FREE TO GO. WE'LL HAVE A TRANSPORT READY TO TAKE YOU BACK TO UPSTATE UNIVERSITY SOON.
OR WE COULD TAKE YOU TO YOUR PARENTS' HOME, IF YOU'D PREFER.
I'D PREFER TO BE DE--
I DON'T KNOW ***WHAT*** I'D PREFER.
DO YOU WANT TO ***TALK*** ABOUT IT? WHAT YOU'VE BEEN THROUGH-- IT'S NOT ***EASY.***
IT WILL HELP IF YOU TALK ABOUT IT.
RIGHT, DUDE-- LIKE YOU'VE GOT ALL THE ANSWERS. HOW COULD YOU ***POSSIBLY*** KNOW WHAT I'M GOING THROUGH RIGHT NOW?!
I KNOW.
I'VE BEEN THROUGH IT, TOO.

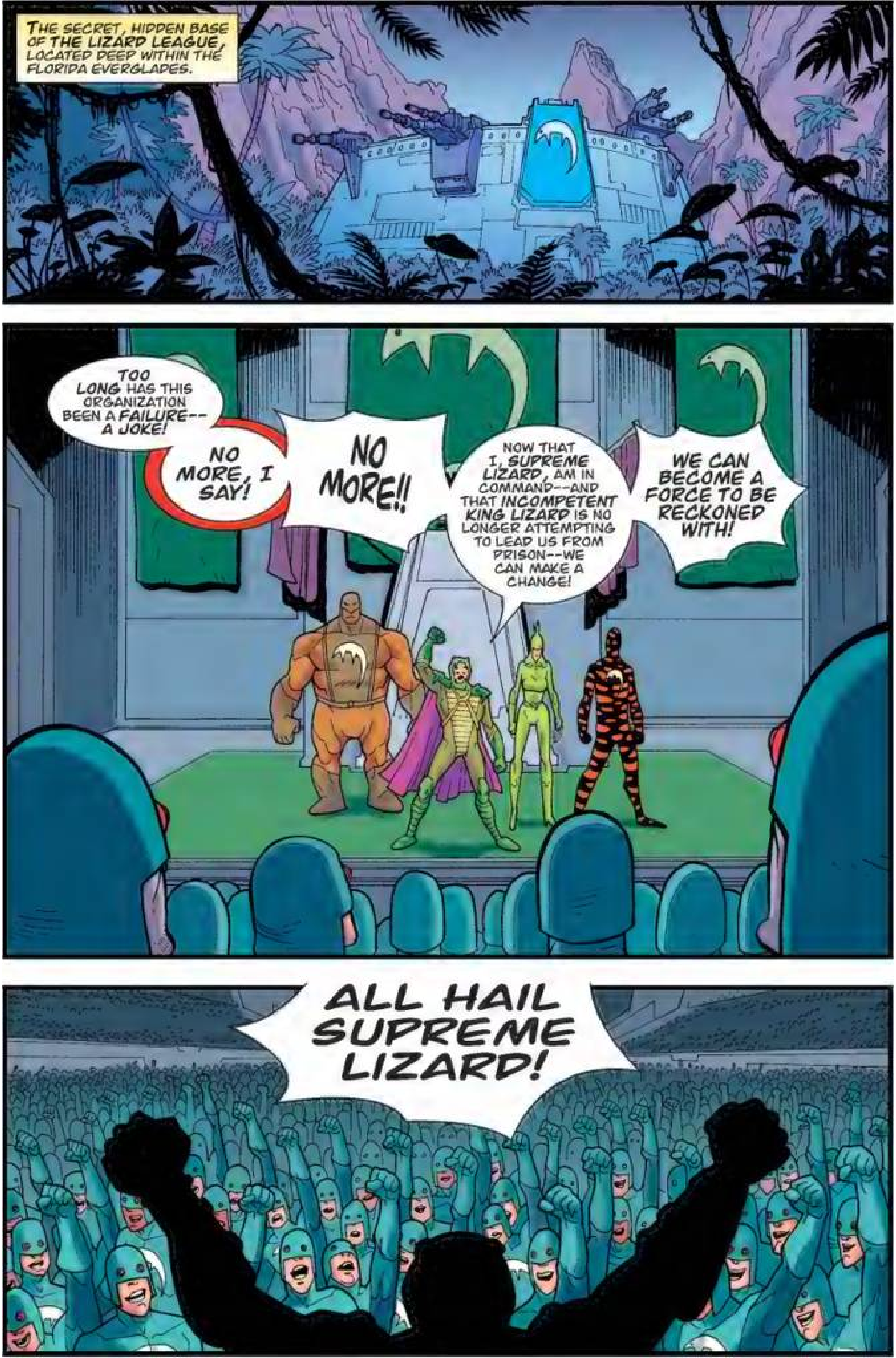

YOU HAVE?! REALLY?!
YOU WERE ABDUCTED BY SOME CRAZY COLLEGE STUDENT?! YOU HAD YOUR WHOLE BODY CUT UP AND REPLACED WITH-- WITH-- MACHINE PARTS?!
YOU GOT TURNED INTO A ROBOT KILLING MACHINE?! YOU WERE CONTROLLED FOR MONTHS--SENT OUT TO-- TO--ABDUCT HOMELESS PEOPLE--NOT EVEN ABLE TO THINK STRAIGHT-- OR REALIZE WHAT YOU WERE DOING?!
THEN WHEN YOU FINALLY DID REALIZE WHAT HAD HAPPENED--YOU LEARN THAT YOU'RE BARELY EVEN HUMAN-- AND SOME GOVERNMENT SPOOKS PUT YOU BACK TOGETHER--MADE YOU LOOK HUMAN--BUT YOU FEEL DIFFERENT-- YOU KNOW YOU'RE NOT--
AND YOU JUST CAN'T STOP THINKING ABOUT IT--IT-- IT EATS YOU UP INSIDE?!
MY STORY IS JUST A TINY BIT DIFFERENT, BUT YEAH--I'VE BEEN THROUGH ALL OF THAT.
I USED TO BE A FIELD AGENT. WHILE ON A MISSION--I DIED. MY BODY WAS RECOVERED. PARTS OF MY BRAIN WERE PRESERVED--USED TO POWER THIS BODY, WHICH IS NINETY-EIGHT PERCENT MACHINE.
I DIDN'T HAVE ACCESS TO MY EMOTIONS FOR SOME TIME--AND MY MEMORIES WERE DOCTORED SO I DIDN'T REMEMBER MY DEATH--I DIDN'T EVEN KNOW I WAS AN ANDROID FOR YEARS.
I LOST MY WIFE OVER IT.
OH, MAN--I'M SORRY.
WE'VE RECONCILED SINCE THE SPLIT-- BUT YEAH, I'VE BEEN THROUGH SOME ROUGH TIMES.
AND I HAD TO DO IT ALONE.
IT'S NOT THE END OF THE WORLD. THE THINGS WE'VE DONE TO YOU--THE REPAIRS-- NOBODY WILL EVEN KNOW YOU'RE NOT NORMAL UNLESS YOU TELL THEM.
YOUR GIRLFRIEND-- WIFE, YOUR FAMILY-- NOBODY.
YOU CAN STILL LIVE A NORMAL LIFE IF YOU WANT TO.
THANK YOU-- YOU--WHAT YOU'RE SAYING-- YOU'VE HELPED ME.
MAYBE I WOULD LIKE TO TALK...

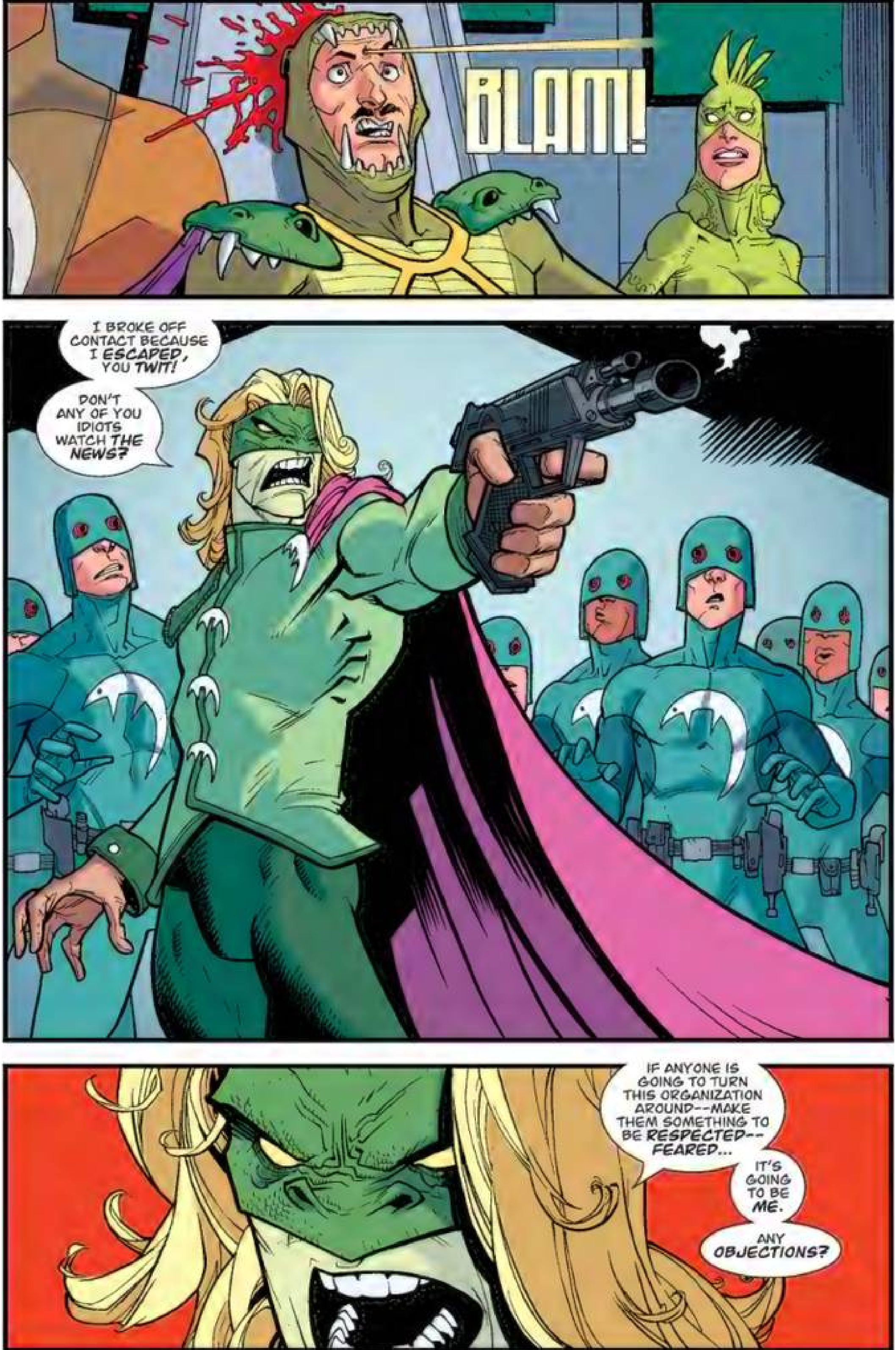

PAYTON-NOBLE UNIVERSITY, WHERE AMBER BENNETT, MARK GRAYSON'S GIRLFRIEND, CURRENTLY ATTENDS CLASSES.
WHAT WAS HIS NAME AGAIN?
GARY. HIS NAME WAS GARY.
IF YOU GUYS GET ALONG SO WELL, LIKE YOU SAID-- MAYBE THERE IS SOMETHING THERE.
JANNIE'S RIGHT-- AND YOUR CURRENT BOYFRIEND IS M.I.A. SO OFTEN, I'M SURE HE WOULDN'T EVEN NOTICE IF YOU GOT COFFEE WITH THE GUY OR SOMETHING.
OKAY, FIRST OFF-- I LOVE MARK. I'M "IN LOVE" WITH HIM. WE'RE SERIOUS, SO THAT'S JUST NOT GOING TO HAPPEN.
SORRY TO BURST YOUR BUBBLE, BRIDGET.
SECOND-- WHEN DID I SAY "WE GET ALONG SO WELL?" AS I RECALL MY WORDS WERE "HE'S FUNNY." I THOUGHT HE WAS GOING TO BE A CREEP AND IT TURNED OUT HE WAS FUNNY-- NOT AT ALL HARD TO BE AROUND.
YOU ACT LIKE I WAS GUSHING ABOUT HOW GREAT THIS GUY WAS.
AH, BUT IT WAS THE TWINKLE IN YOUR EYE THAT GAVE YOU AWAY.
YOU CAN'T HIDE THE TWINKLE.
I DON'T RECALL ANY "TWINKLE."
THERE WAS A TWINKLE. IT WAS QUITE CUTE.
YOU GUYS ARE RIDICULOUS.
DO YOU HATE MARK? WHAT DO YOU GUYS HAVE AGAINST MY BOY-FRIEND?

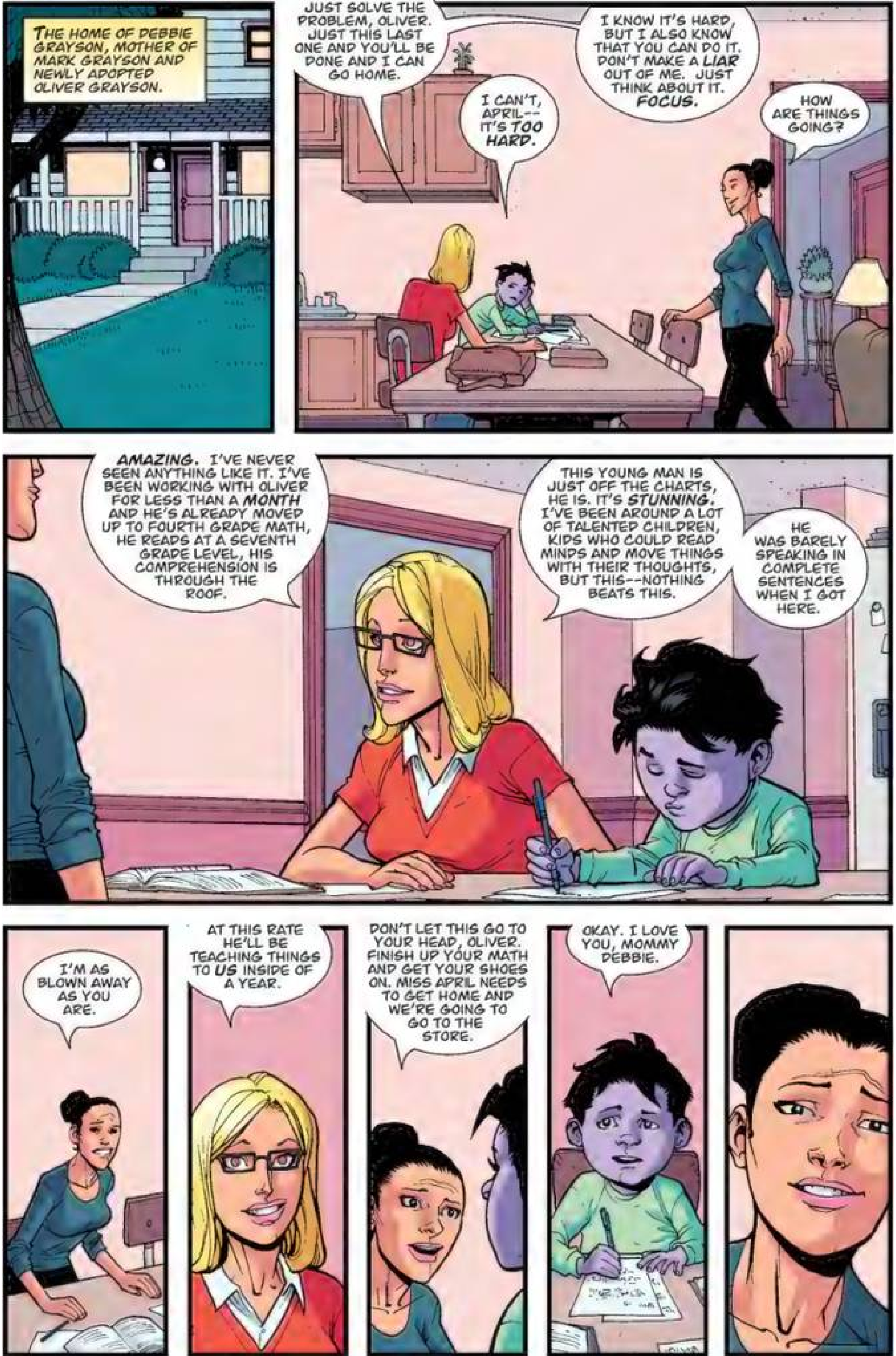

ME? NOTHING. I HAVEN'T EVEN MET HIM.
THAT! THAT RIGHT THERE--COREY NAILED IT! THAT'S WHAT I HAVE AGAINST HIM. HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN DATING HIM? HOW MANY MONTHS--HAS IT BEEN A YEAR YET?
HE HASN'T EVEN BOTHERED TO MEET YOUR FRIENDS? THAT'S TOTALLY WEIRD! I MEAN, HOW OFTEN DO YOU GUYS SEE PAUL? MY MAN IS ALWAYS HAPPY TO SEE YOU GUYS.
YEAH, BUT NOBODY LIKES PAUL.
NOT FUNNY.
ANOTHER THING--WHAT IS SO SPECIAL ABOUT MARK? YOU'VE BEEN COMPLAINING ABOUT HIM SINCE WE FIRST MET. YOU WERE ALWAYS COMPLAINING ABOUT HIM BEING LATE FOR DATES--CANCELLING AT THE LAST MINUTE--ALL THAT CRAP.
AND REMEMBER WHEN HE FELL OF THE GRID FOR TWO MONTHS BECAUSE HE HAD A LAST MINUTE TRIP TO VISIT HIS GRANDFATHER AND COULDN'T GET TO A PHONE... FOR TWO MONTHS?
WOW-- I DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT THAT.
YEAH.
THAT'S TOTALLY WEIRD.
HE, UH... HE HAD HIS REASONS.
I'M NOT GOING TO SIT HERE AND DEFEND MY BOYFRIEND SO YOU GUYS WILL STOP TRYING TO TALK ME INTO CHEATING ON HIM.
CAN WE JUST--I DON'T KNOW--DROP THIS?

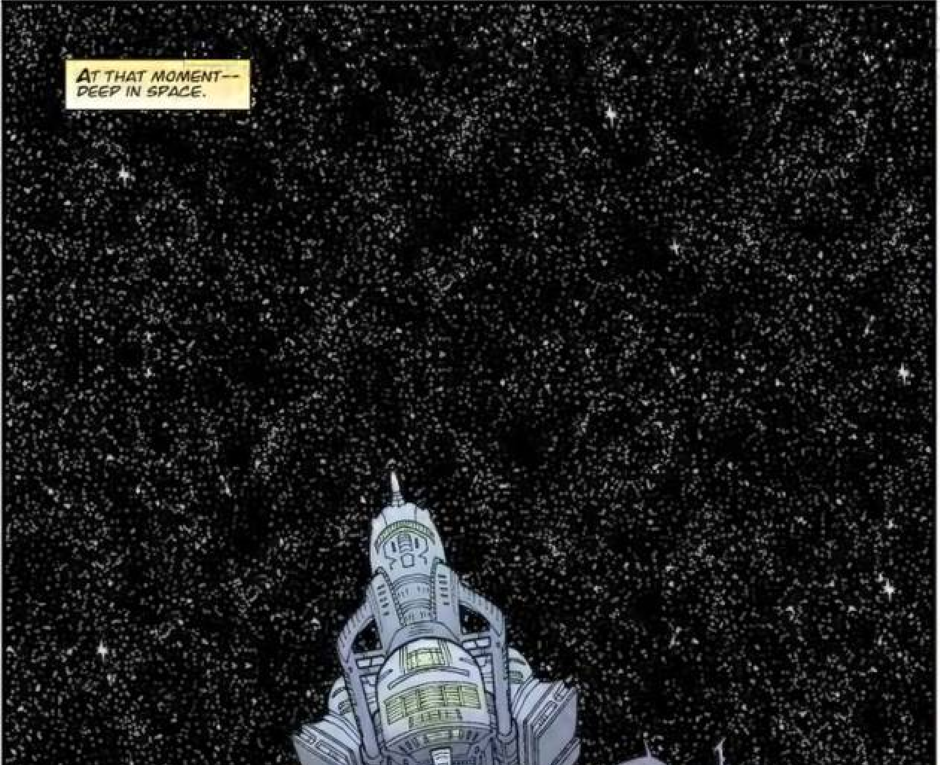

YEAH, UH... CONSIDER IT DROPPED.
SORRY IF I INTERRUPTED ANYTHING. THE DOOR WAS, UH... IT WAS OPEN JUST A LITTLE BIT.
EXCUSE US.
IT WAS GREAT SEEING YOU ALL.
YOUR FRIENDS SEEM SOOOO NICE.
CHRIST, HOW MUCH DID YOU HEAR?
JUST THAT BIT YOU SAID AT THE END--THE PART ABOUT THEM TELLING YOU TO CHEAT ON ME.
THAT'S ALL? YOU DIDN'T HEAR ANYTHING ELSE? I THOUGHT--?
SUPER-HEARING IS NOT ONE OF MY POWERS. WE'VE TALKED ABOUT THIS BEFORE.
RIGHT.
I WANTED TO APOLOGIZE ABOUT LAST TIME--HOW I LEFT SO ABRUPTLY.
S'OKAY. IT'S PART OF "THE DEAL." I UNDERSTAND.
YOU SOUND... DISSATISFIED. YOU'RE NOT GOING TO TAKE THEIR ADVICE ARE YOU?
MARK, PLEASE-- HE'S JUST A GUY, I PROMISE. HE'S NICE, BUT THERE'S NOTHING THERE.
GOOD.
I COULDN'T LIVE WITH MYSELF IF YOU CHOSE HIM OVER ME. THAT GUY LOOKED RIDICULOUS.

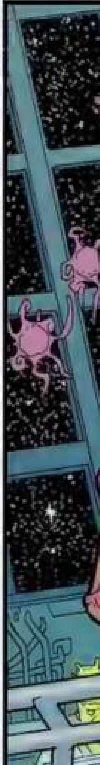

OH, HE DOES NOT. GARY WAS VERY NICE. HE--
...
THAT CHIN HAIR WITH NO MUSTACHE THING DOES LOOK A LITTLE SILLY.
YOU WANT TO GO ON A DATE? LIKE, I DON'T KNOW... RIGHT NOW?
A DATE? LIKE WHAT?
BOWLING--A MOVIE--WE COULD HAVE DINNER. I DON'T CARE. WE COULD DO ALL THREE.
THAT-- THAT SOUNDS GOOD, BUT NOW? WHAT ABOUT MY FRIENDS?
HEY, GUYS. AMBER AND I ARE GOING OUT TO A MOVIE, GETTING SOME DINNER... MAYBE A LITTLE BOWLING.
YOU GUYS WANT TO TAG ALONG? MAYBE YOU WOULDN'T HATE ME SO MUCH IF YOU GOT TO KNOW ME.

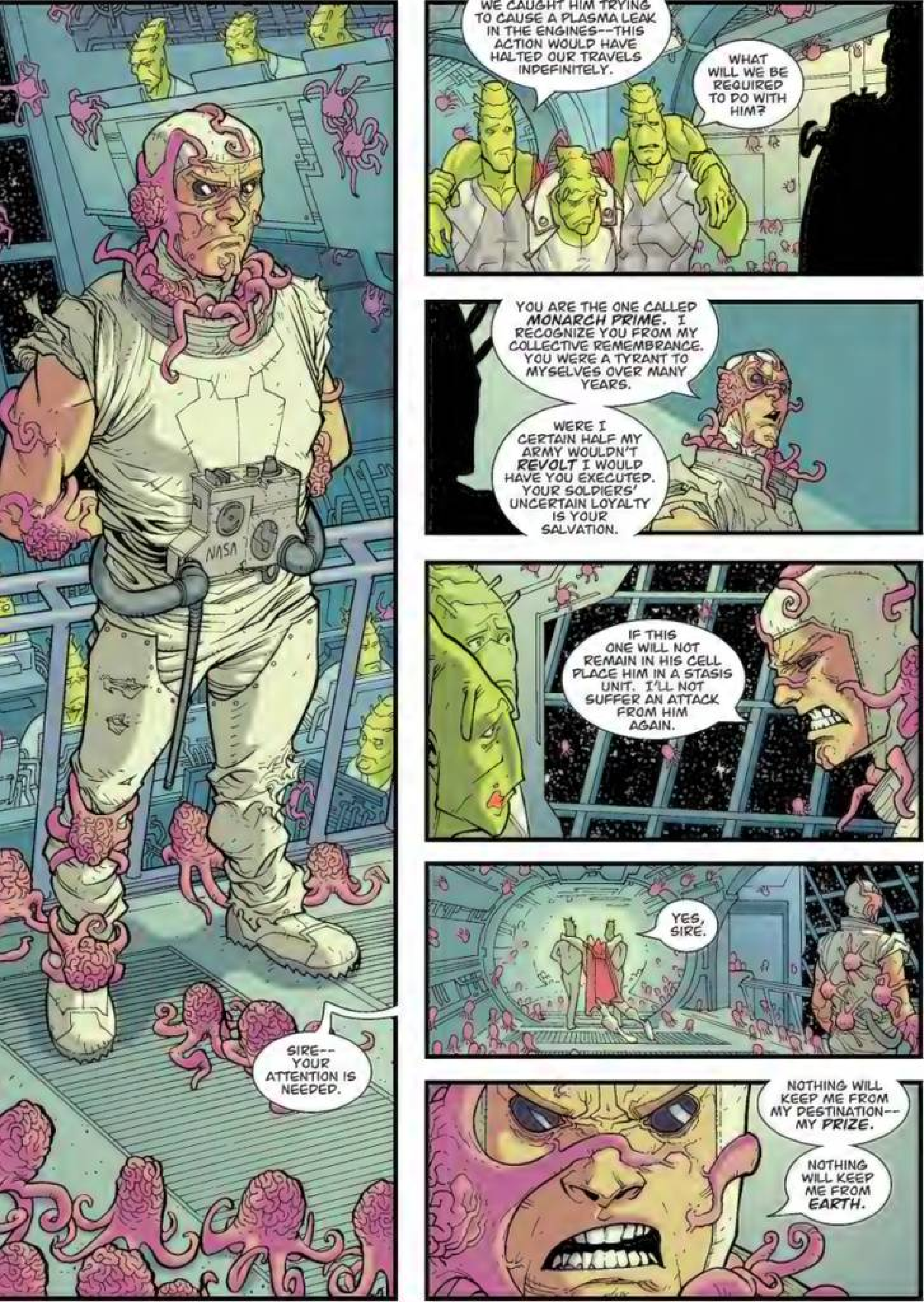

THE SECRET, HIDDEN BASE OF THE LIZARD LEAGUE, LOCATED DEEP WITHIN THE FLORIDA EVERGLADES.
TOO LONG HAS THIS ORGANIZATION BEEN A FAILURE-- A JOKE!
NO MORE, I SAY!
NO MORE!!
NOW THAT I, SUPREME LIZARD, AM IN COMMAND--AND THAT INCOMPETENT KING LIZARD IS NO LONGER ATTEMPTING TO LEAD US FROM PRISON--WE CAN MAKE A CHANGE!
WE CAN BECOME A FORCE TO BE RECKONED WITH!
ALL HAIL SUPREME LIZARD!

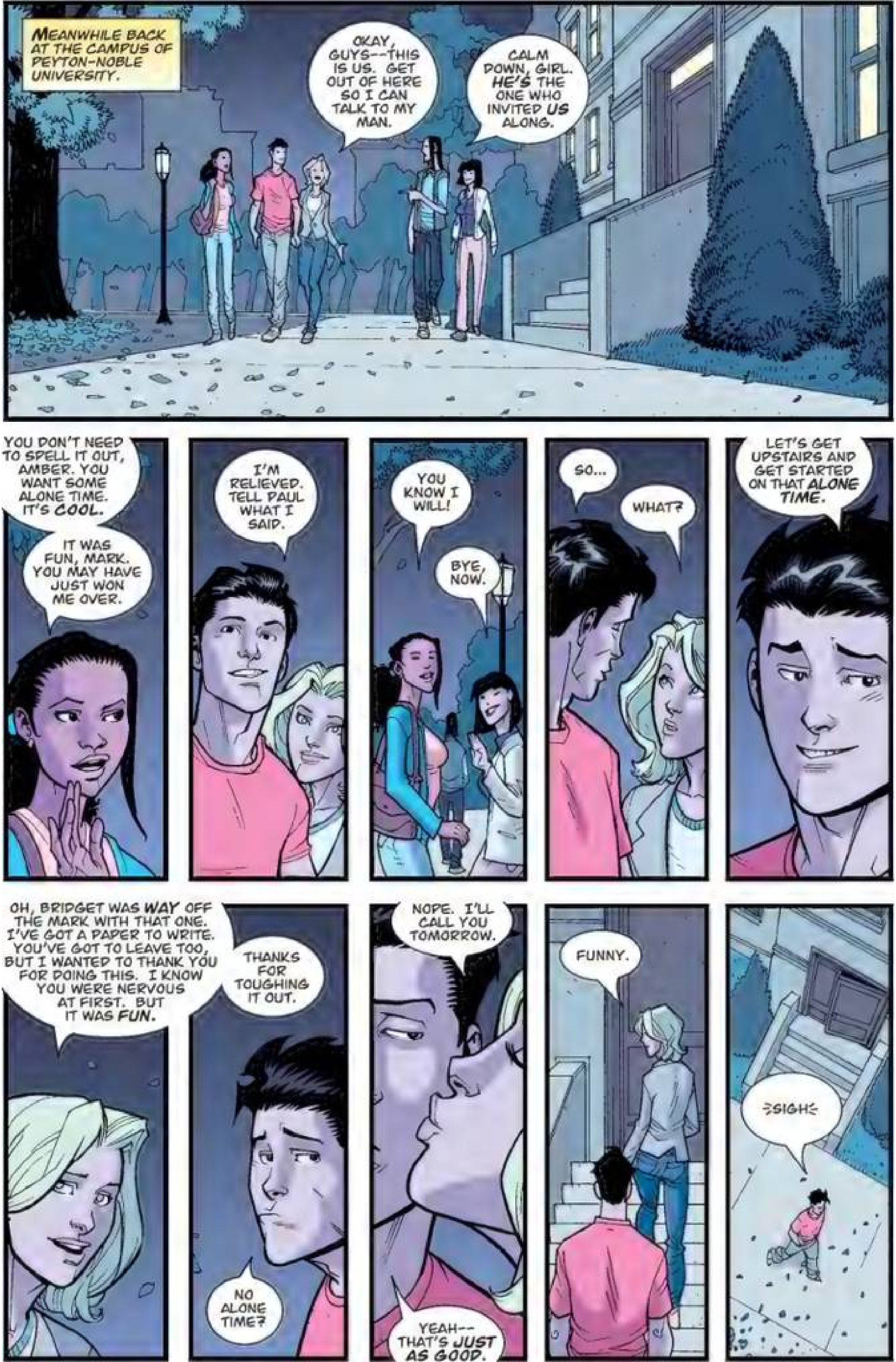

BLAM!
I BROKE OFF CONTACT BECAUSE I ESCAPED, YOU TWIT!
DON'T ANY OF YOU IDIOTS WATCH THE NEWS?
IF ANYONE IS GOING TO TURN THIS ORGANIZATION AROUND--MAKE THEM SOMETHING TO BE RESPECTED--FEARED...
IT'S GOING TO BE ME.
ANY OBJECTIONS?

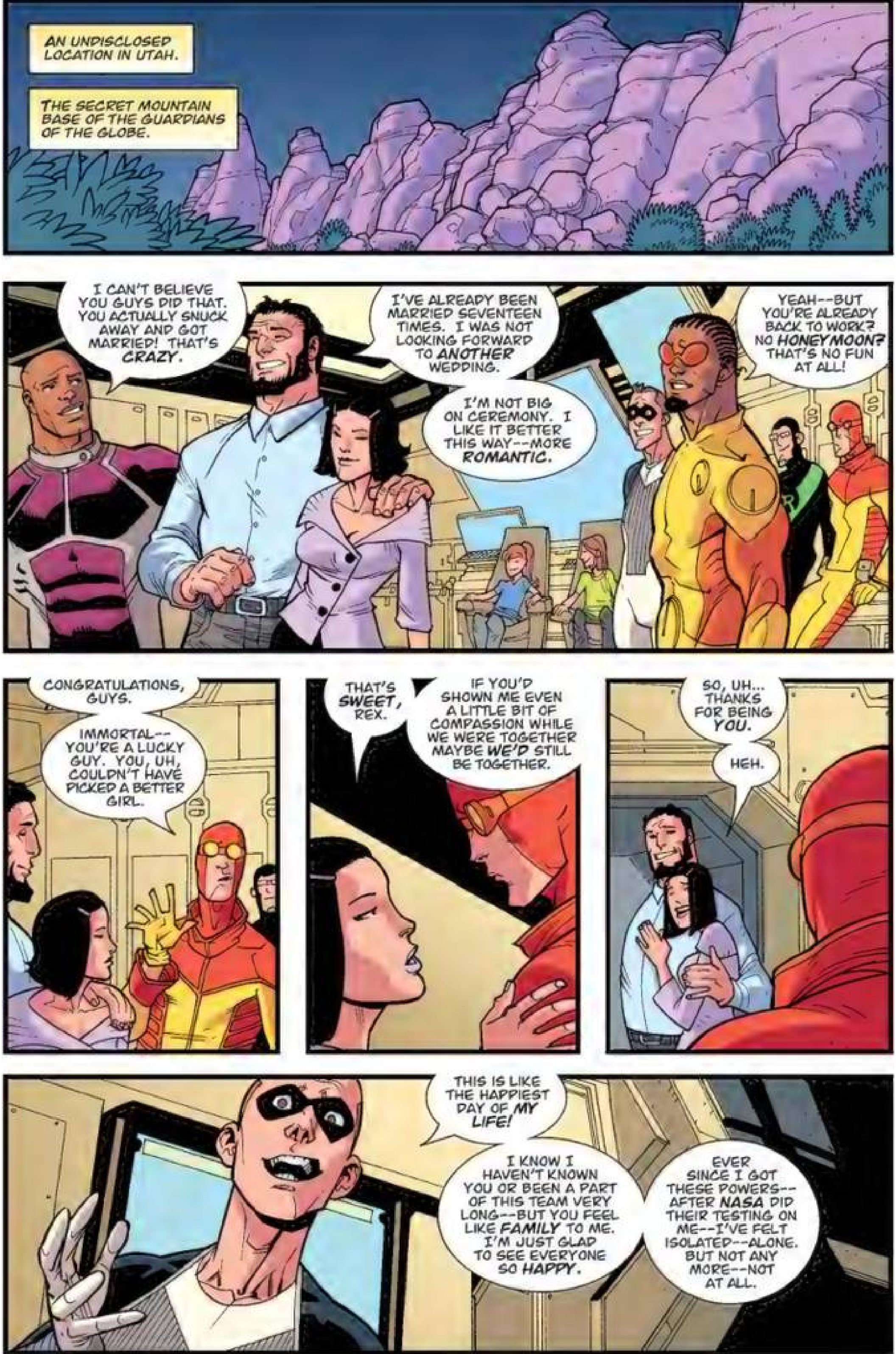

THE HOME OF DEBBIE GRAYSON, MOTHER OF MARK GRAYSON AND NEWLY ADOPTED OLIVER GRAYSON.
JUST SOLVE THE PROBLEM, OLIVER. JUST THIS LAST ONE AND YOU'LL BE DONE AND I CAN GO HOME.
I CAN'T, APRIL-- IT'S TOO HARD.
I KNOW IT'S HARD, BUT I ALSO KNOW THAT YOU CAN DO IT. DON'T MAKE A LIAR OUT OF ME. JUST THINK ABOUT IT. FOCUS.
HOW ARE THINGS GOING?
AMAZING. I'VE NEVER SEEN ANYTHING LIKE IT. I'VE BEEN WORKING WITH OLIVER FOR LESS THAN A MONTH AND HE'S ALREADY MOVED UP TO FOURTH GRADE MATH, HE READS AT A SEVENTH GRADE LEVEL, HIS COMPREHENSION IS THROUGH THE ROOF.
THIS YOUNG MAN IS JUST OFF THE CHARTS, HE IS. IT'S STUNNING. I'VE BEEN AROUND A LOT OF TALENTED CHILDREN, KIDS WHO COULD READ MINDS AND MOVE THINGS WITH THEIR THOUGHTS, BUT THIS--NOTHING BEATS THIS.
HE WAS BARELY SPEAKING IN COMPLETE SENTENCES WHEN I GOT HERE.
I'M AS BLOWN AWAY AS YOU ARE.
AT THIS RATE HE'LL BE TEACHING THINGS TO US INSIDE OF A YEAR.
DON'T LET THIS GO TO YOUR HEAD, OLIVER. FINISH UP YOUR MATH AND GET YOUR SHOES ON. MISS APRIL NEEDS TO GET HOME AND WE'RE GOING TO GO TO THE STORE.
OKAY. I LOVE YOU, MOMMY DEBBIE.

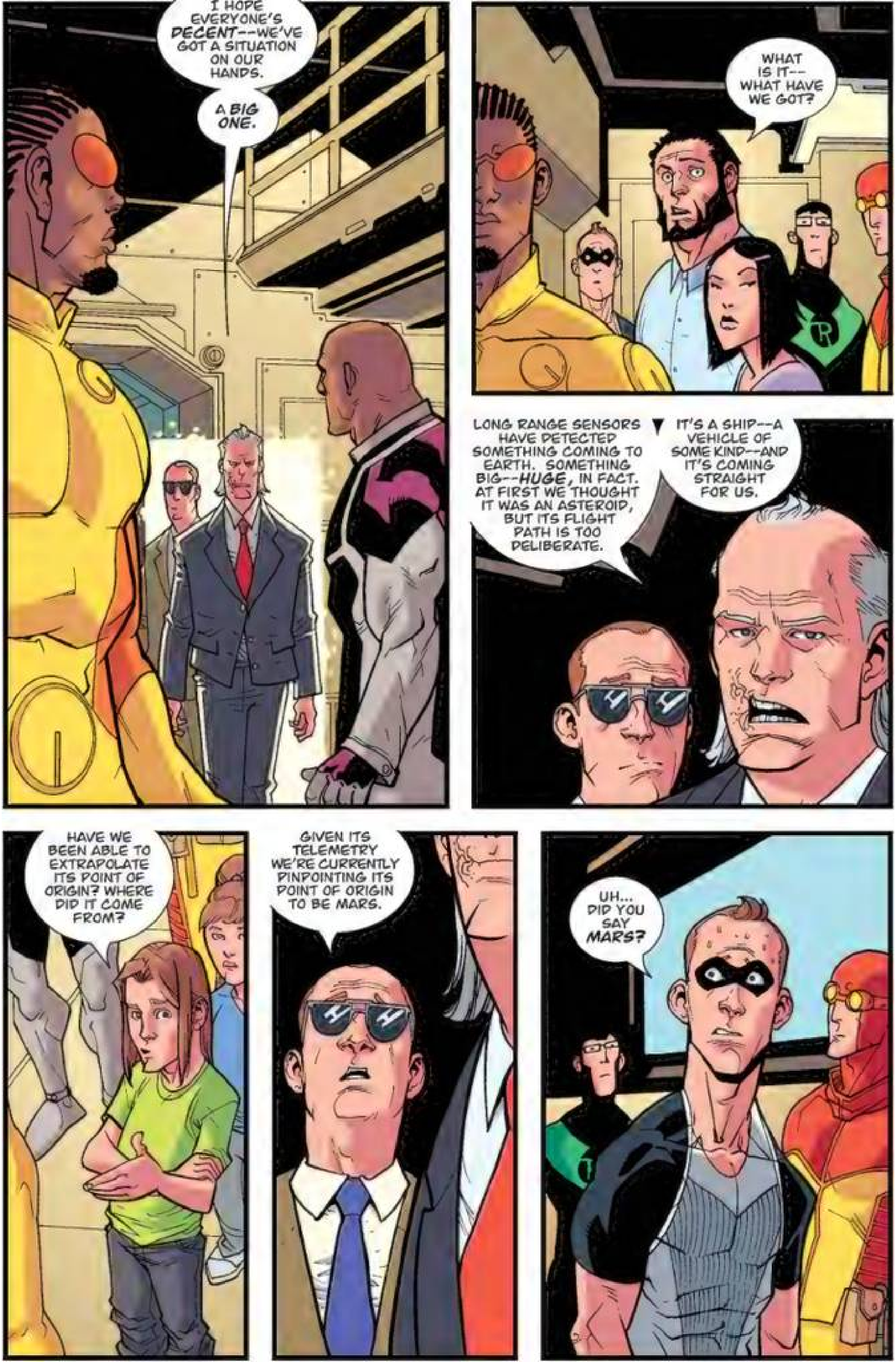

AT THAT MOMENT— DEEP IN SPACE.

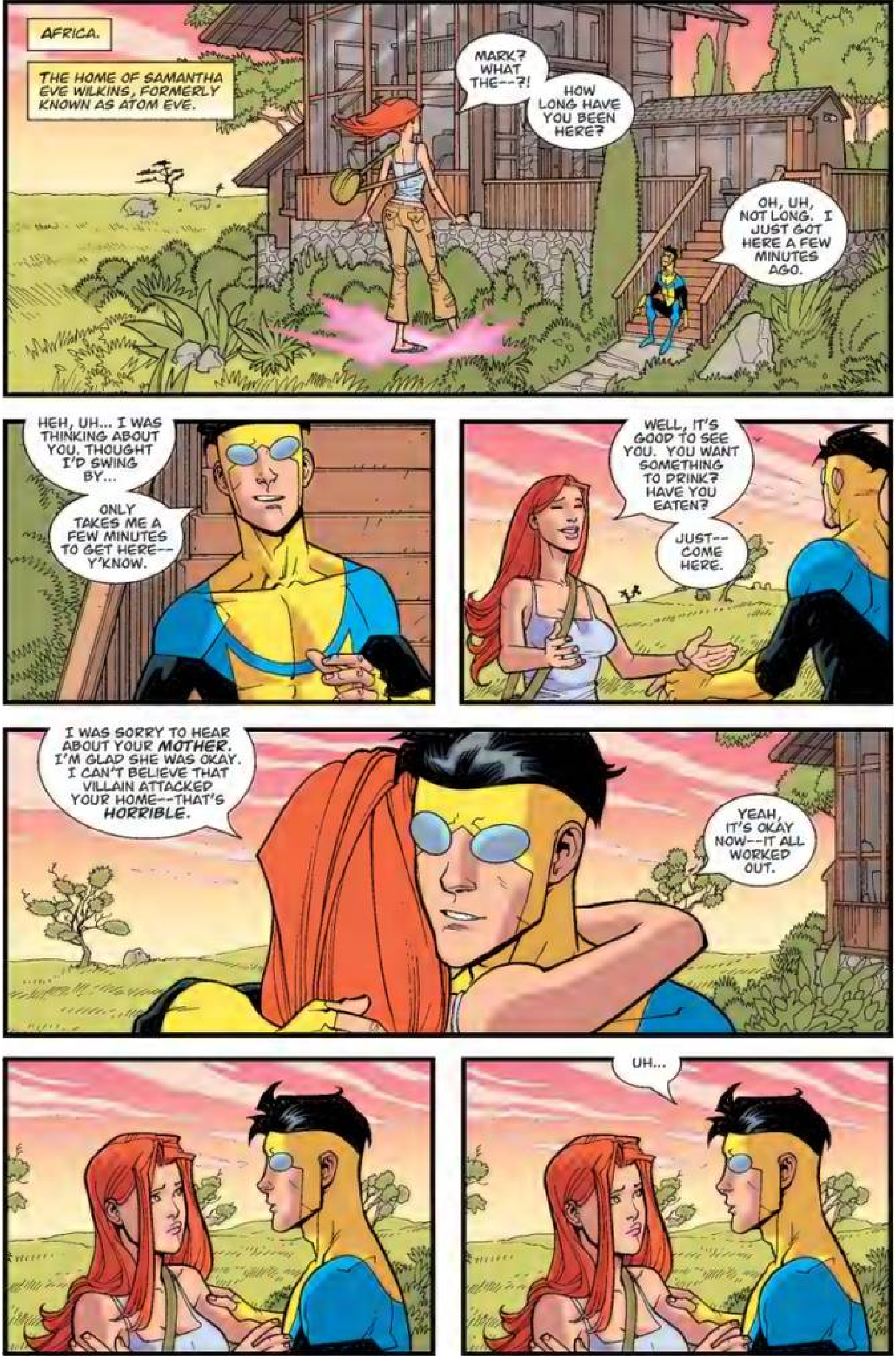



SIRE-- YOUR ATTENTION IS NEEDED.
WE CAUGHT HIM TRYING TO CAUSE A PLASMA LEAK IN THE ENGINES--THIS ACTION WOULD HAVE HALTED OUR TRAVELS INDEFINITELY.
WHAT WILL WE BE REQUIRED TO DO WITH HIM?
YOU ARE THE ONE CALLED MONARCH PRIME. I RECOGNIZE YOU FROM MY COLLECTIVE REMEMBRANCE. YOU WERE A TYRANT TO MYSELVES OVER MANY YEARS.
WERE I CERTAIN HALF MY ARMY WOULDN'T REVOLT I WOULD HAVE YOU EXECUTED. YOUR SOLDIERS' UNCERTAIN LOYALTY IS YOUR SALVATION.
IF THIS ONE WILL NOT REMAIN IN HIS CELL PLACE HIM IN A STASIS UNIT. I'LL NOT SUFFER AN ATTACK FROM HIM AGAIN.
YES, SIRE.
NOTHING WILL KEEP ME FROM MY DESTINATION-- MY PRIZE.
NOTHING WILL KEEP ME FROM EARTH.
NASA

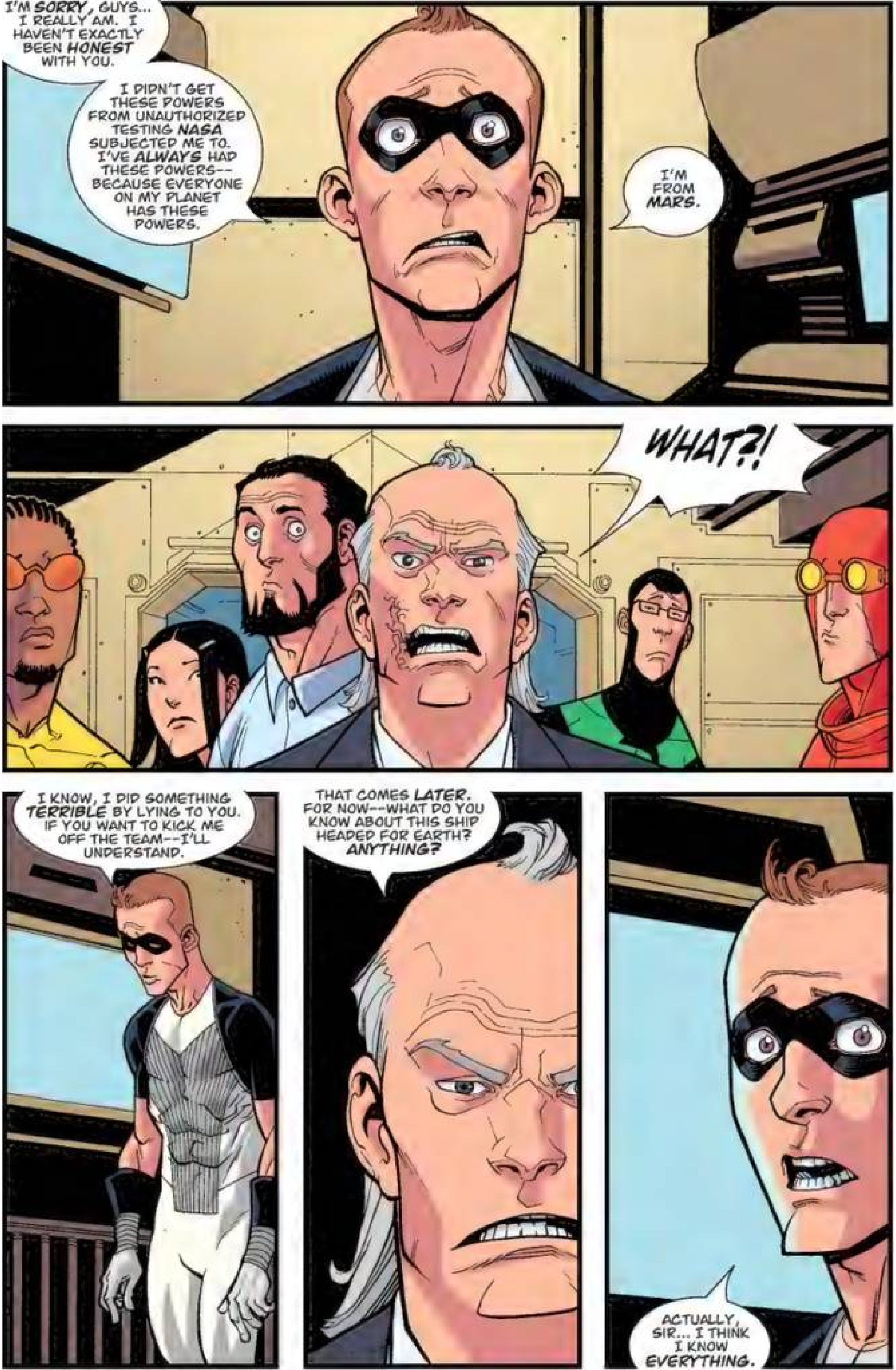

MEANWHILE BACK AT THE CAMPUS OF PEYTON-NOBLE UNIVERSITY.
OKAY, GUYS--THIS IS US. GET OUT OF HERE SO I CAN TALK TO MY MAN.
CALM DOWN, GIRL. HE'S THE ONE WHO INVITED US ALONG.
YOU DON'T NEED TO SPELL IT OUT, AMBER. YOU WANT SOME ALONE TIME. IT'S COOL.
IT WAS FUN, MARK. YOU MAY HAVE JUST WON ME OVER.
I'M RELIEVED. TELL PAUL WHAT I SAID.
YOU KNOW I WILL!
BYE, NOW.
SO...
WHAT?
LET'S GET UPSTAIRS AND GET STARTED ON THAT ALONE TIME.
OH, BRIDGET WAS WAY OFF THE MARK WITH THAT ONE. I'VE GOT A PAPER TO WRITE. YOU'VE GOT TO LEAVE TOO, BUT I WANTED TO THANK YOU FOR DOING THIS. I KNOW YOU WERE NERVOUS AT FIRST. BUT IT WAS FUN.
THANKS FOR TOUGHING IT OUT.
NO ALONE TIME?
NOPE. I'LL CALL YOU TOMORROW.
YEAH-- THAT'S JUST AS GOOD.
FUNNY.
SIGH

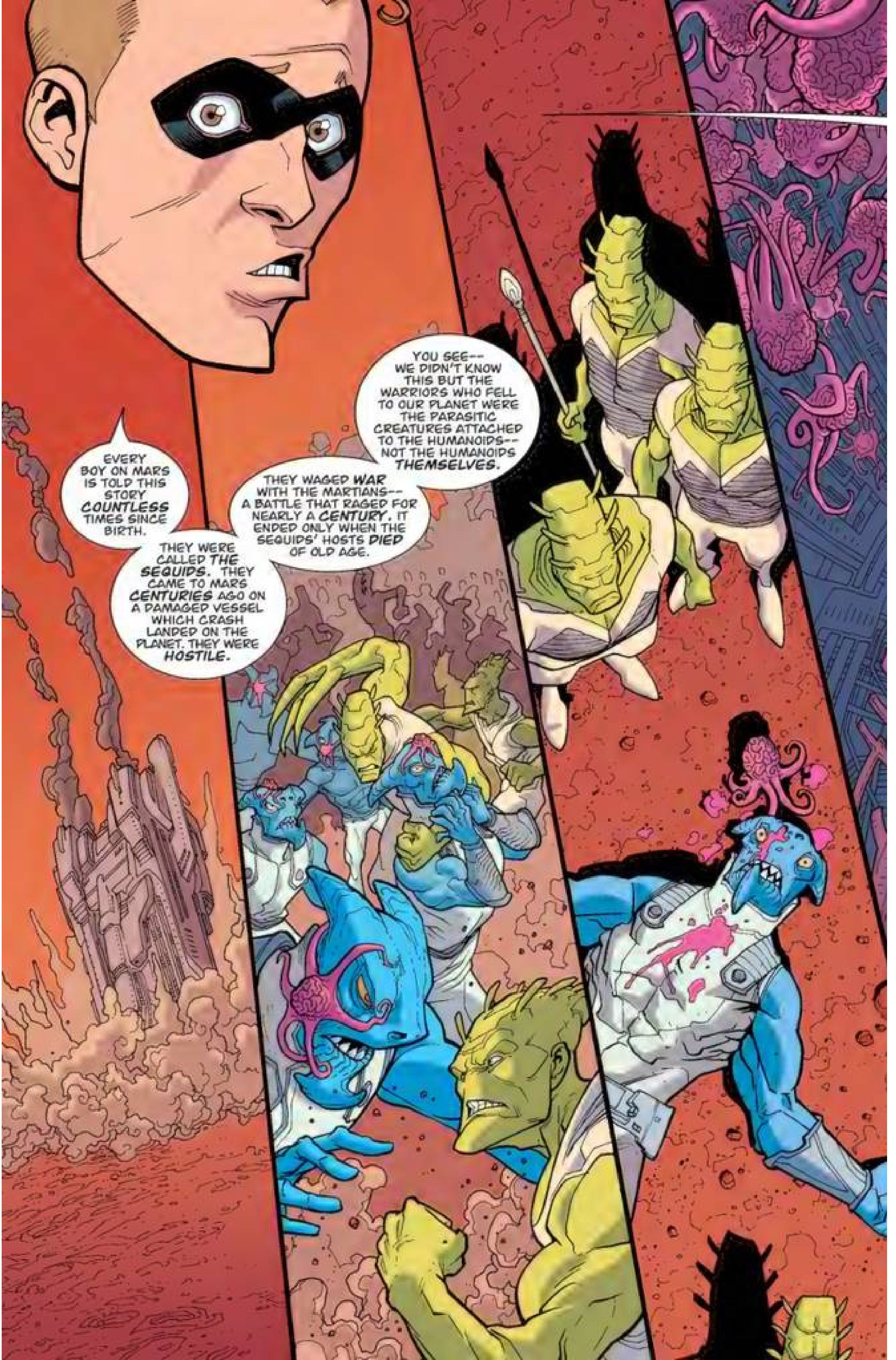

AN UNDISCLOSED LOCATION IN UTAH.
THE SECRET MOUNTAIN BASE OF THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE.
I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU GUYS DID THAT. YOU ACTUALLY SNUCK AWAY AND GOT MARRIED! THAT'S CRAZY.
I'VE ALREADY BEEN MARRIED SEVENTEEN TIMES. I WAS NOT LOOKING FORWARD TO ANOTHER WEDDING.
I'M NOT BIG ON CEREMONY. I LIKE IT BETTER THIS WAY--MORE ROMANTIC.
YEAH--BUT YOU'RE ALREADY BACK TO WORK? NO HONEYMOON? THAT'S NO FUN AT ALL!
CONGRATULATIONS, GUYS.
IMMORTAL-- YOU'RE A LUCKY GUY. YOU, UH, COULDN'T HAVE PICKED A BETTER GIRL.
THAT'S SWEET, REX.
IF YOU'D SHOWN ME EVEN A LITTLE BIT OF COMPASSION WHILE WE WERE TOGETHER MAYBE WE'D STILL BE TOGETHER.
SO, UH... THANKS FOR BEING YOU.
HEH.
THIS IS LIKE THE HAPPIEST DAY OF MY LIFE!
I KNOW I HAVEN'T KNOWN YOU OR BEEN A PART OF THIS TEAM VERY LONG--BUT YOU FEEL LIKE FAMILY TO ME. I'M JUST GLAD TO SEE EVERYONE SO HAPPY.
EVER SINCE I GOT THESE POWERS-- AFTER NASA DID THEIR TESTING ON ME--I'VE FELT ISOLATED--ALONE. BUT NOT ANY MORE--NOT AT ALL.

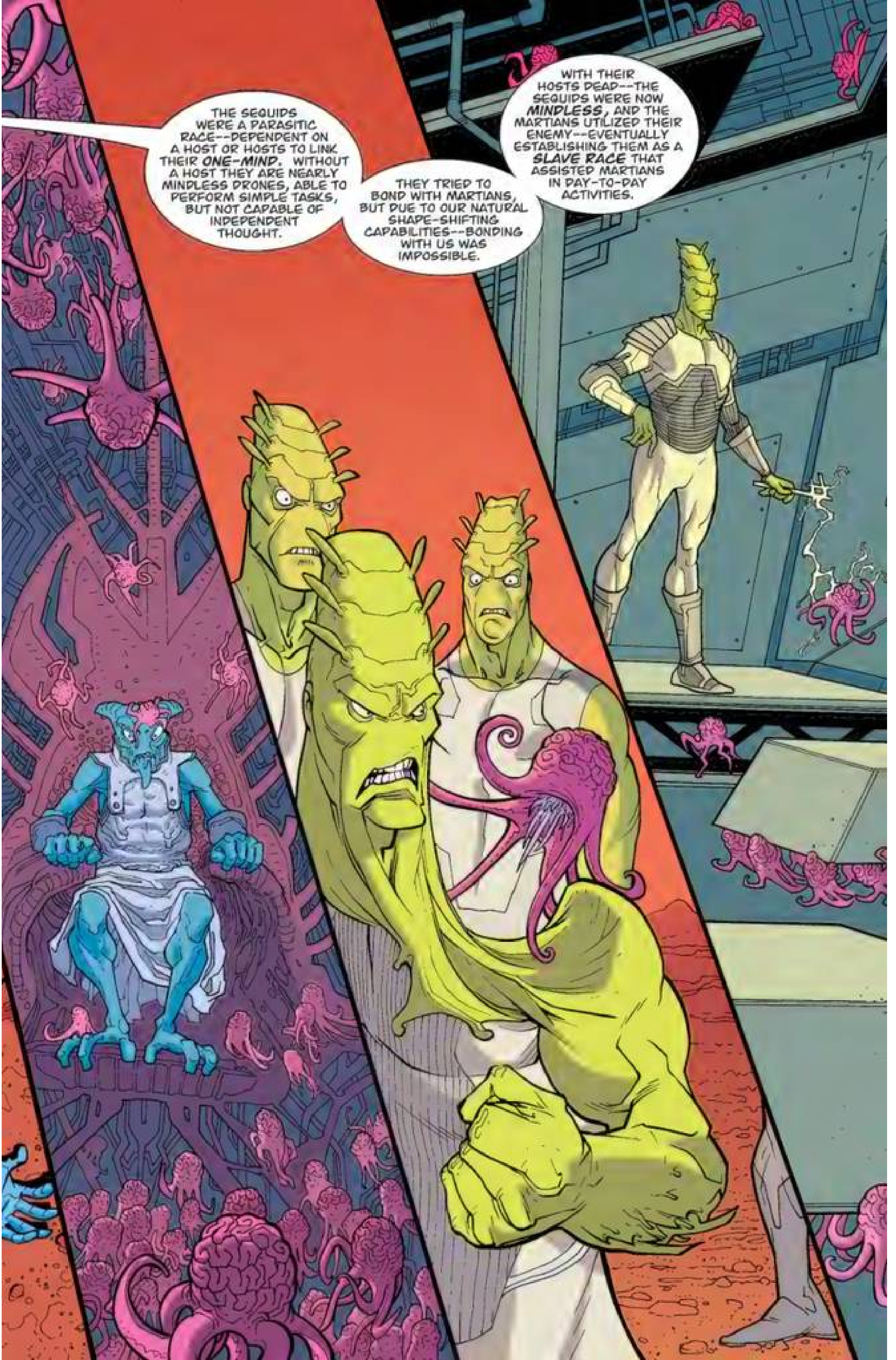

I HOPE EVERYONE'S *DECENT*--WE'VE GOT A SITUATION ON OUR HANDS.
A *BIG ONE.*
WHAT IS IT-- WHAT HAVE WE GOT?
LONG RANGE SENSORS HAVE DETECTED SOMETHING COMING TO EARTH. SOMETHING BIG--*HUGE*, IN FACT. AT FIRST WE THOUGHT IT WAS AN ASTEROID, BUT ITS FLIGHT PATH IS TOO DELIBERATE.
IT'S A SHIP--A VEHICLE OF SOME KIND--AND IT'S COMING STRAIGHT FOR US.
HAVE WE BEEN ABLE TO EXTRAPOLATE ITS POINT OF ORIGIN? WHERE DID IT COME FROM?
GIVEN ITS TELEMETRY WE'RE CURRENTLY PINPOINTING ITS POINT OF ORIGIN TO BE MARS.
UH... DID YOU SAY *MARS?*

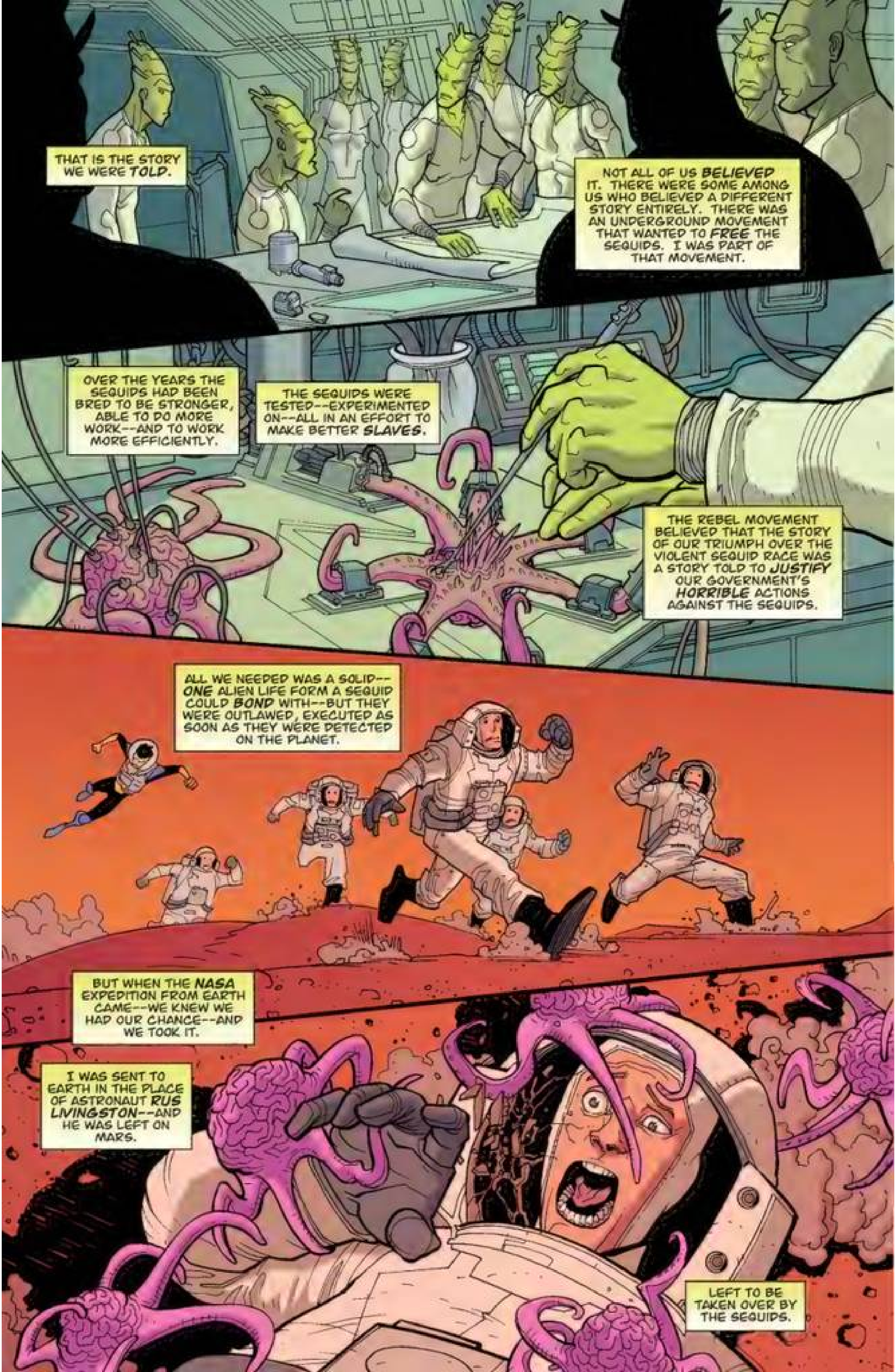

AFRICA.
THE HOME OF SAMANTHA EVE WILKINS, FORMERLY KNOWN AS ATOM EVE.
MARK? WHAT THE--?!
HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN HERE?
OH, UH, NOT LONG. I JUST GOT HERE A FEW MINUTES AGO.
HEH, UH... I WAS THINKING ABOUT YOU. THOUGHT I'D SWING BY...
ONLY TAKES ME A FEW MINUTES TO GET HERE--Y'KNOW.
WELL, IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU. YOU WANT SOMETHING TO DRINK? HAVE YOU EATEN?
JUST--COME HERE.
I WAS SORRY TO HEAR ABOUT YOUR MOTHER. I'M GLAD SHE WAS OKAY. I CAN'T BELIEVE THAT VILLAIN ATTACKED YOUR HOME--THAT'S HORRIBLE.
YEAH, IT'S OKAY NOW--IT ALL WORKED OUT.
UH...

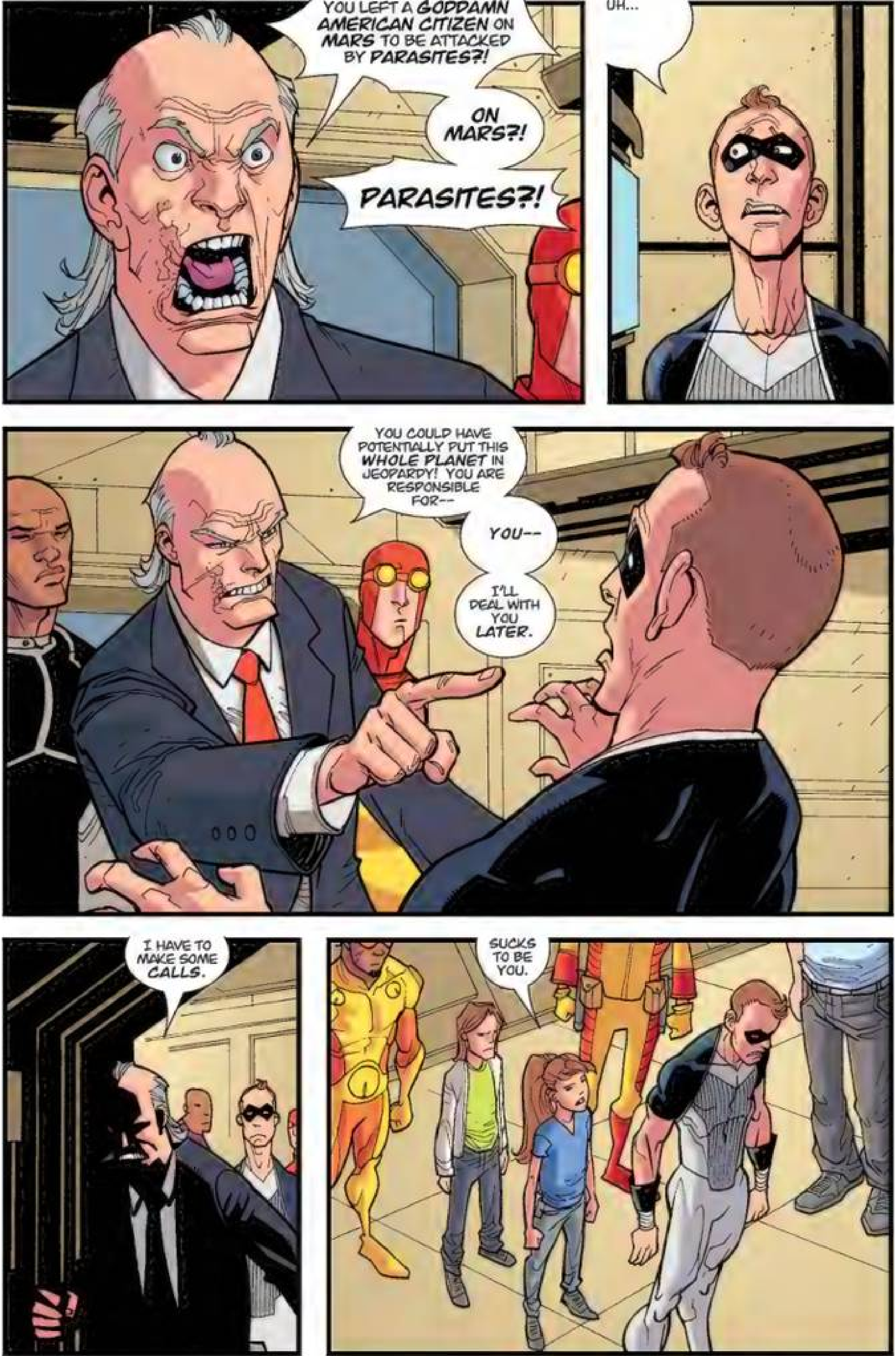
ISSUE THIRTY-NINE

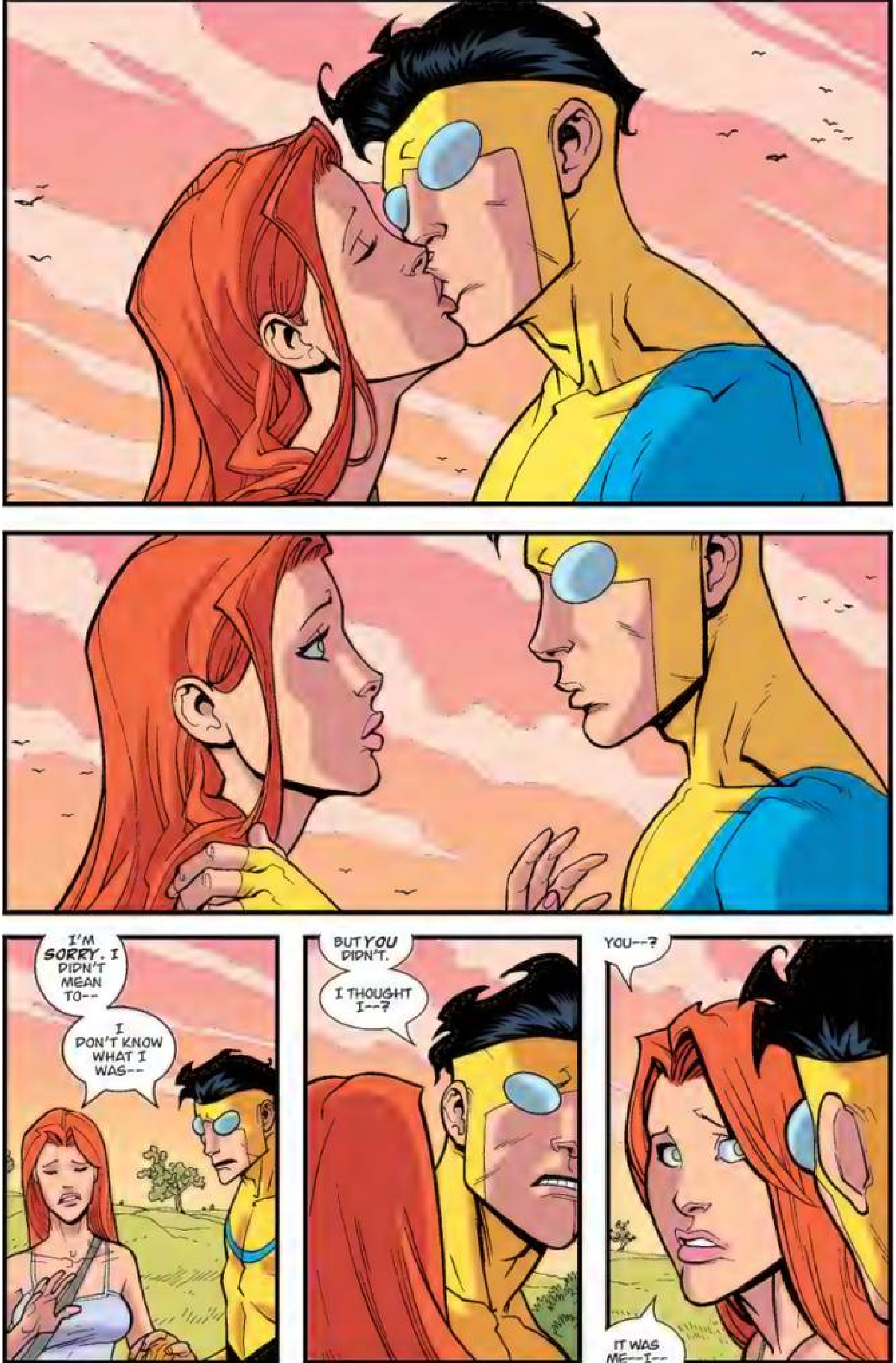

I'M SORRY, GUYS... I REALLY AM. I HAVEN'T EXACTLY BEEN HONEST WITH YOU.
I DIDN'T GET THESE POWERS FROM UNAUTHORIZED TESTING NASA SUBJECTED ME TO. I'VE ALWAYS HAD THESE POWERS--BECAUSE EVERYONE ON MY PLANET HAS THESE POWERS.
I'M FROM MARS.
WHAT?!
I KNOW, I DID SOMETHING TERRIBLE BY LYING TO YOU. IF YOU WANT TO KICK ME OFF THE TEAM--I'LL UNDERSTAND.
THAT COMES LATER. FOR NOW--WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT THIS SHIP HEADED FOR EARTH? ANYTHING?
ACTUALLY, SIR... I THINK I KNOW EVERYTHING.

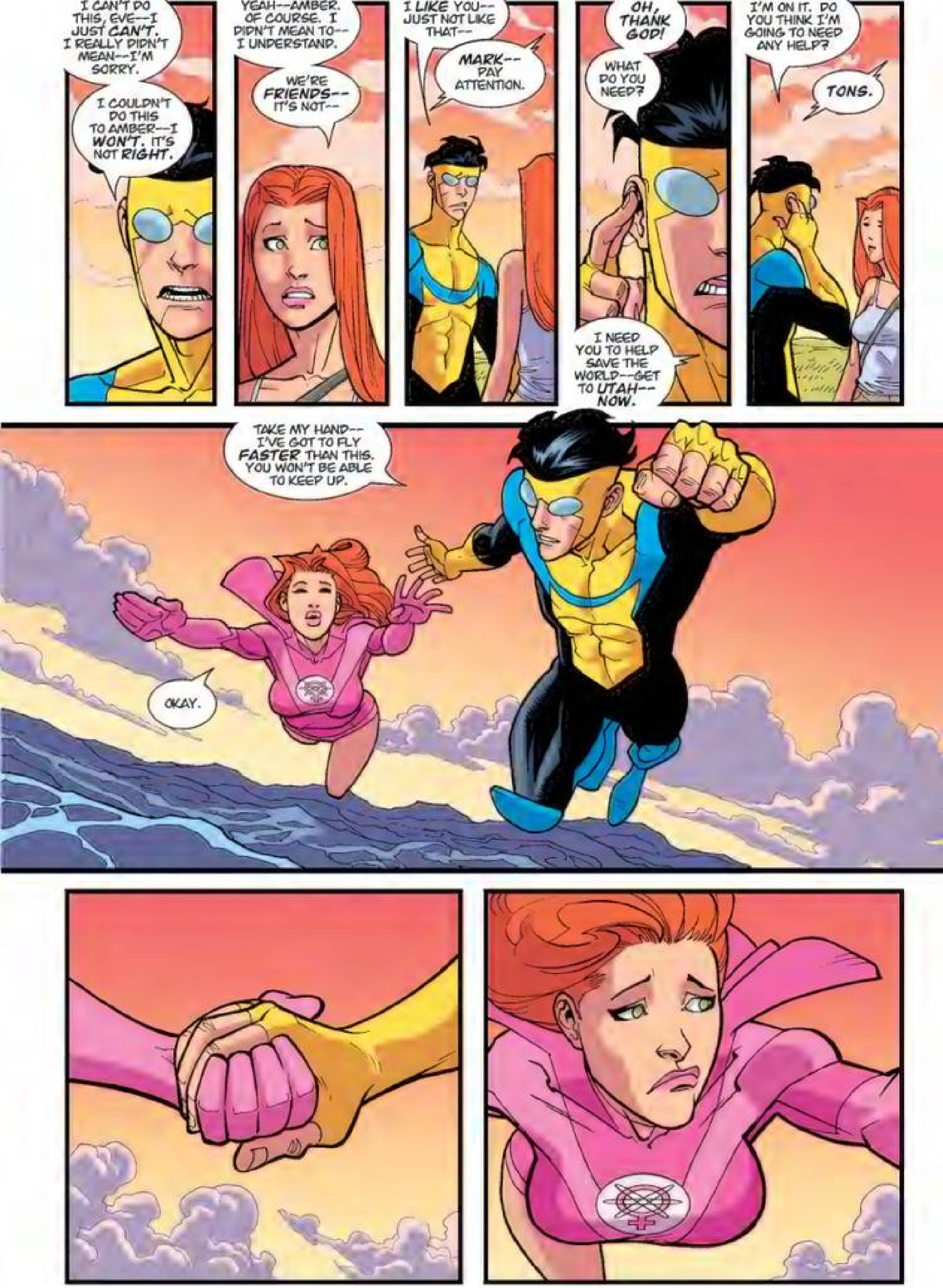

EVERY BOY ON MARS IS TOLD THIS STORY COUNTLESS TIMES SINCE BIRTH.
THEY WERE CALLED THE SEQUIDS. THEY CAME TO MARS CENTURIES AGO ON A DAMAGED VESSEL WHICH CRASH LANDED ON THE PLANET. THEY WERE HOSTILE.
THEY WAGED WAR WITH THE MARTIANS-- A BATTLE THAT RAGED FOR NEARLY A CENTURY. IT ENDED ONLY WHEN THE SEQUIDS' HOSTS DIED OF OLD AGE.
YOU SEE-- WE DIDN'T KNOW THIS BUT THE WARRIORS WHO FELL TO OUR PLANET WERE THE PARASITIC CREATURES ATTACHED TO THE HUMANOIDS-- NOT THE HUMANOIDS THEMSELVES.

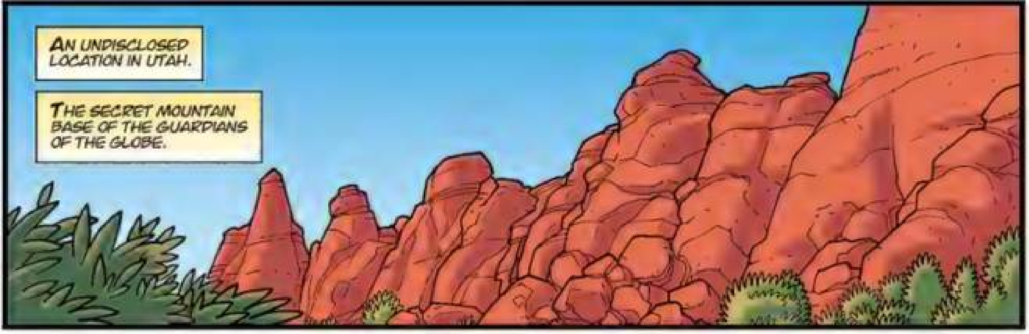

THE SEQUIDS WERE A PARASITIC RACE--DEPENDENT ON A HOST OR HOSTS TO LINK THEIR *ONE-MIND*. WITHOUT A HOST THEY ARE NEARLY MINDLESS DRONES, ABLE TO PERFORM SIMPLE TASKS, BUT NOT CAPABLE OF INDEPENDENT THOUGHT.
THEY TRIED TO BOND WITH MARTIANS, BUT DUE TO OUR NATURAL SHAPE-SHIFTING CAPABILITIES--BONDING WITH US WAS IMPOSSIBLE.
WITH THEIR HOSTS DEAD--THE SEQUIDS WERE NOW *MINDLESS*, AND THE MARTIANS UTILIZED THEIR ENEMY--EVENTUALLY ESTABLISHING THEM AS A *SLAVE RACE* THAT ASSISTED MARTIANS IN DAY-TO-DAY ACTIVITIES.


THAT IS THE STORY WE WERE TOLD.
NOT ALL OF US BELIEVED IT. THERE WERE SOME AMONG US WHO BELIEVED A DIFFERENT STORY ENTIRELY. THERE WAS AN UNDERGROUND MOVEMENT THAT WANTED TO FREE THE SEQUIDS. I WAS PART OF THAT MOVEMENT.
OVER THE YEARS THE SEQUIDS HAD BEEN BRED TO BE STRONGER, ABLE TO DO MORE WORK--AND TO WORK MORE EFFICIENTLY.
THE SEQUIDS WERE TESTED--EXPERIMENTED ON--ALL IN AN EFFORT TO MAKE BETTER SLAVES.
THE REBEL MOVEMENT BELIEVED THAT THE STORY OF OUR TRIUMPH OVER THE VIOLENT SEQUID RACE WAS A STORY TOLD TO JUSTIFY OUR GOVERNMENT'S HORRIBLE ACTIONS AGAINST THE SEQUIDS.
ALL WE NEEDED WAS A SOLID--ONE ALIEN LIFE FORM A SEQUID COULD BOND WITH--BUT THEY WERE OUTLAWED, EXECUTED AS SOON AS THEY WERE DETECTED ON THE PLANET.
BUT WHEN THE NASA EXPEDITION FROM EARTH CAME--WE KNEW WE HAD OUR CHANCE--AND WE TOOK IT.
I WAS SENT TO EARTH IN THE PLACE OF ASTRONAUT RUS LIVINGSTON--AND HE WAS LEFT ON MARS.
LEFT TO BE TAKEN OVER BY THE SEQUIDS.


YOU LEFT A GODDAMN AMERICAN CITIZEN ON MARS TO BE ATTACKED BY PARASITES?!
ON MARS?!
PARASITES?!
UH...
YOU COULD HAVE POTENTIALLY PUT THIS WHOLE PLANET IN JEOPARDY! YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR--
YOU--
I'LL DEAL WITH YOU LATER.
I HAVE TO MAKE SOME CALLS.
SUCKS TO BE YOU.


I'M SORRY. I DIDN'T MEAN TO--
I DON'T KNOW WHAT I WAS--
BUT YOU DIDN'T.
I THOUGHT I--?
YOU--?
IT WAS ME--I--


I CAN'T DO THIS, EVE--I JUST **CAN'T**. I REALLY DIDN'T MEAN--I'M SORRY.
I COULDN'T DO THIS TO AMBER--I **WON'T**. IT'S NOT **RIGHT**.
YEAH--AMBER. OF COURSE. I DIDN'T MEAN TO--I UNDERSTAND.
WE'RE **FRIENDS**--IT'S NOT--
I **LIKE** YOU--JUST NOT LIKE THAT--
MARK--PAY ATTENTION.
OH, THANK GOD!
WHAT DO YOU NEED?
I NEED YOU TO HELP SAVE THE WORLD--GET TO **UTAH**--**NOW**.
I'M ON IT. DO YOU THINK I'M GOING TO NEED ANY HELP?
TONS.
TAKE MY HAND--I'VE GOT TO FLY **FASTER** THAN THIS. YOU WON'T BE ABLE TO KEEP UP.
OKAY.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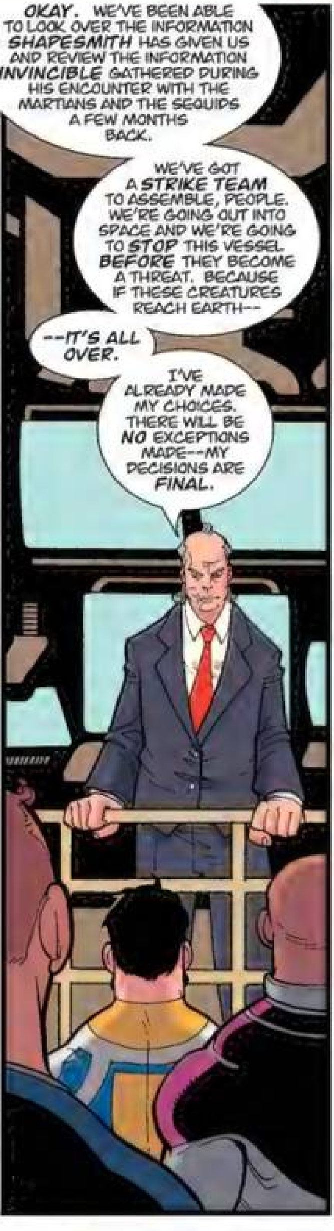
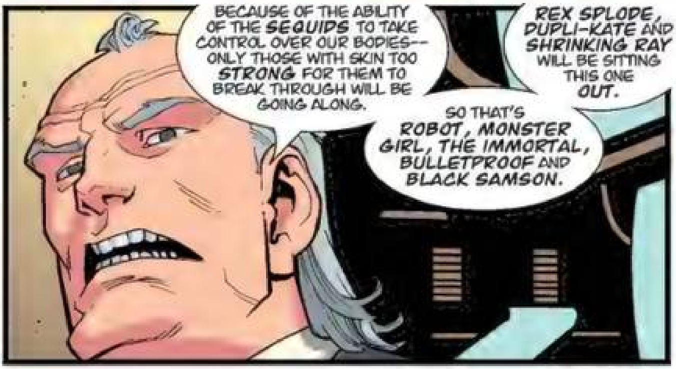
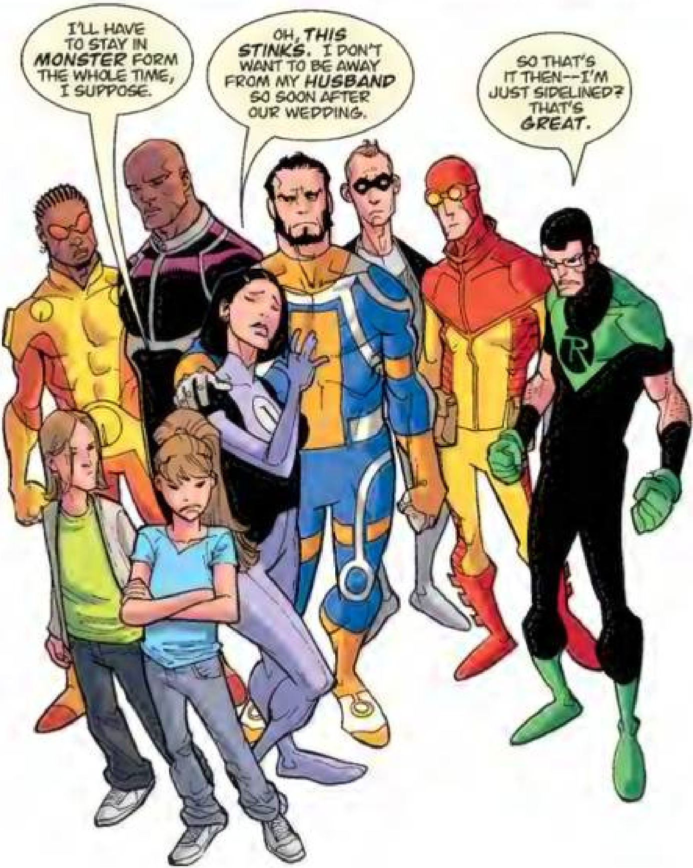
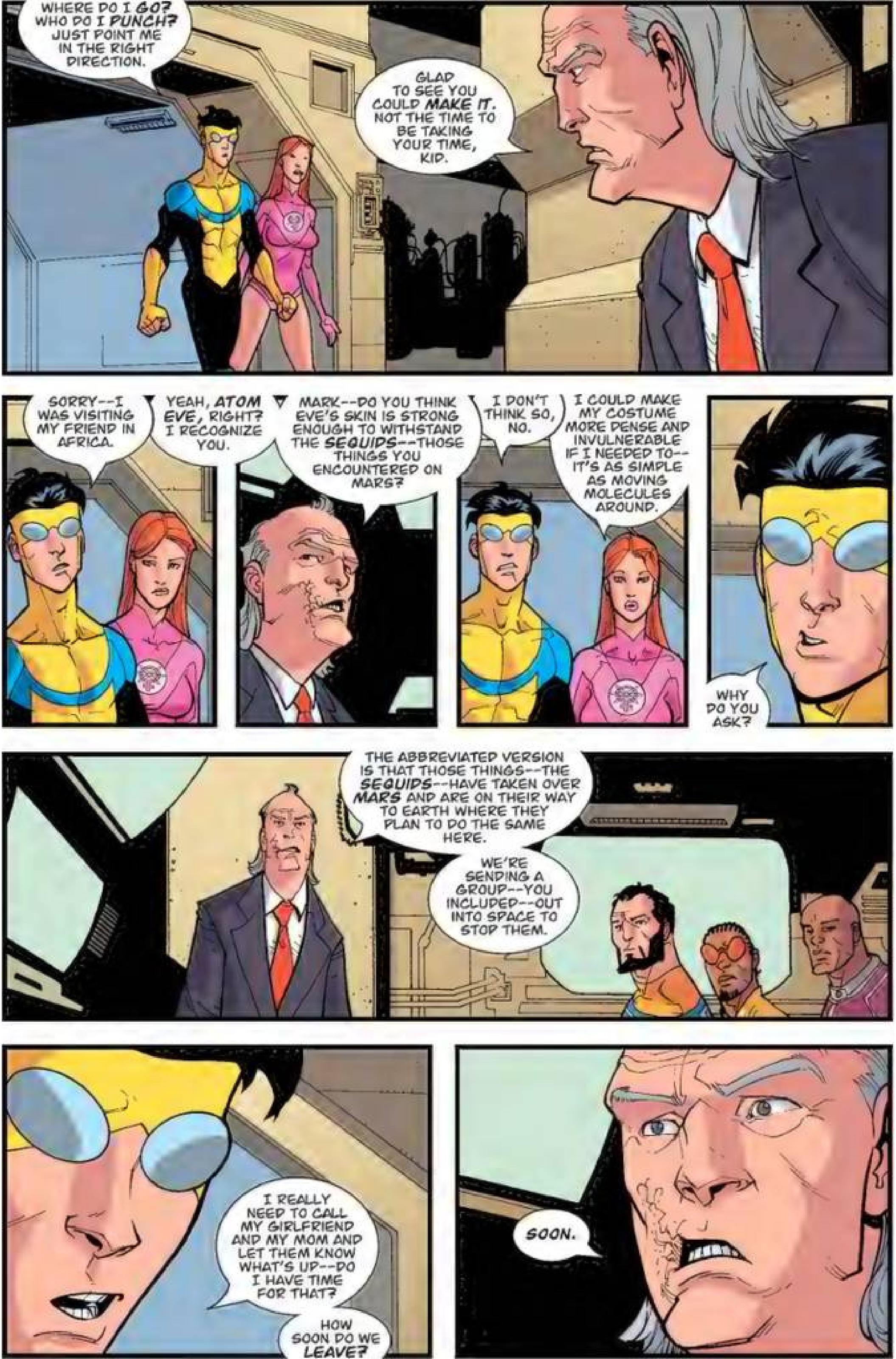
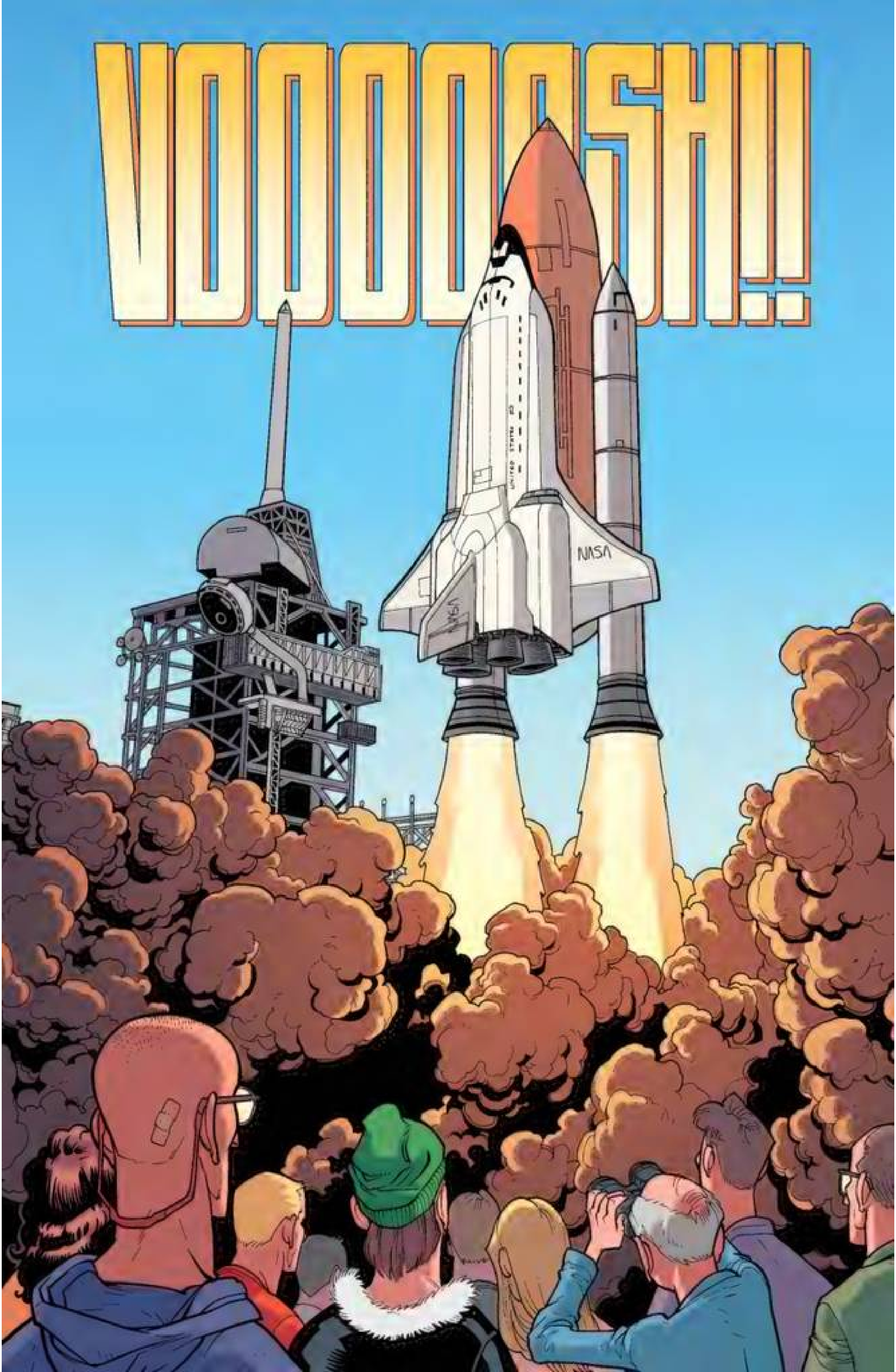
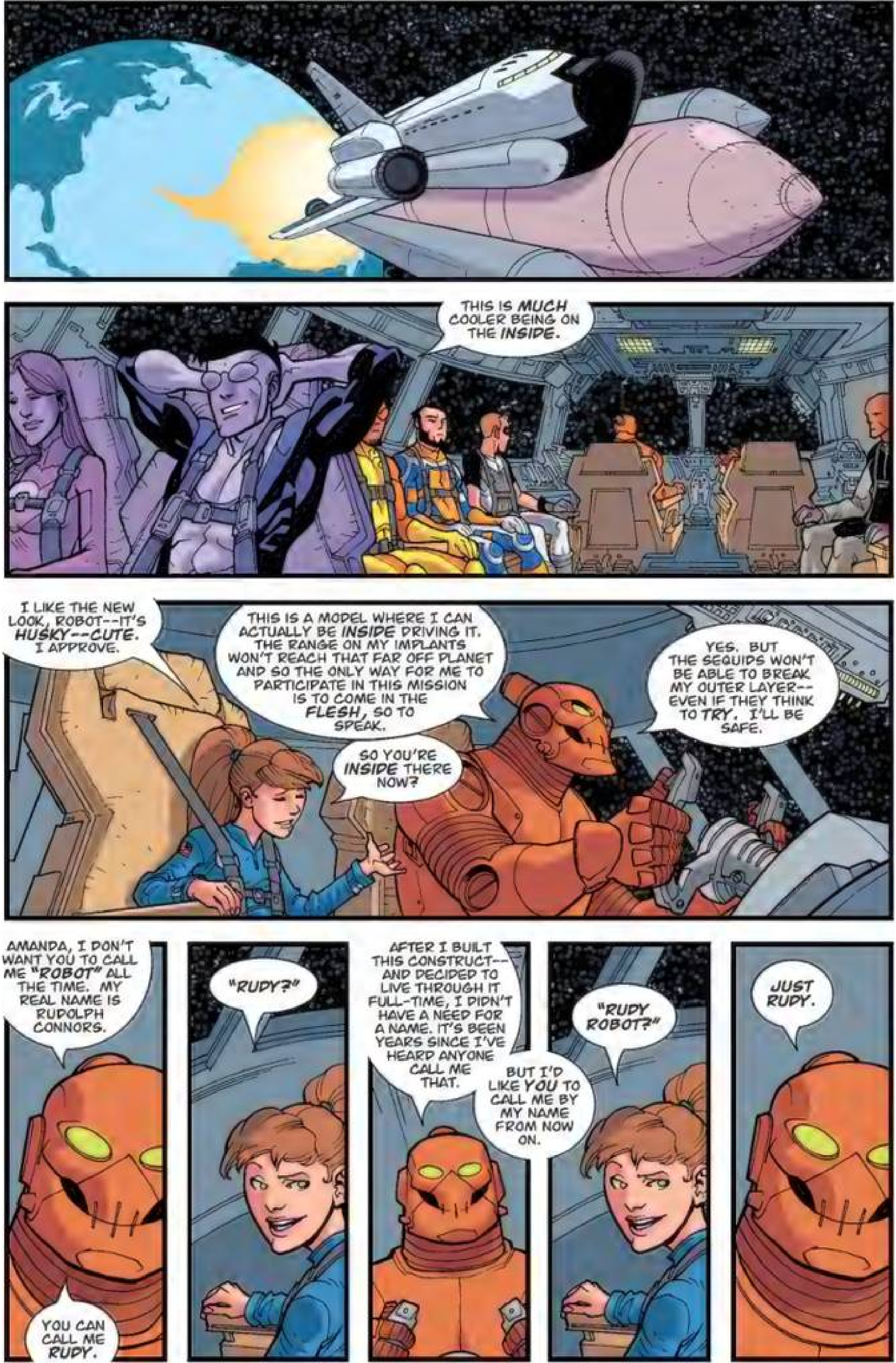

OKAY. WE'VE BEEN ABLE TO LOOK OVER THE INFORMATION SHAPESMITH HAS GIVEN US AND REVIEW THE INFORMATION INVINCIBLE GATHERED DURING HIS ENCOUNTER WITH THE MARTIANS AND THE SEQUIDS A FEW MONTHS BACK.
WE'VE GOT A STRIKE TEAM TO ASSEMBLE, PEOPLE. WE'RE GOING OUT INTO SPACE AND WE'RE GOING TO STOP THIS VESSEL BEFORE THEY BECOME A THREAT. BECAUSE IF THESE CREATURES REACH EARTH--
--IT'S ALL OVER.
I'VE ALREADY MADE MY CHOICES. THERE WILL BE NO EXCEPTIONS MADE--MY DECISIONS ARE FINAL.

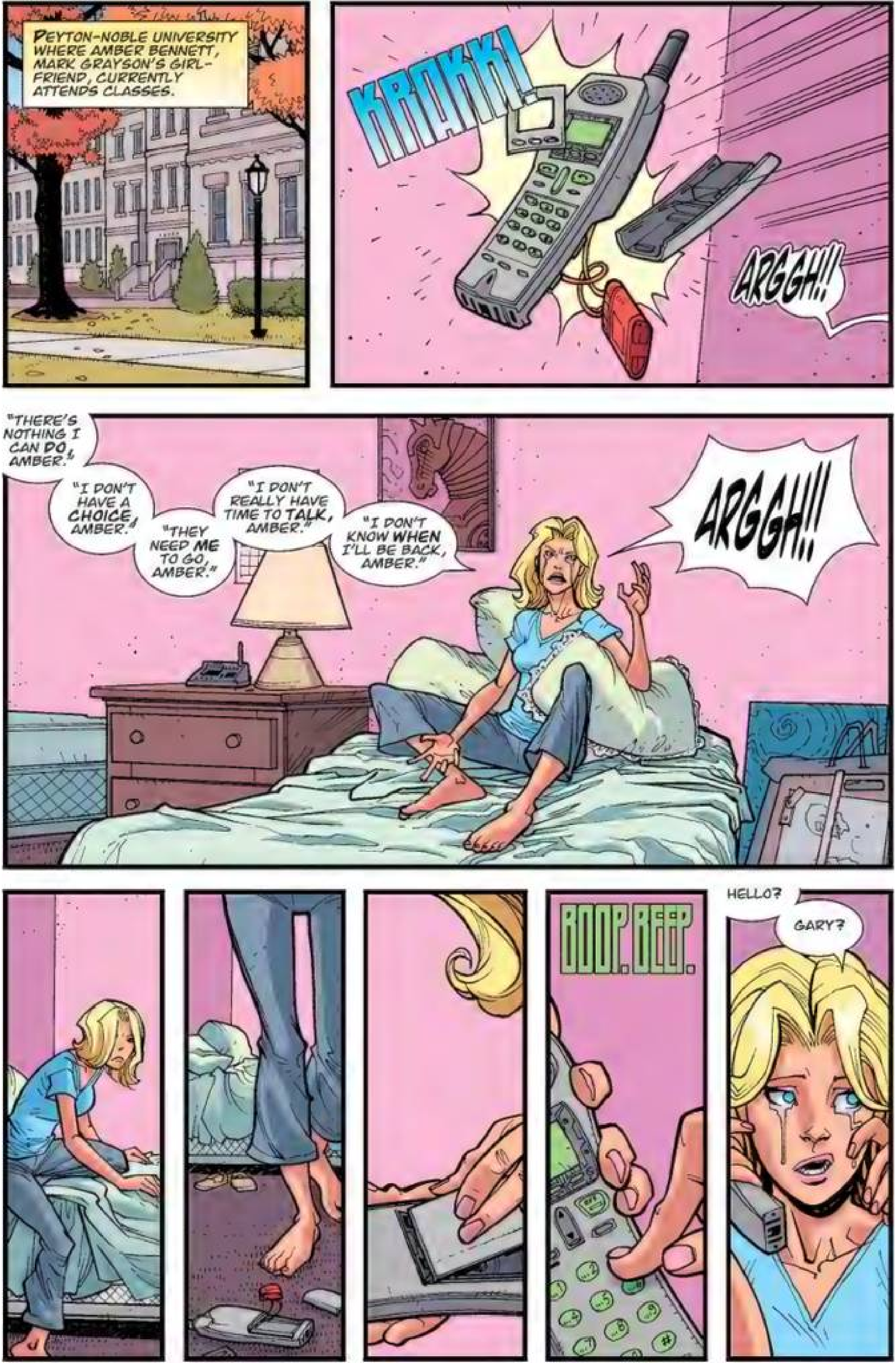

BECAUSE OF THE ABILITY OF THE SEQUIDS TO TAKE CONTROL OVER OUR BODIES--ONLY THOSE WITH SKIN TOO STRONG FOR THEM TO BREAK THROUGH WILL BE GOING ALONG.
REX SPLODE, DUPLI-KATE AND SHRINKING RAY WILL BE SITTING THIS ONE OUT.
SO THAT'S ROBOT, MONSTER GIRL, THE IMMORTAL, BULLETPROOF AND BLACK SAMSON.

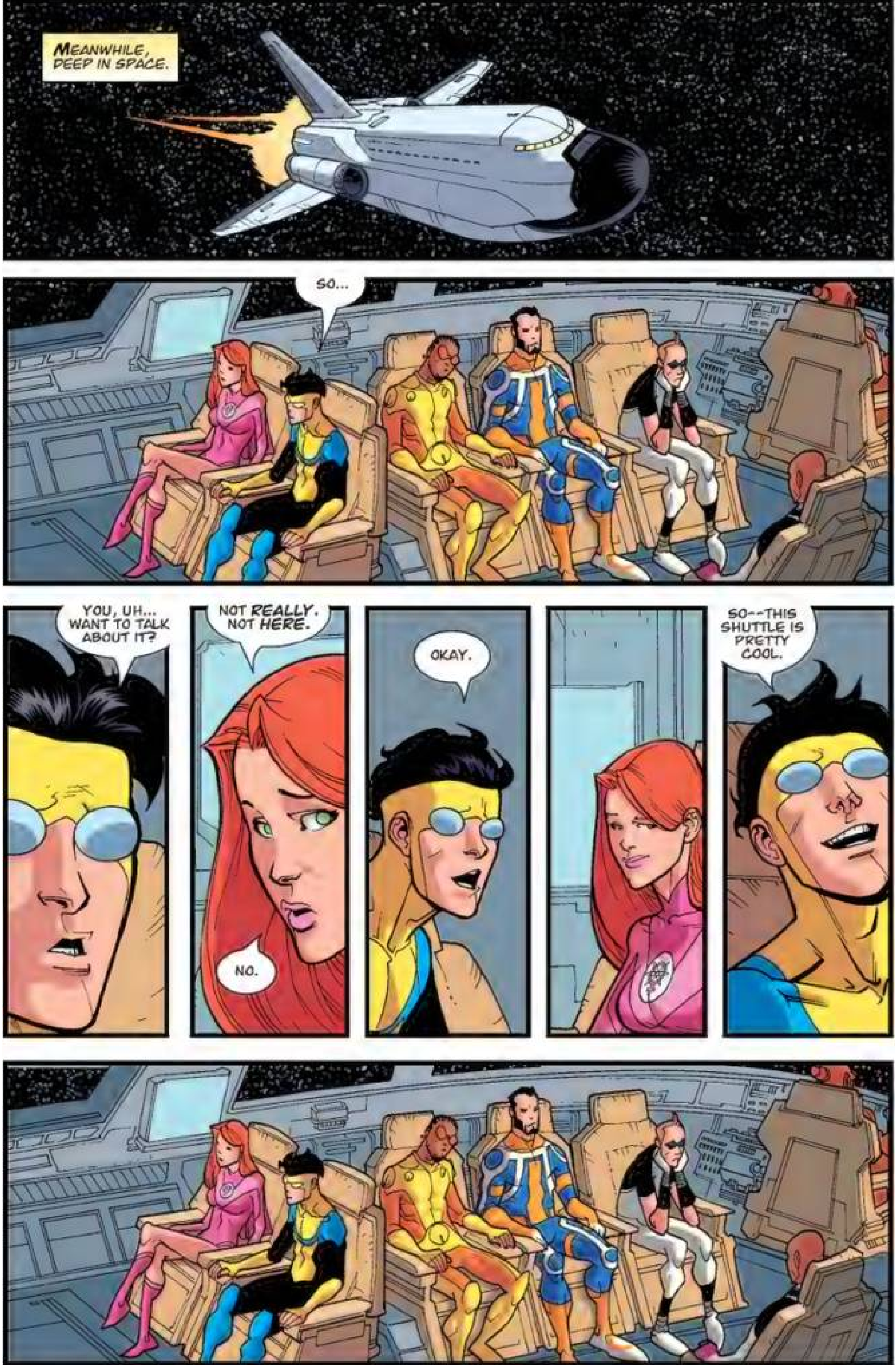

I'LL HAVE TO STAY IN MONSTER FORM THE WHOLE TIME, I SUPPOSE.
OH, THIS STINKS. I DON'T WANT TO BE AWAY FROM MY HUSBAND SO SOON AFTER OUR WEDDING.
SO THAT'S IT THEN--I'M JUST SIDELINED? THAT'S GREAT.

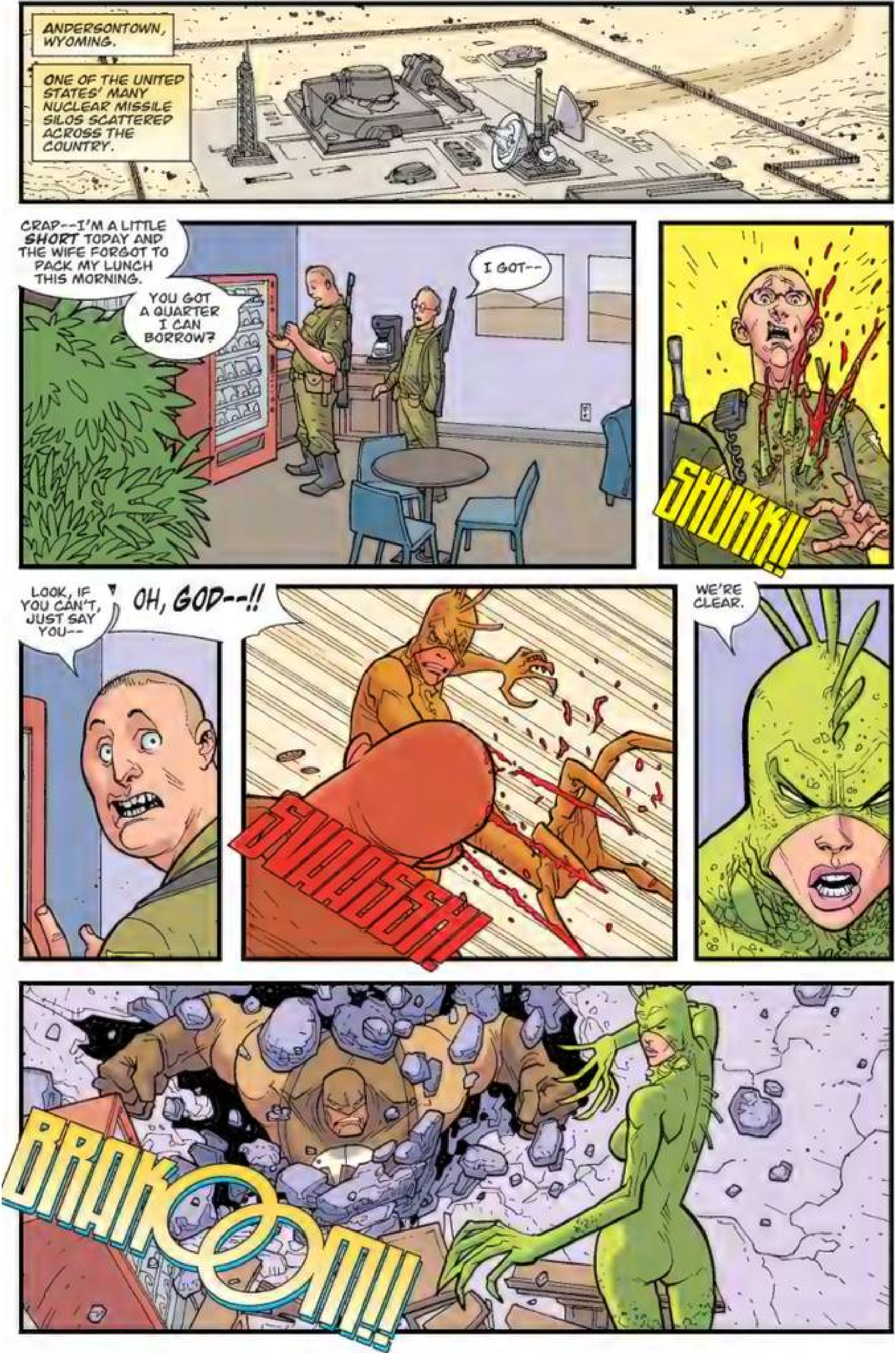

WHERE DO I *GO?* WHO DO I *PUNCH?* JUST POINT ME IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION.
GLAD TO SEE YOU COULD *MAKE IT.* NOT THE TIME TO BE TAKING YOUR TIME, KID.
SORRY--I WAS VISITING MY FRIEND IN AFRICA.
YEAH, *ATOM EVE,* RIGHT? I RECOGNIZE YOU.
MARK--DO YOU THINK EVE'S SKIN IS STRONG ENOUGH TO WITHSTAND THE *SEQUIDS*--THOSE THINGS YOU ENCOUNTERED ON MARS?
I DON'T THINK SO, NO.
I COULD MAKE MY COSTUME MORE DENSE AND INVULNERABLE IF I NEEDED TO--IT'S AS SIMPLE AS MOVING MOLECULES AROUND.
WHY DO YOU ASK?
THE ABBREVIATED VERSION IS THAT THOSE THINGS--THE *SEQUIDS*--HAVE TAKEN OVER *MARS* AND ARE ON THEIR WAY TO EARTH WHERE THEY PLAN TO DO THE SAME HERE.
WE'RE SENDING A GROUP--YOU INCLUDED--OUT INTO SPACE TO STOP THEM.
I REALLY NEED TO CALL MY GIRLFRIEND AND MY MOM AND LET THEM KNOW WHAT'S UP--DO I HAVE TIME FOR THAT?
HOW SOON DO WE *LEAVE?*
SOON.

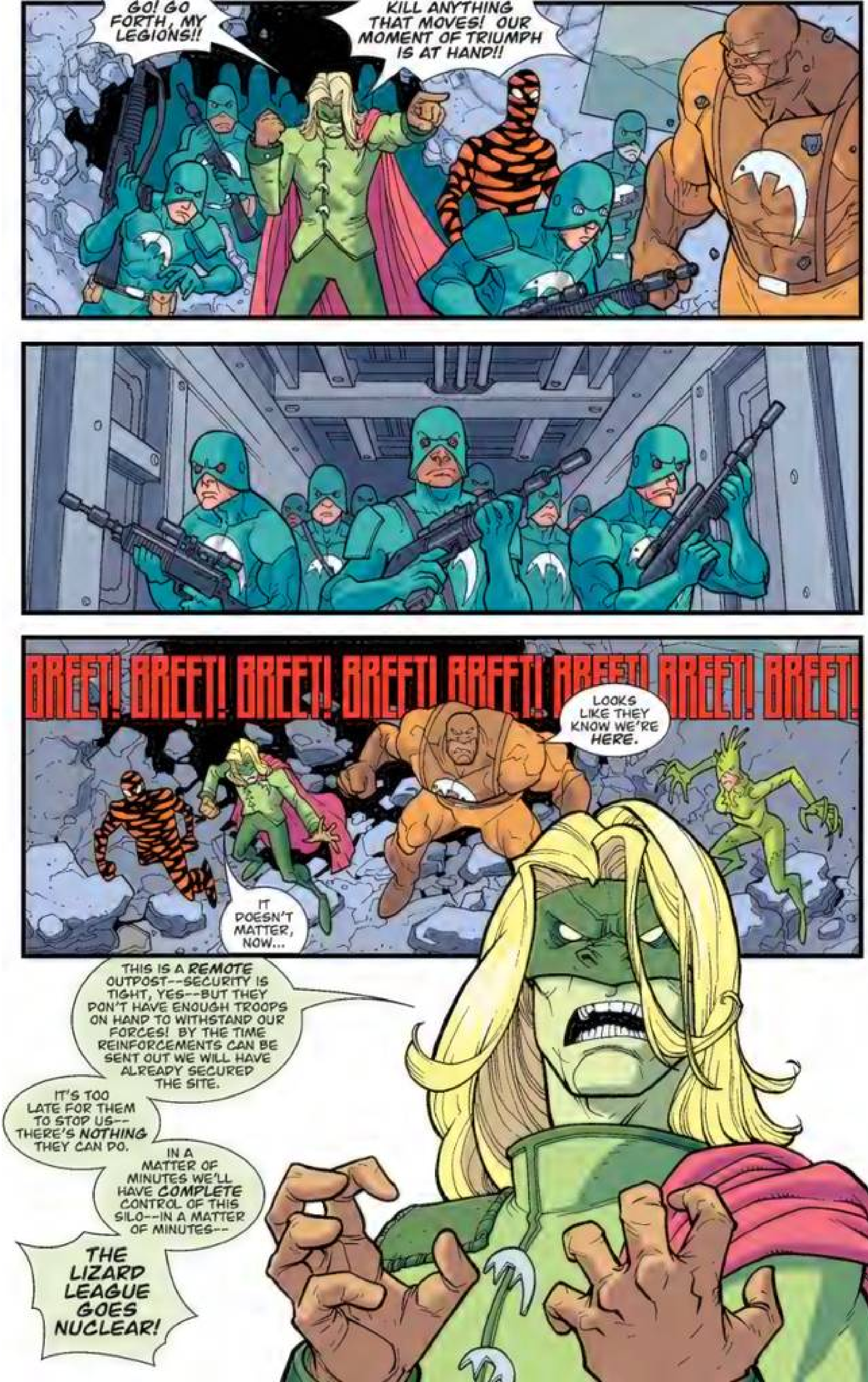

VOOOOSH!!
NASA

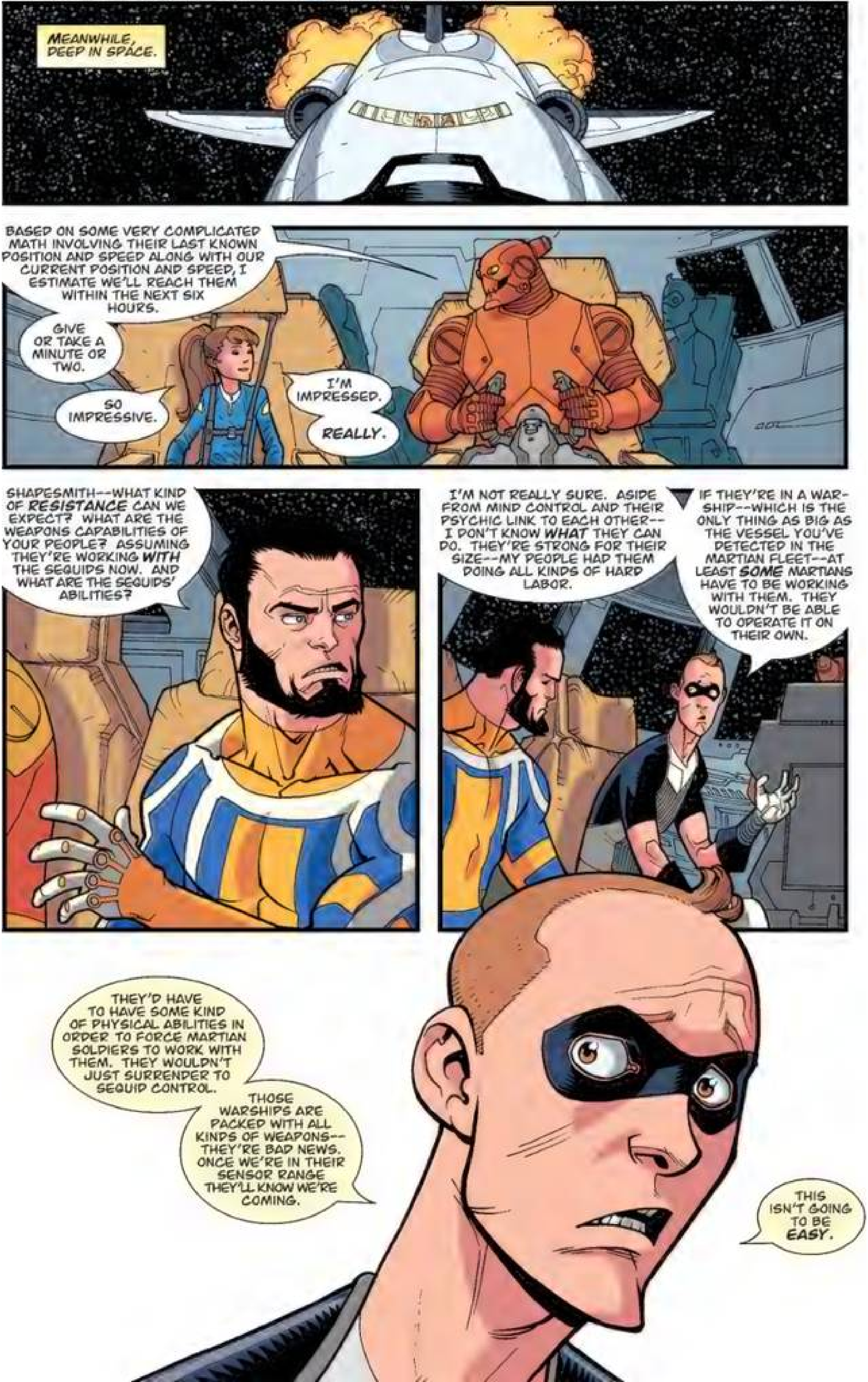

THIS IS *MUCH* COOLER BEING ON THE *INSIDE.*
I LIKE THE NEW LOOK, ROBOT--IT'S *HUSKY--CUTE.* I APPROVE.
THIS IS A MODEL WHERE I CAN ACTUALLY BE *INSIDE* DRIVING IT. THE RANGE ON MY IMPLANTS WON'T REACH THAT FAR OFF PLANET AND SO THE ONLY WAY FOR ME TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS MISSION IS TO COME IN THE *FLESH,* SO TO SPEAK.
SO YOU'RE *INSIDE* THERE NOW?
YES. BUT THE SEQUIDS WON'T BE ABLE TO BREAK MY OUTER LAYER--EVEN IF THEY THINK TO *TRY.* I'LL BE SAFE.
AMANDA, I DON'T WANT YOU TO CALL ME "*ROBOT*" ALL THE TIME. MY REAL NAME IS RUDOLPH CONNORS.
YOU CAN CALL ME *RUDY.*
"*RUDY?*"
AFTER I BUILT THIS CONSTRUCT--AND DECIDED TO LIVE THROUGH IT FULL-TIME, I DIDN'T HAVE A NEED FOR A NAME. IT'S BEEN YEARS SINCE I'VE HEARD ANYONE CALL ME THAT.
BUT I'D LIKE *YOU* TO CALL ME BY MY NAME FROM NOW ON.
"*RUDY ROBOT?*"
JUST RUDY.

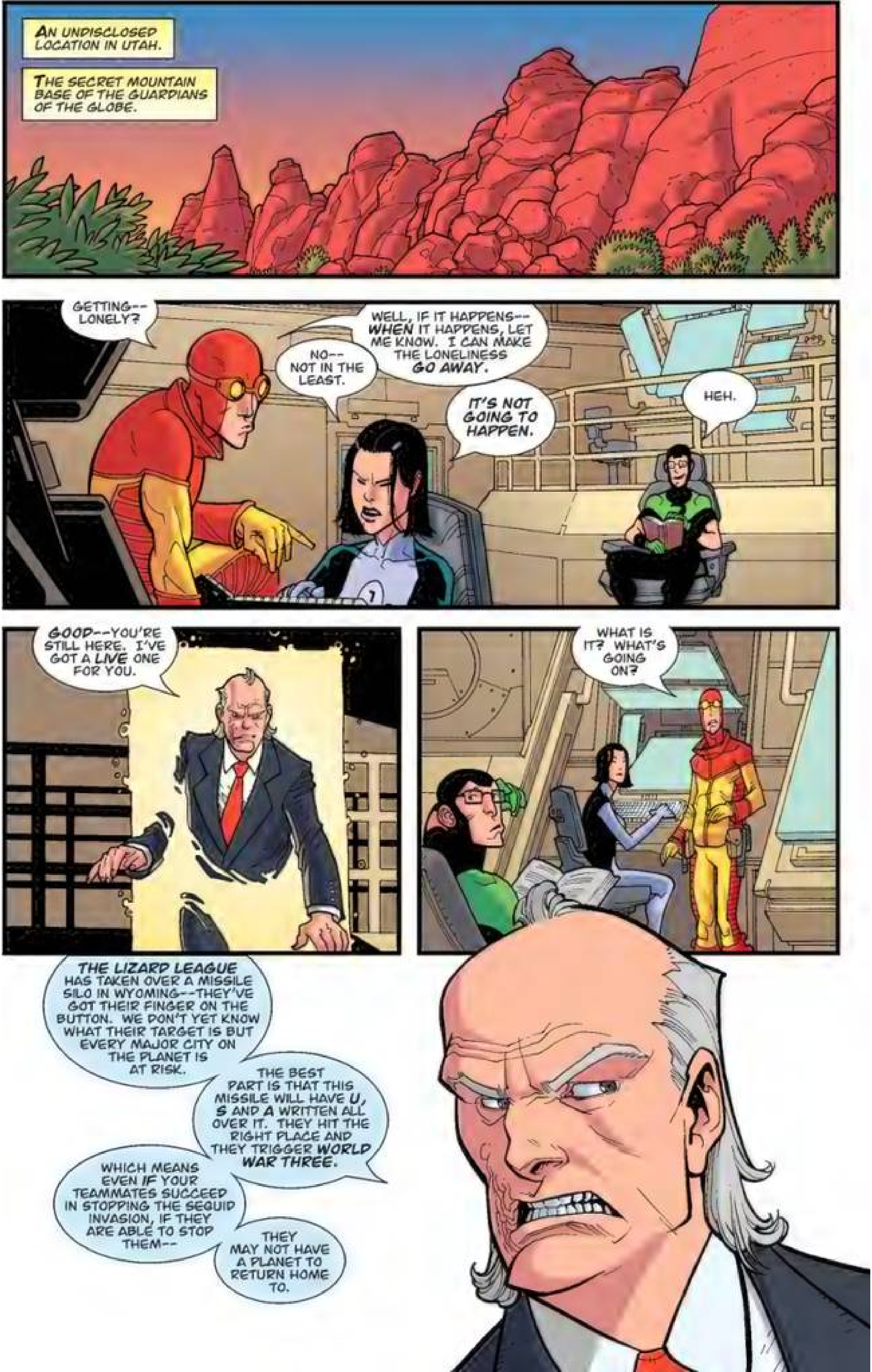

PEYTON-NOBLE UNIVERSITY WHERE AMBER BENNETT, MARK GRAYSON'S GIRL-FRIEND, CURRENTLY ATTENDS CLASSES.
KRAKK!
ARGGH!!
"THERE'S NOTHING I CAN DO, AMBER."
"I DON'T HAVE A CHOICE, AMBER."
"THEY NEED ME TO GO, AMBER."
"I DON'T REALLY HAVE TIME TO TALK, AMBER."
"I DON'T KNOW WHEN I'LL BE BACK, AMBER."
ARGGH!!
BOOP. BEEP.
HELLO?
GARY?

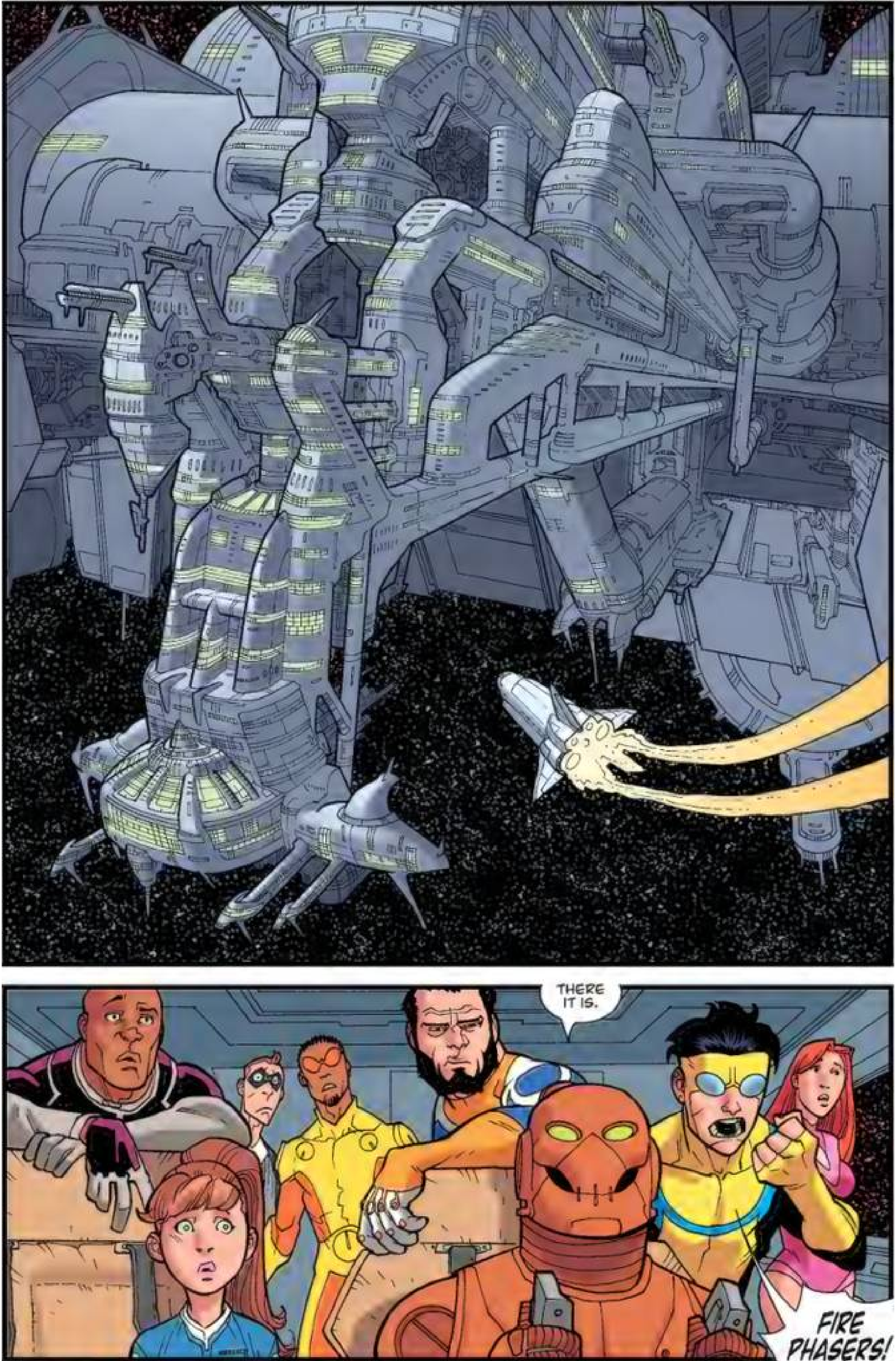

MEANWHILE, DEEP IN SPACE.
SO...
YOU, UH... WANT TO TALK ABOUT IT?
NOT REALLY. NOT HERE.
NO.
OKAY.
SO--THIS SHUTTLE IS PRETTY COOL.

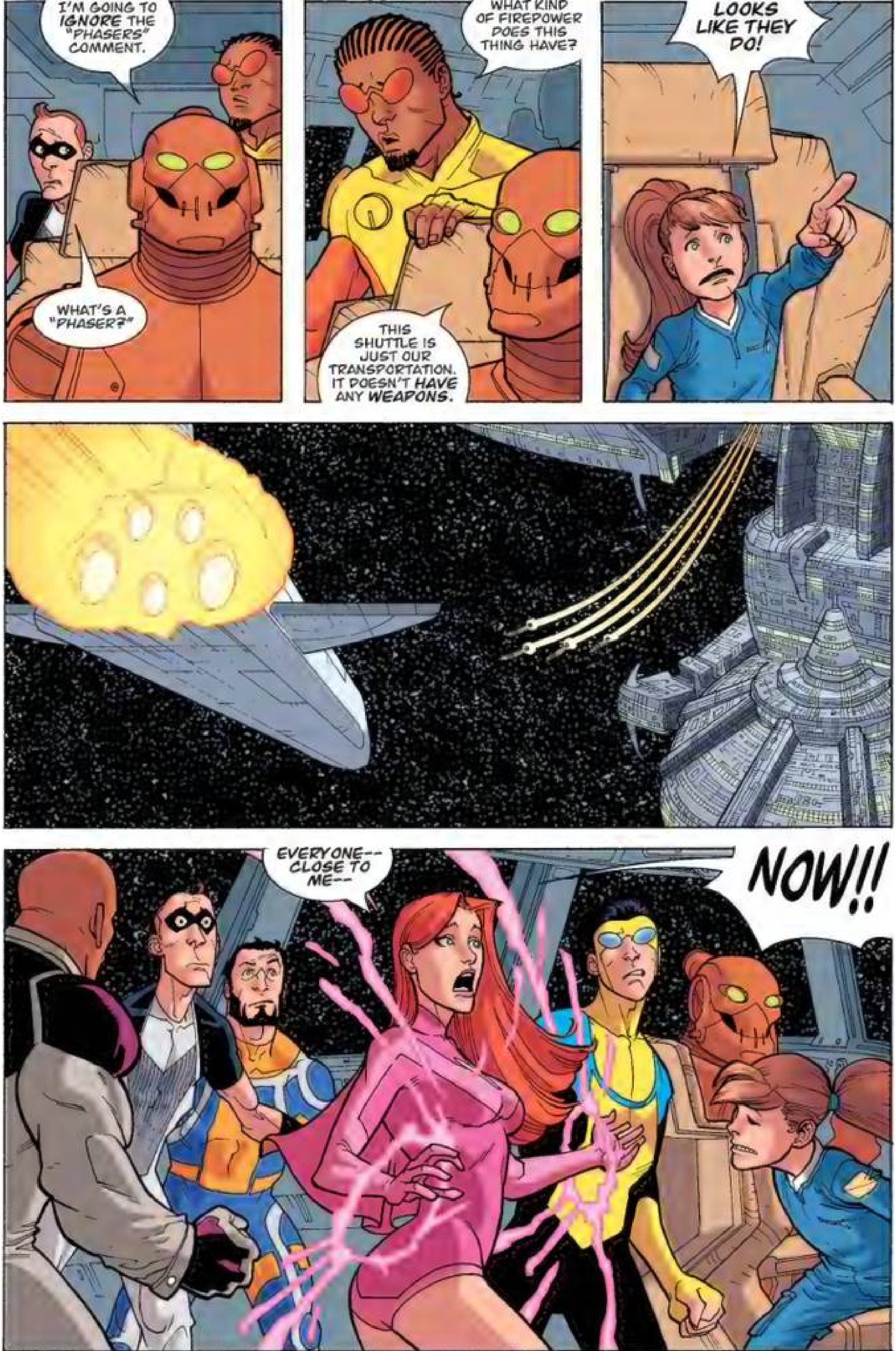

ANDERSONTOWN, WYOMING.
ONE OF THE UNITED STATES' MANY NUCLEAR MISSILE SILOS SCATTERED ACROSS THE COUNTRY.
CRAP--I'M A LITTLE SHORT TODAY AND THE WIFE FORGOT TO PACK MY LUNCH THIS MORNING.
YOU GOT A QUARTER I CAN BORROW?
I GOT--
SHUKK!!
LOOK, IF YOU CAN'T, JUST SAY YOU--
OH, GOD--!!
SHLOOSH!!
WE'RE CLEAR.
BRAKOOM!!

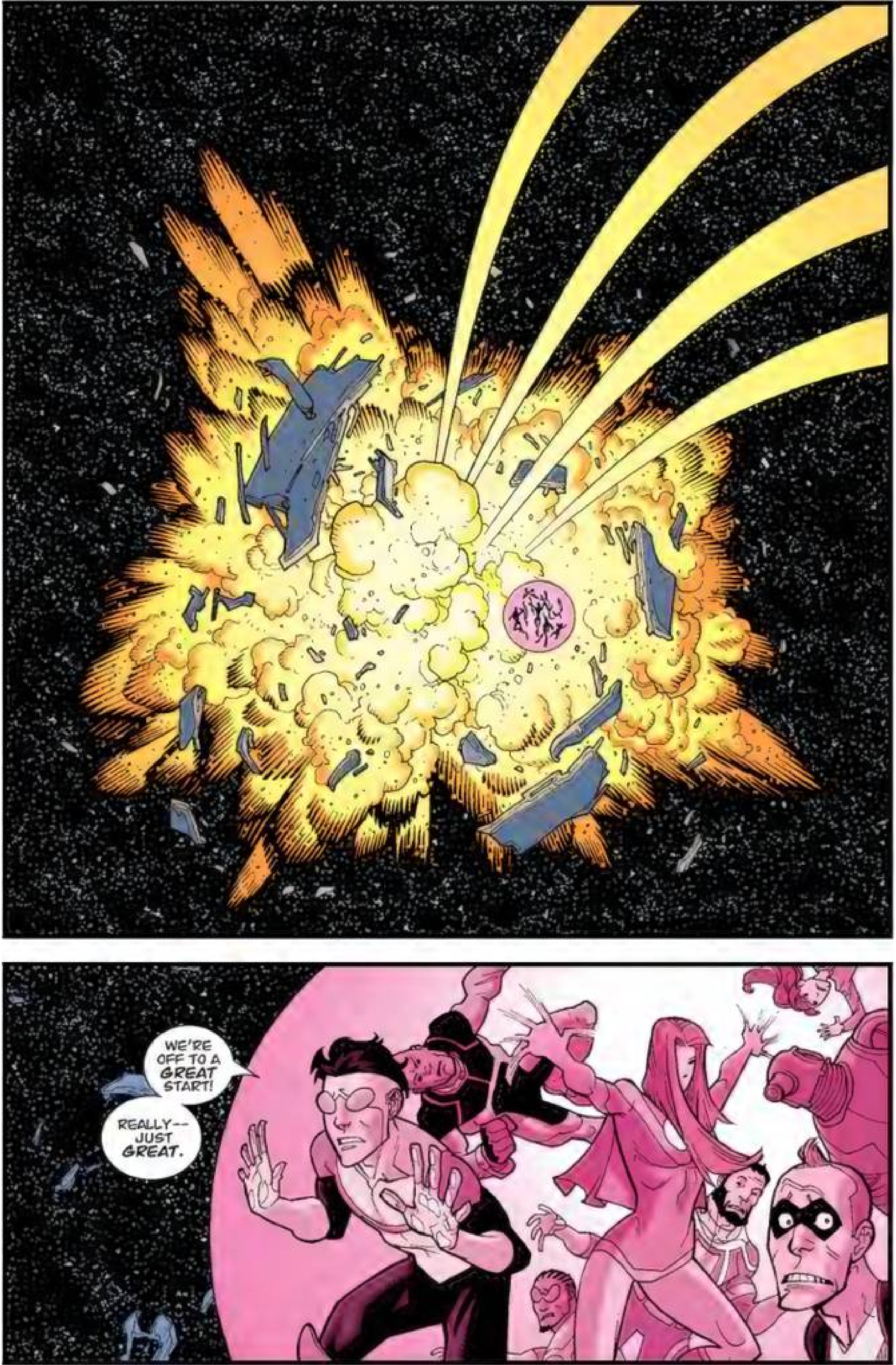

GO! GO FORTH, MY LEGIONS!!
KILL ANYTHING THAT MOVES! OUR MOMENT OF TRIUMPH IS AT HAND!!
BREET! BREET! BREET! BREET! BREET! BREET! BREET! BREET!
LOOKS LIKE THEY KNOW WE'RE HERE.
IT DOESN'T MATTER, NOW...
THIS IS A REMOTE OUTPOST--SECURITY IS TIGHT, YES--BUT THEY DON'T HAVE ENOUGH TROOPS ON HAND TO WITHSTAND OUR FORCES! BY THE TIME REINFORCEMENTS CAN BE SENT OUT WE WILL HAVE ALREADY SECURED THE SITE.
IT'S TOO LATE FOR THEM TO STOP US--THERE'S NOTHING THEY CAN DO.
IN A MATTER OF MINUTES WE'LL HAVE COMPLETE CONTROL OF THIS SILO--IN A MATTER OF MINUTES--
THE LIZARD LEAGUE GOES NUCLEAR!


MEANWHILE, DEEP IN SPACE.
BASED ON SOME VERY COMPLICATED MATH INVOLVING THEIR LAST KNOWN POSITION AND SPEED ALONG WITH OUR CURRENT POSITION AND SPEED, I ESTIMATE WE'LL REACH THEM WITHIN THE NEXT SIX HOURS.
GIVE OR TAKE A MINUTE OR TWO.
SO IMPRESSIVE.
I'M IMPRESSED.
REALLY.
SHAPESMITH--WHAT KIND OF RESISTANCE CAN WE EXPECT? WHAT ARE THE WEAPONS CAPABILITIES OF YOUR PEOPLE? ASSUMING THEY'RE WORKING WITH THE SEQUIDS NOW. AND WHAT ARE THE SEQUIDS' ABILITIES?
I'M NOT REALLY SURE. ASIDE FROM MIND CONTROL AND THEIR PSYCHIC LINK TO EACH OTHER-- I DON'T KNOW WHAT THEY CAN DO. THEY'RE STRONG FOR THEIR SIZE--MY PEOPLE HAD THEM DOING ALL KINDS OF HARD LABOR.
IF THEY'RE IN A WARSHIP--WHICH IS THE ONLY THING AS BIG AS THE VESSEL YOU'VE DETECTED IN THE MARTIAN FLEET--AT LEAST SOME MARTIANS HAVE TO BE WORKING WITH THEM. THEY WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO OPERATE IT ON THEIR OWN.
THEY'D HAVE TO HAVE SOME KIND OF PHYSICAL ABILITIES IN ORDER TO FORCE MARTIAN SOLDIERS TO WORK WITH THEM. THEY WOULDN'T JUST SURRENDER TO SEQUID CONTROL.
THOSE WARSHIPS ARE PACKED WITH ALL KINDS OF WEAPONS-- THEY'RE BAD NEWS. ONCE WE'RE IN THEIR SENSOR RANGE THEY'LL KNOW WE'RE COMING.
THIS ISN'T GOING TO BE EASY.

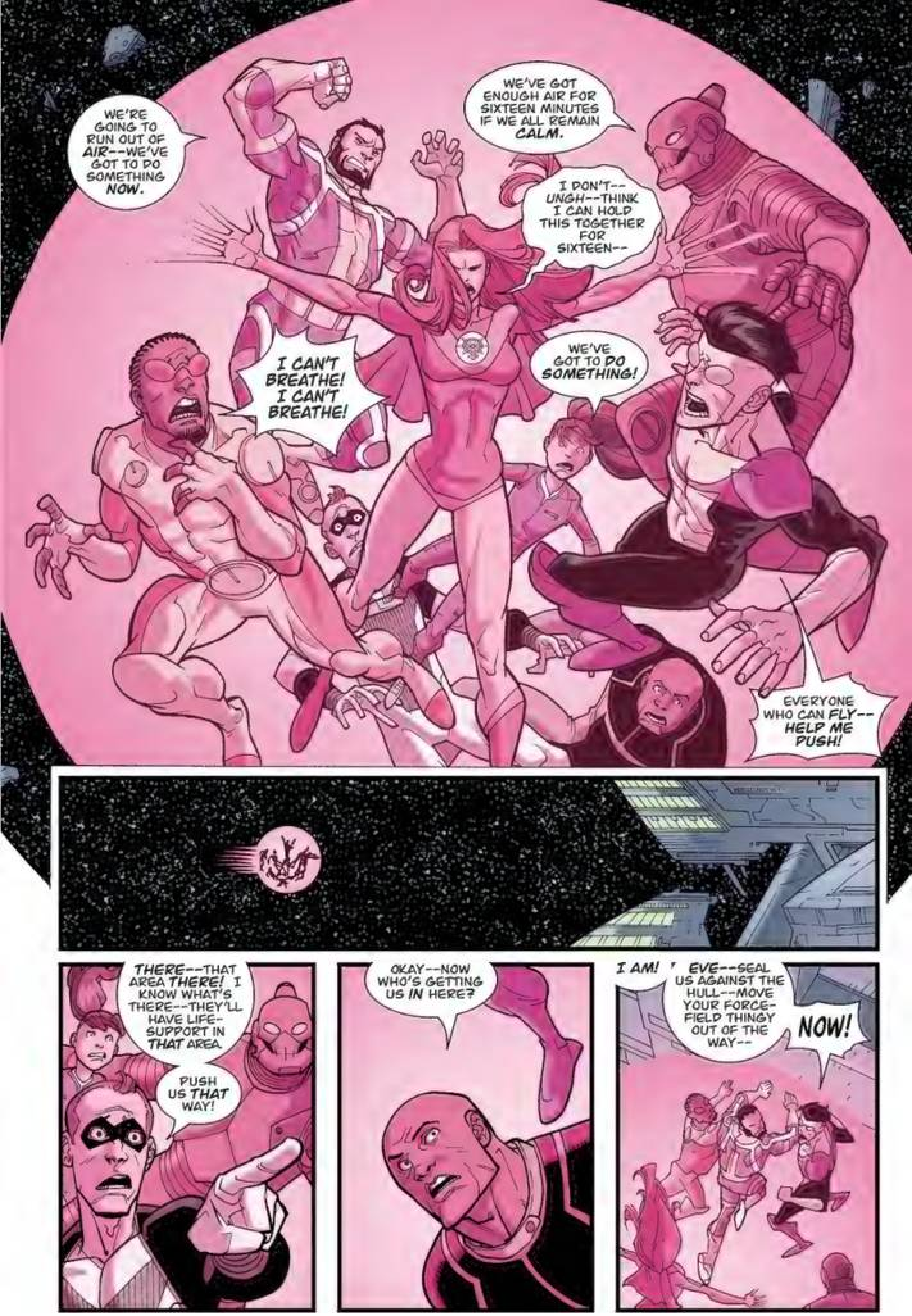

AN UNDISCLOSED LOCATION IN UTAH.
THE SECRET MOUNTAIN BASE OF THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE.
GETTING-- LONELY?
NO-- NOT IN THE LEAST.
WELL, IF IT HAPPENS-- **WHEN** IT HAPPENS, LET ME KNOW. I CAN MAKE THE LONELINESS **GO AWAY**.
IT'S NOT GOING TO HAPPEN.
HEH.
GOOD--YOU'RE STILL HERE. I'VE GOT A **LIVE** ONE FOR YOU.
WHAT IS IT? WHAT'S GOING ON?
THE LIZARD LEAGUE HAS TAKEN OVER A MISSILE SILO IN WYOMING--THEY'VE GOT THEIR FINGER ON THE BUTTON. WE DON'T YET KNOW WHAT THEIR TARGET IS BUT EVERY MAJOR CITY ON THE PLANET IS AT RISK.
THE BEST PART IS THAT THIS MISSILE WILL HAVE **U**, **S** AND **A** WRITTEN ALL OVER IT. THEY HIT THE RIGHT PLACE AND THEY TRIGGER ***WORLD WAR THREE.***
WHICH MEANS EVEN **IF** YOUR TEAMMATES SUCCEED IN STOPPING THE SEQUID INVASION, IF THEY ARE ABLE TO STOP THEM--
THEY MAY NOT HAVE A PLANET TO RETURN HOME TO.

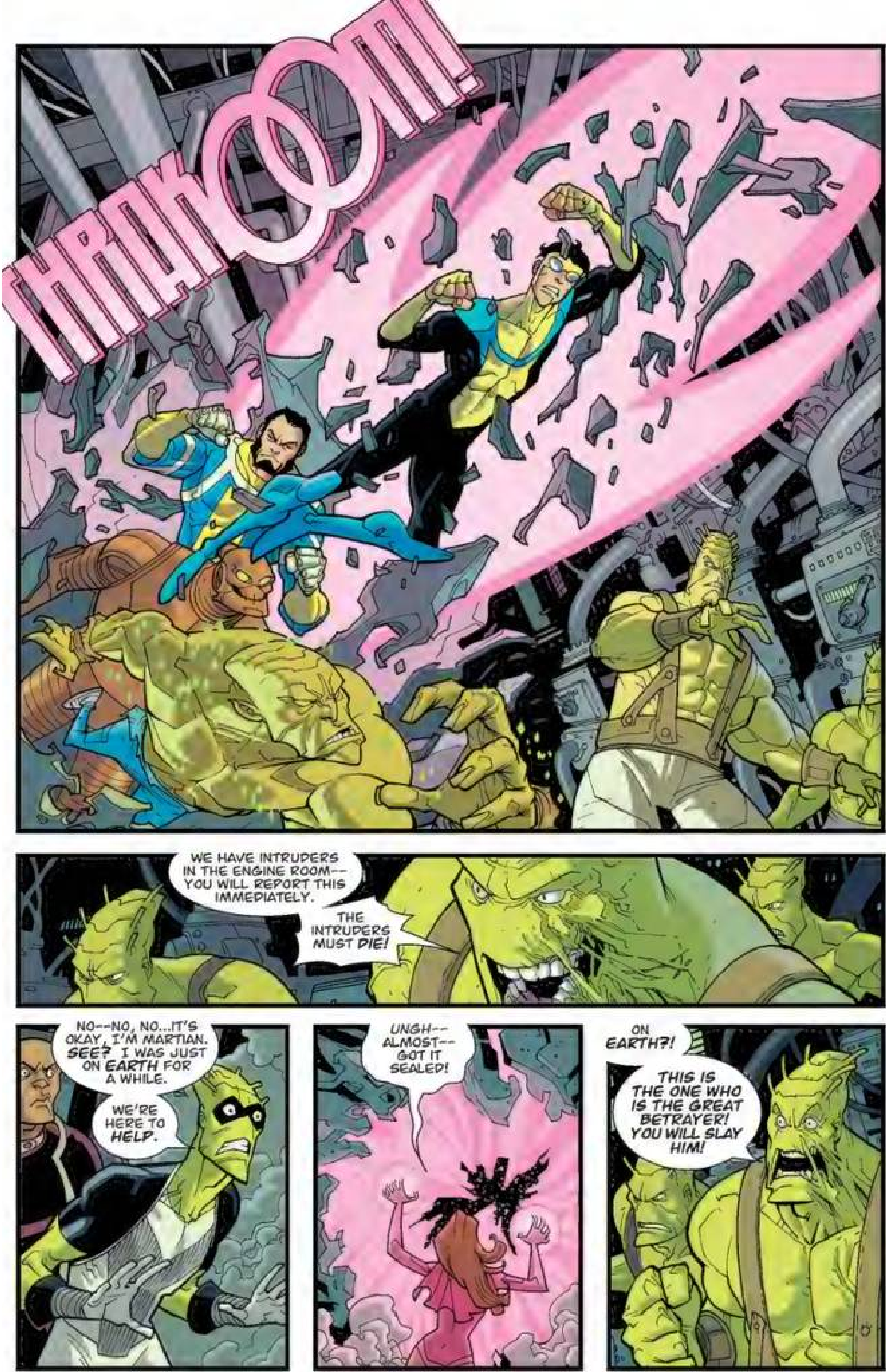

THERE IT IS.
FIRE PHASERS!

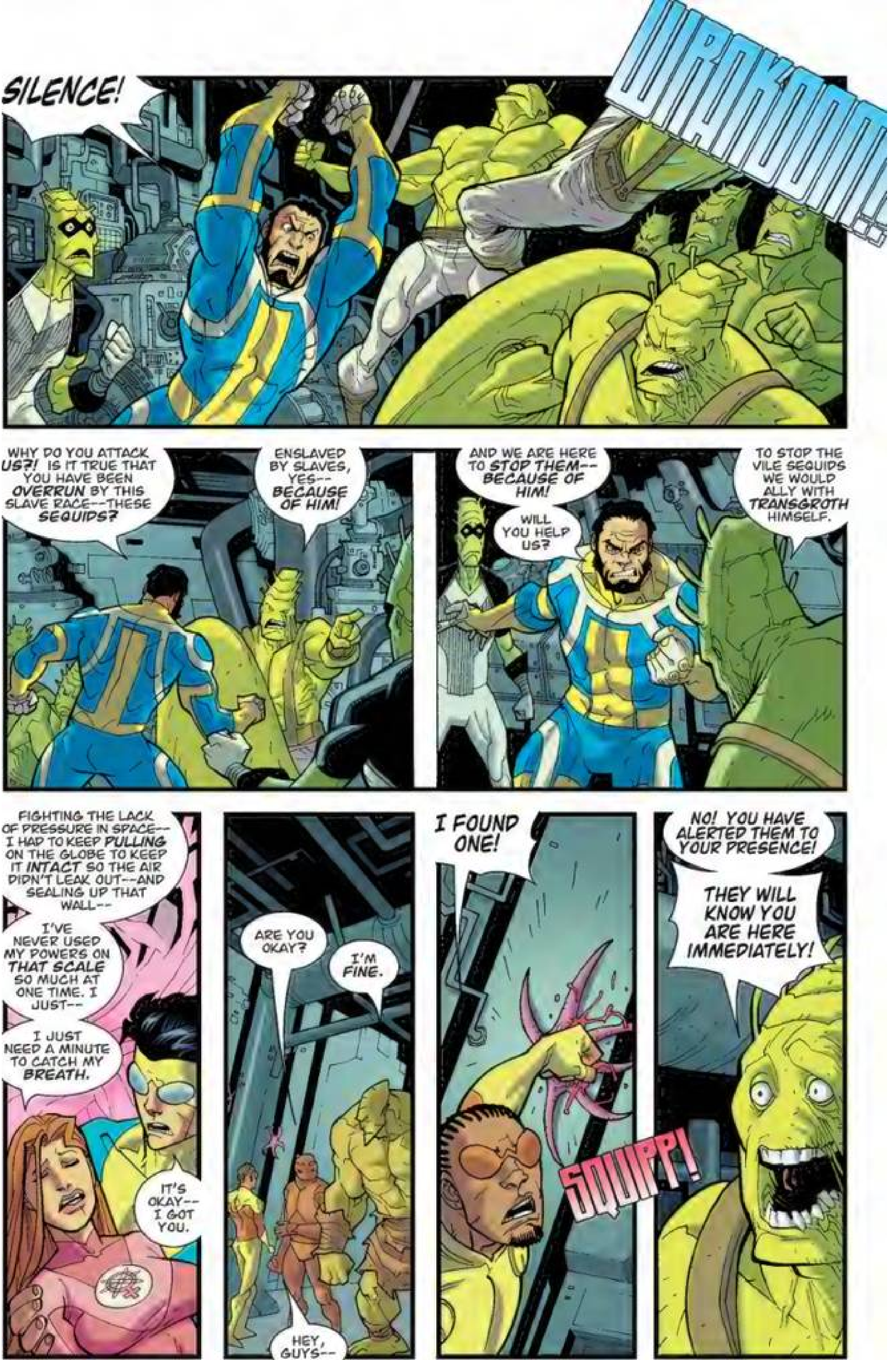

I'M GOING TO IGNORE THE "PHASERS" COMMENT.
WHAT'S A "PHASER?"
WHAT KIND OF FIREPOWER DOES THIS THING HAVE?
THIS SHUTTLE IS JUST OUR TRANSPORTATION. IT DOESN'T HAVE ANY WEAPONS.
LOOKS LIKE THEY DO!
EVERYONE-- CLOSE TO ME--
NOW!!

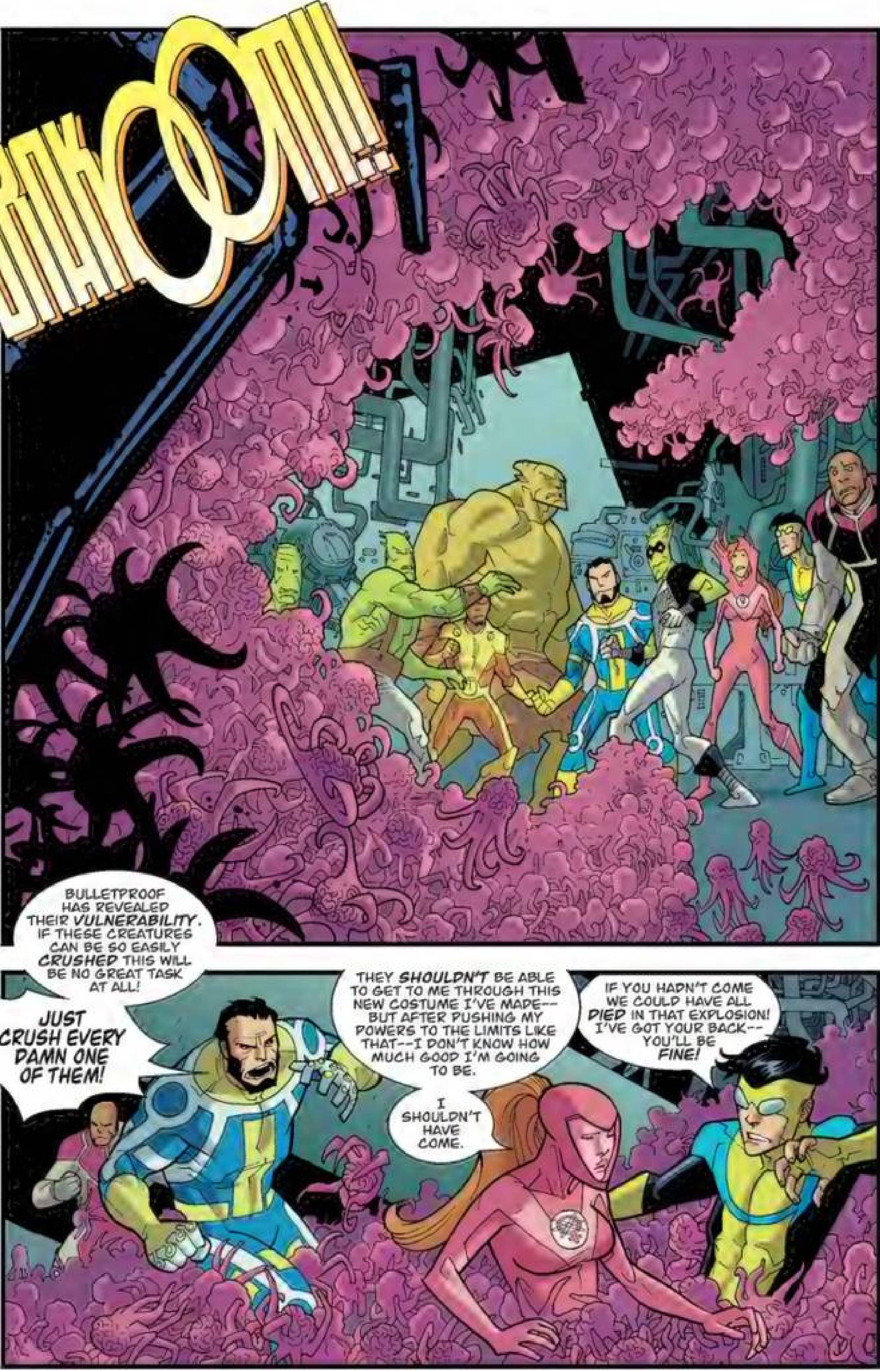

WE'RE OFF TO A GREAT START!
REALLY-- JUST GREAT.

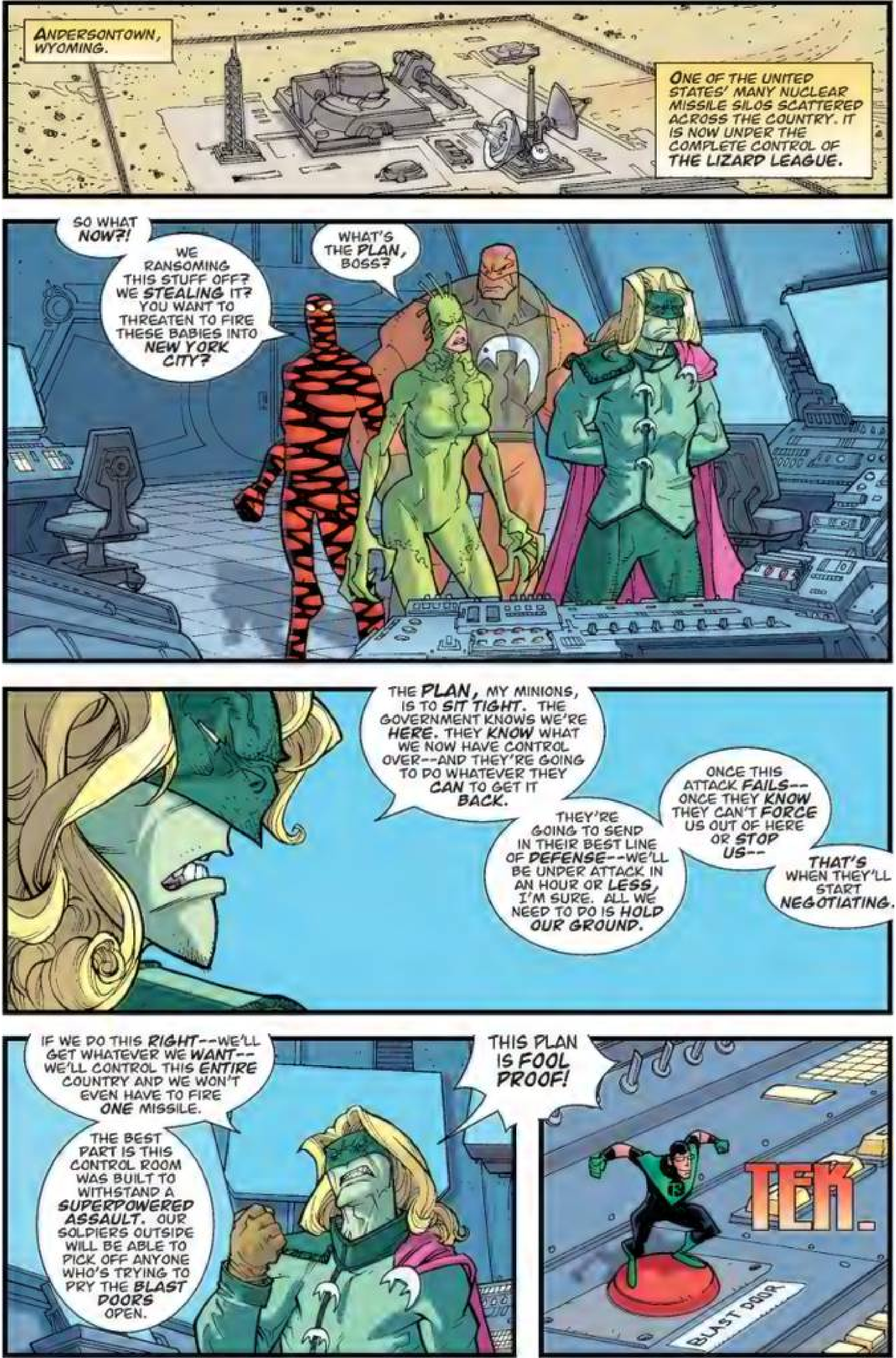
ISSUE FORTY

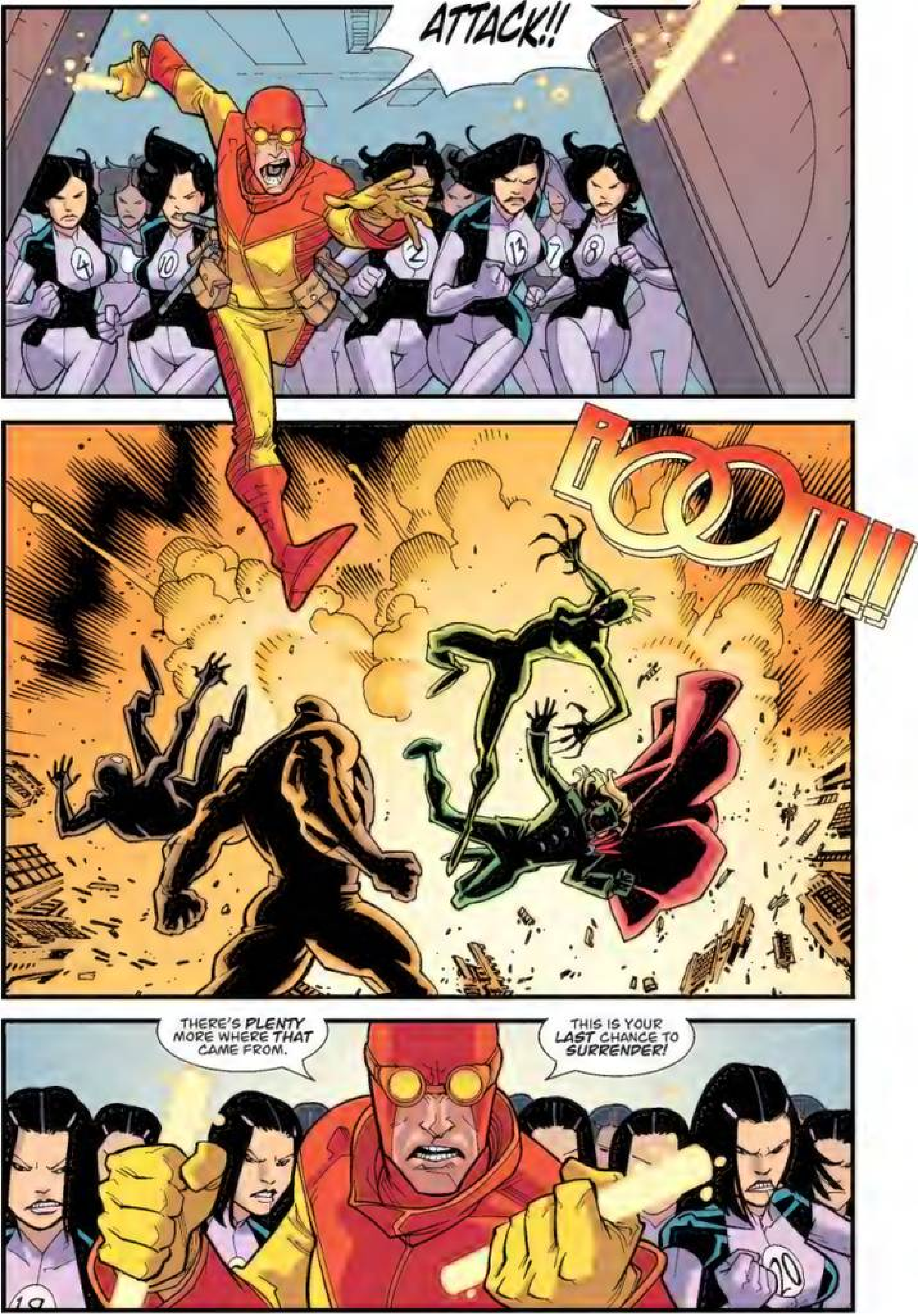

WE'RE GOING TO RUN OUT OF AIR--WE'VE GOT TO DO SOMETHING NOW.
WE'VE GOT ENOUGH AIR FOR SIXTEEN MINUTES IF WE ALL REMAIN CALM.
I DON'T-- UNGH--THINK I CAN HOLD THIS TOGETHER FOR SIXTEEN--
I CAN'T BREATHE! I CAN'T BREATHE!
WE'VE GOT TO DO SOMETHING!
EVERYONE WHO CAN FLY-- HELP ME PUSH!
THERE--THAT AREA THERE! I KNOW WHAT'S THERE--THEY'LL HAVE LIFE-SUPPORT IN THAT AREA.
PUSH US THAT WAY!
OKAY--NOW WHO'S GETTING US IN HERE?
I AM!
EVE--SEAL US AGAINST THE HULL--MOVE YOUR FORCE-FIELD THINGY OUT OF THE WAY--
NOW!

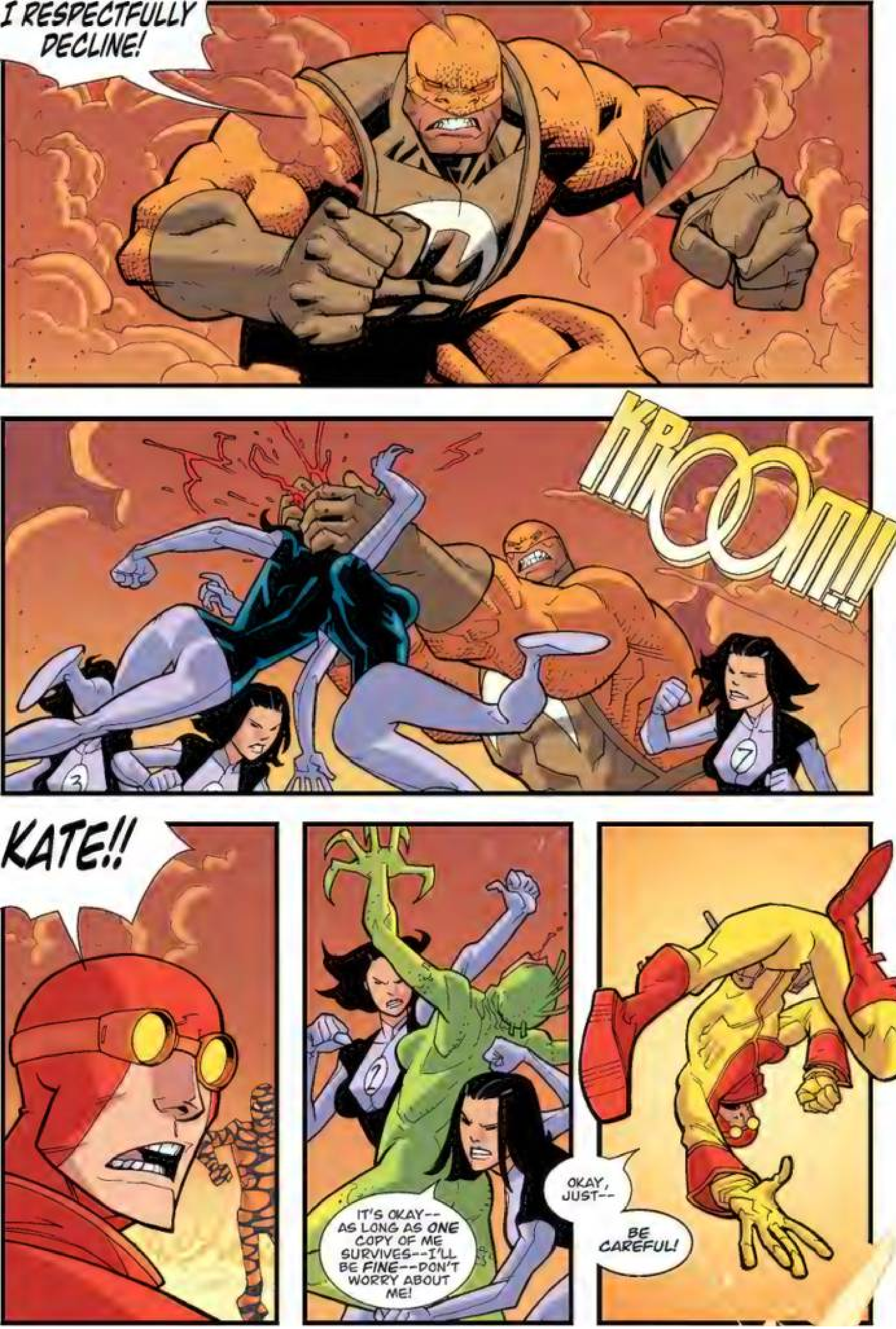

THRAKOOM!!
WE HAVE INTRUDERS IN THE ENGINE ROOM-- YOU WILL REPORT THIS IMMEDIATELY.
THE INTRUDERS MUST DIE!
NO--NO, NO...IT'S OKAY, I'M MARTIAN. SEE? I WAS JUST ON EARTH FOR A WHILE.
WE'RE HERE TO HELP.
UNGH-- ALMOST-- GOT IT SEALED!
ON EARTH?!
THIS IS THE ONE WHO IS THE GREAT BETRAYER! YOU WILL SLAY HIM!

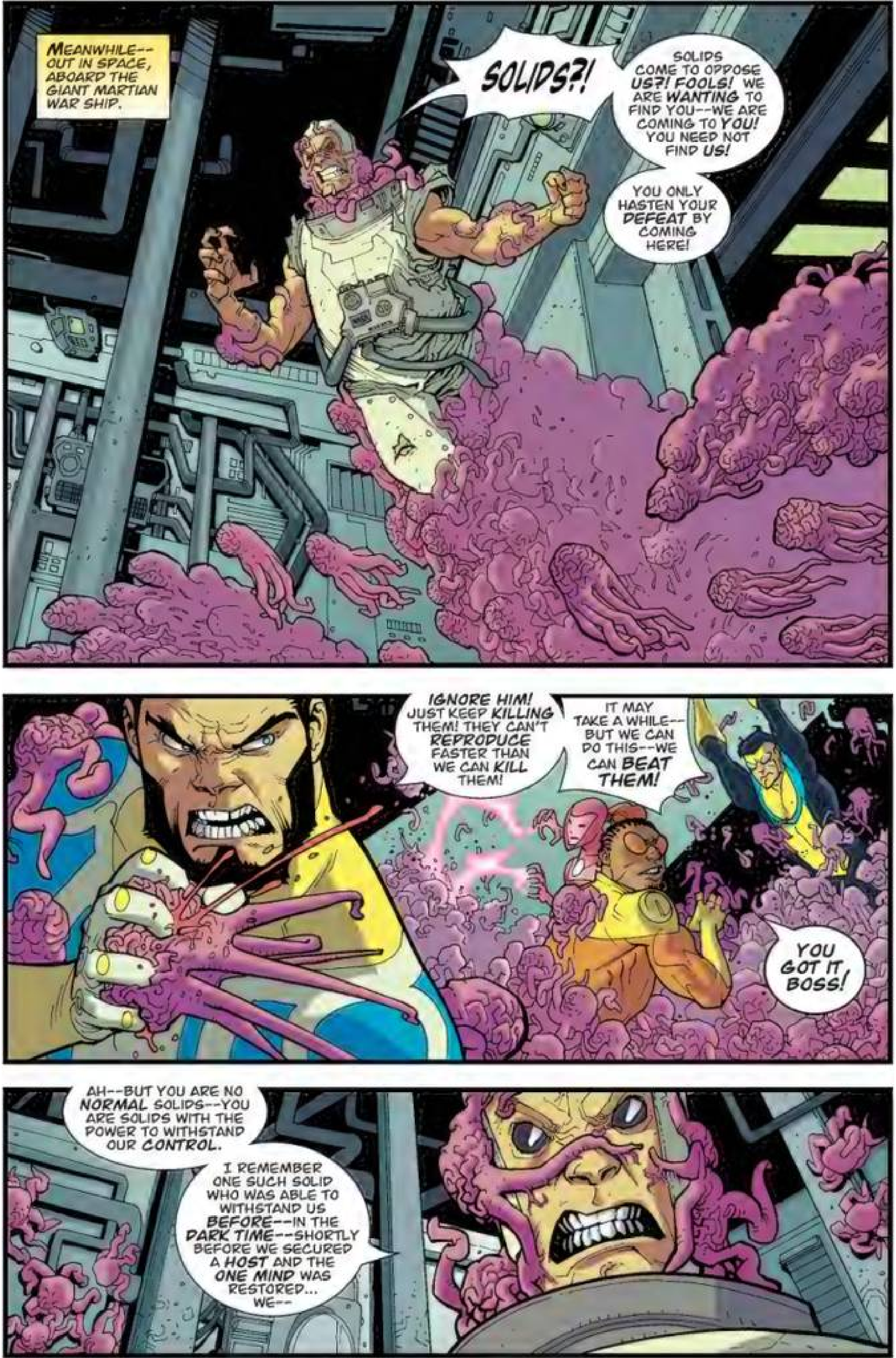

SILENCE!
WRAKOOM!!
WHY DO YOU ATTACK US?! IS IT TRUE THAT YOU HAVE BEEN OVERRUN BY THIS SLAVE RACE--THESE SEQUIDS?
ENSLAVED BY SLAVES, YES--BECAUSE OF HIM!
AND WE ARE HERE TO STOP THEM--BECAUSE OF HIM!
WILL YOU HELP US?
TO STOP THE VILE SEQUIDS WE WOULD ALLY WITH TRANSGROTH HIMSELF.
FIGHTING THE LACK OF PRESSURE IN SPACE--I HAD TO KEEP PULLING ON THE GLOBE TO KEEP IT INTACT SO THE AIR DIDN'T LEAK OUT--AND SEALING UP THAT WALL--
I'VE NEVER USED MY POWERS ON THAT SCALE SO MUCH AT ONE TIME. I JUST--
I JUST NEED A MINUTE TO CATCH MY BREATH.
IT'S OKAY--I GOT YOU.
ARE YOU OKAY?
I'M FINE.
HEY, GUYS--
I FOUND ONE!
SQUIPP!
NO! YOU HAVE ALERTED THEM TO YOUR PRESENCE!
THEY WILL KNOW YOU ARE HERE IMMEDIATELY!

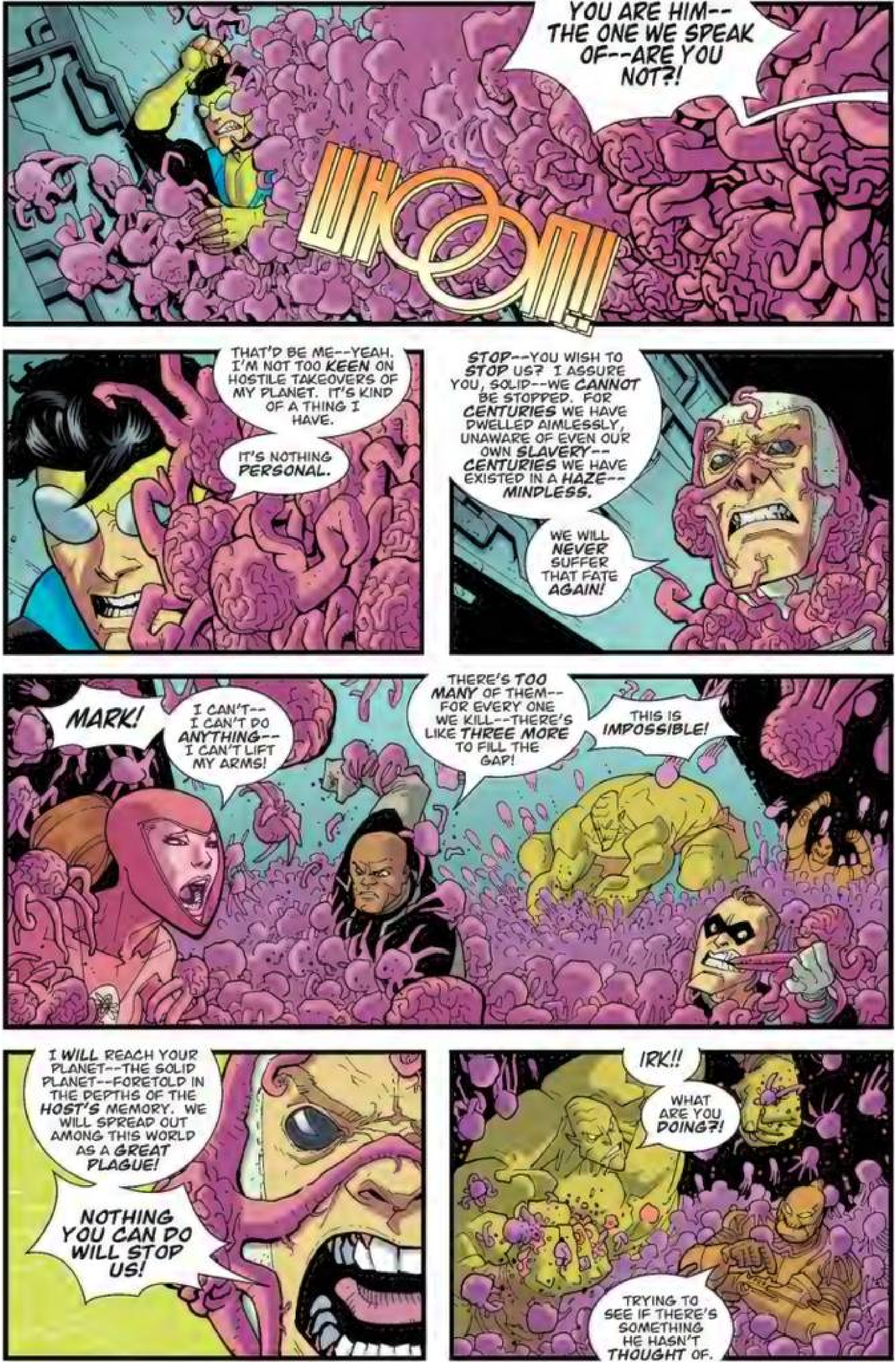

BRAKOOM!!
BULLETPROOF HAS REVEALED THEIR *VULNERABILITY*. IF THESE CREATURES CAN BE SO EASILY *CRUSHED* THIS WILL BE NO GREAT TASK AT ALL!
JUST CRUSH EVERY DAMN ONE OF THEM!
THEY *SHOULDN'T* BE ABLE TO GET TO ME THROUGH THIS NEW COSTUME I'VE MADE-- BUT AFTER PUSHING MY POWERS TO THE LIMITS LIKE THAT--I DON'T KNOW HOW MUCH GOOD I'M GOING TO BE.
I SHOULDN'T HAVE COME.
IF YOU HADN'T COME WE COULD HAVE ALL *DIED* IN THAT EXPLOSION! I'VE GOT YOUR BACK-- YOU'LL BE *FINE!*

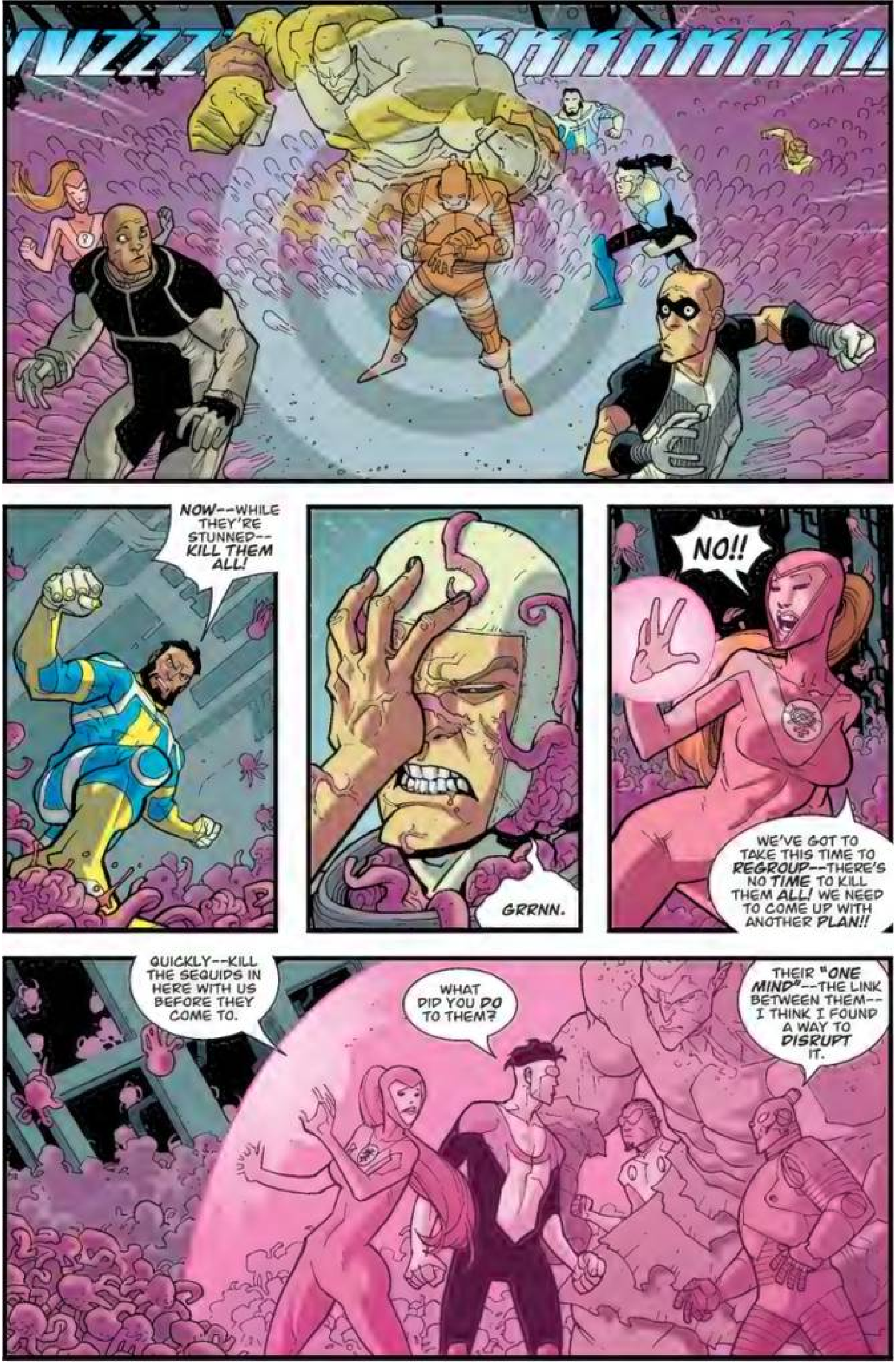

ANDERSONTOWN, WYOMING.
ONE OF THE UNITED STATES' MANY NUCLEAR MISSILE SILOS SCATTERED ACROSS THE COUNTRY. IT IS NOW UNDER THE COMPLETE CONTROL OF THE LIZARD LEAGUE.
SO WHAT NOW?!
WE RANSOMING THIS STUFF OFF? WE STEALING IT? YOU WANT TO THREATEN TO FIRE THESE BABIES INTO NEW YORK CITY?
WHAT'S THE PLAN, BOSS?
THE PLAN, MY MINIONS, IS TO SIT TIGHT. THE GOVERNMENT KNOWS WE'RE HERE. THEY KNOW WHAT WE NOW HAVE CONTROL OVER--AND THEY'RE GOING TO DO WHATEVER THEY CAN TO GET IT BACK.
THEY'RE GOING TO SEND IN THEIR BEST LINE OF DEFENSE--WE'LL BE UNDER ATTACK IN AN HOUR OR LESS, I'M SURE. ALL WE NEED TO DO IS HOLD OUR GROUND.
ONCE THIS ATTACK FAILS--ONCE THEY KNOW THEY CAN'T FORCE US OUT OF HERE OR STOP US--
THAT'S WHEN THEY'LL START NEGOTIATING.
IF WE DO THIS RIGHT--WE'LL GET WHATEVER WE WANT--WE'LL CONTROL THIS ENTIRE COUNTRY AND WE WON'T EVEN HAVE TO FIRE ONE MISSILE.
THE BEST PART IS THIS CONTROL ROOM WAS BUILT TO WITHSTAND A SUPERPOWERED ASSAULT. OUR SOLDIERS OUTSIDE WILL BE ABLE TO PICK OFF ANYONE WHO'S TRYING TO PRY THE BLAST DOORS OPEN.
THIS PLAN IS FOOL PROOF!
TEK.
BLAST DOOR

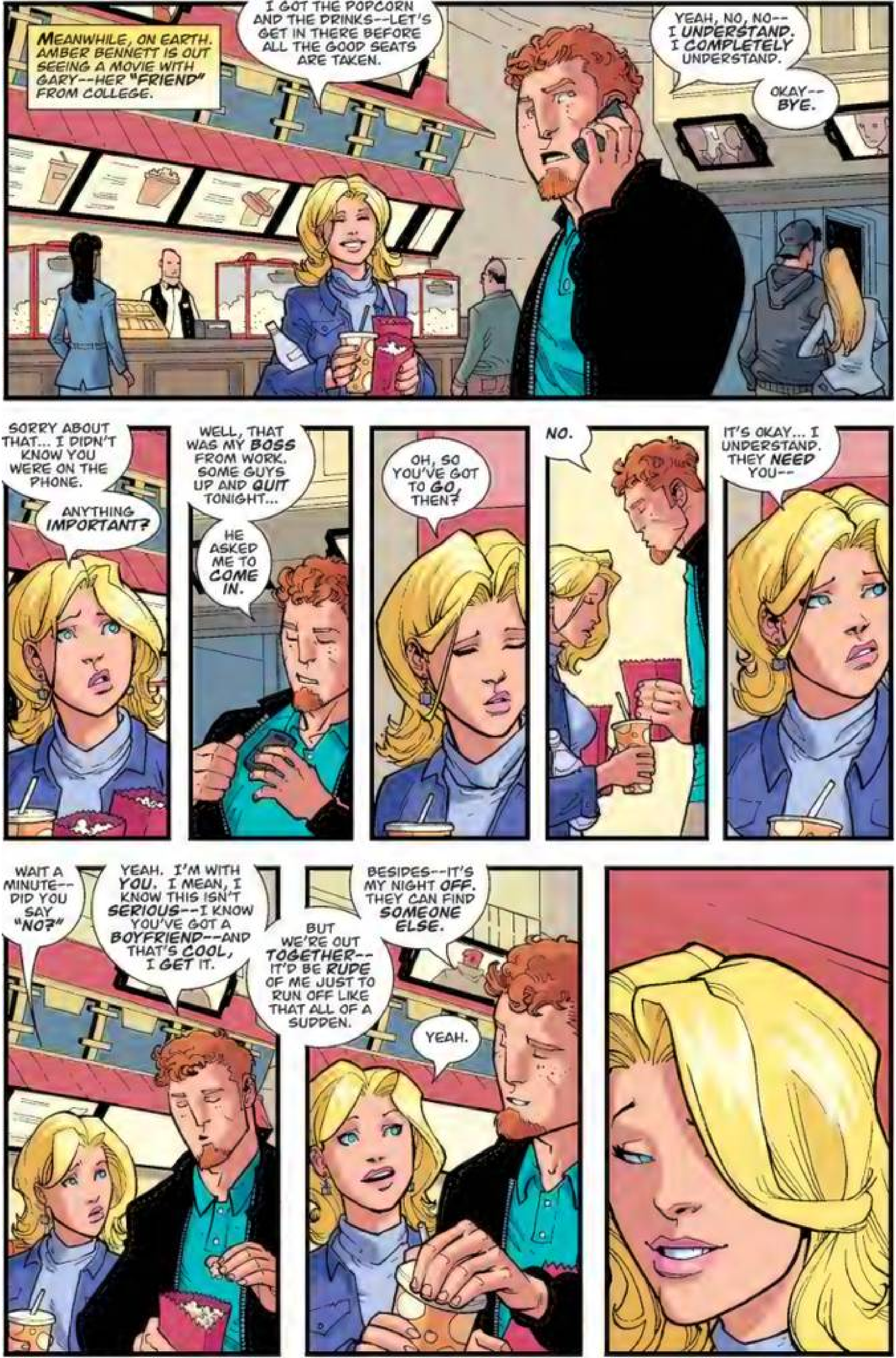

ATTACK!!
4
10
2
13
7
8
BOOM!!!
THERE'S PLENTY MORE WHERE THAT CAME FROM.
THIS IS YOUR LAST CHANCE TO SURRENDER!
18
20

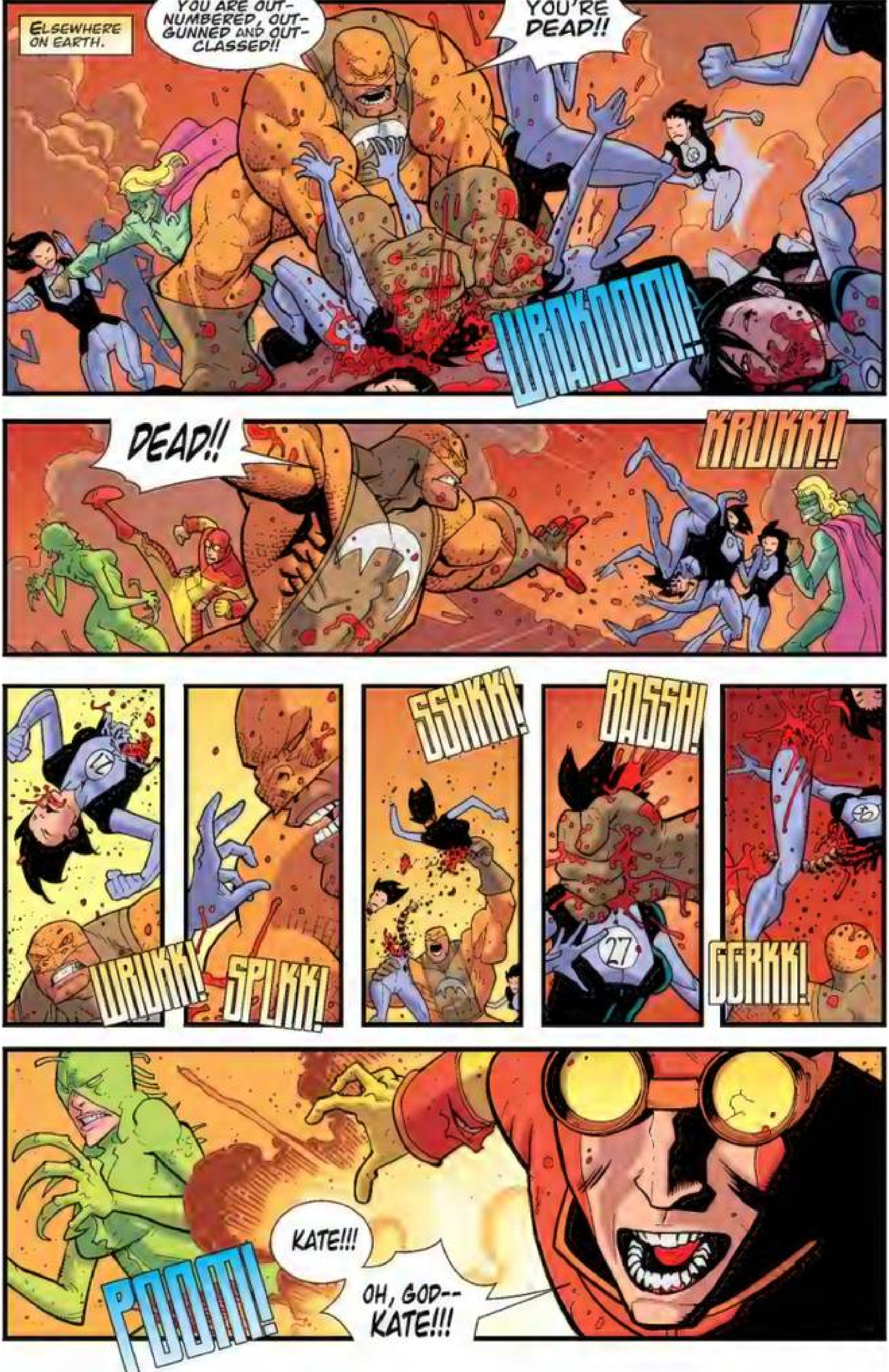

I RESPECTFULLY DECLINE!
KRAOOM!!
KATE!!
IT'S OKAY-- AS LONG AS ONE COPY OF ME SURVIVES--I'LL BE FINE--DON'T WORRY ABOUT ME!
OKAY, JUST--
BE CAREFUL!

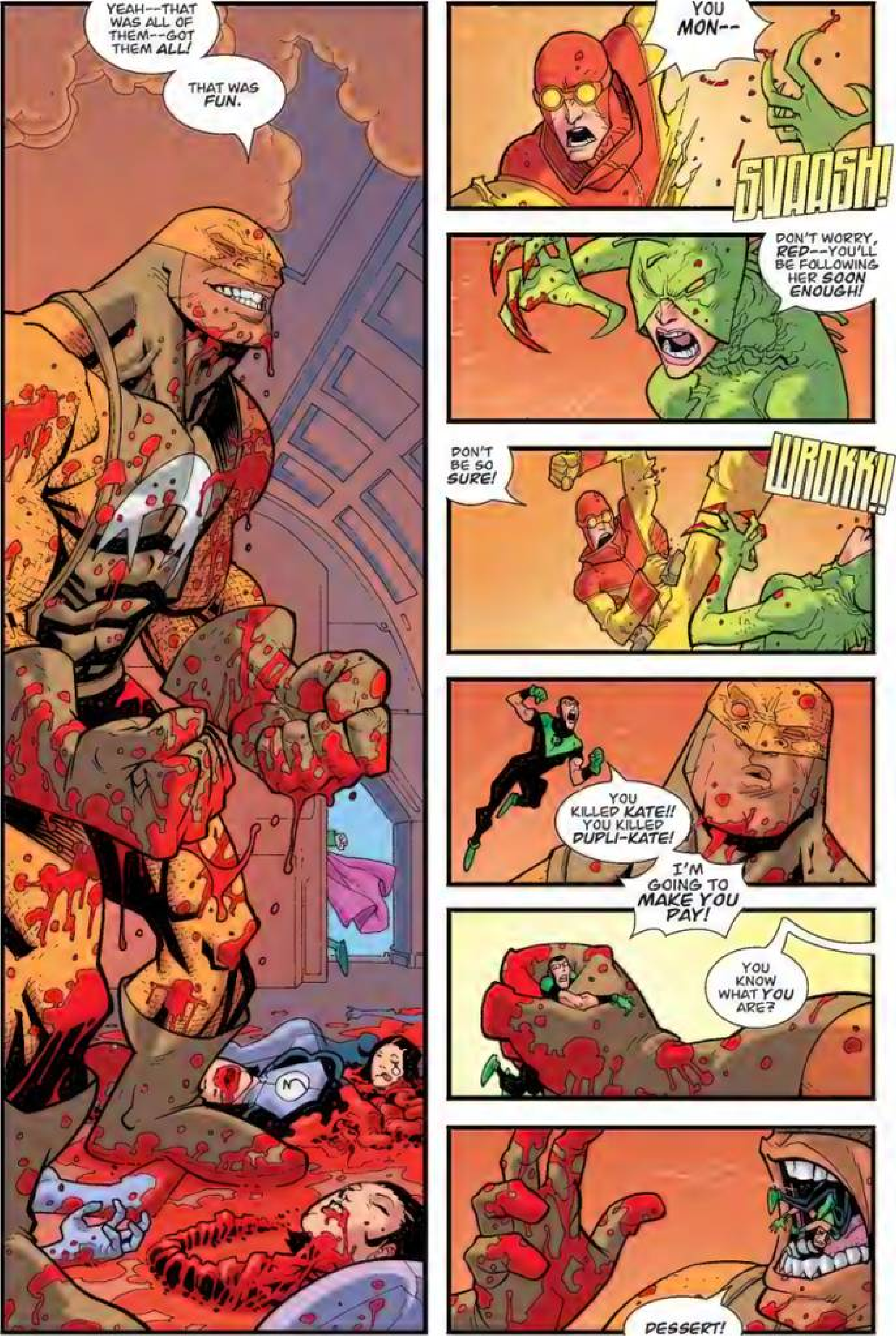

MEANWHILE-- OUT IN SPACE, ABOARD THE GIANT MARTIAN WAR SHIP.
SOLIDS?!
SOLIDS COME TO OPPOSE US?! FOOLS! WE ARE WANTING TO FIND YOU--WE ARE COMING TO YOU! YOU NEED NOT FIND US!
YOU ONLY HASTEN YOUR DEFEAT BY COMING HERE!
IGNORE HIM! JUST KEEP KILLING THEM! THEY CAN'T REPRODUCE FASTER THAN WE CAN KILL THEM!
IT MAY TAKE A WHILE-- BUT WE CAN DO THIS--WE CAN BEAT THEM!
YOU GOT IT, BOSS!
AH--BUT YOU ARE NO NORMAL SOLIDS--YOU ARE SOLIDS WITH THE POWER TO WITHSTAND OUR CONTROL.
I REMEMBER ONE SUCH SOLID WHO WAS ABLE TO WITHSTAND US BEFORE--IN THE DARK TIME--SHORTLY BEFORE WE SECURED A HOST AND THE ONE MIND WAS RESTORED... WE--

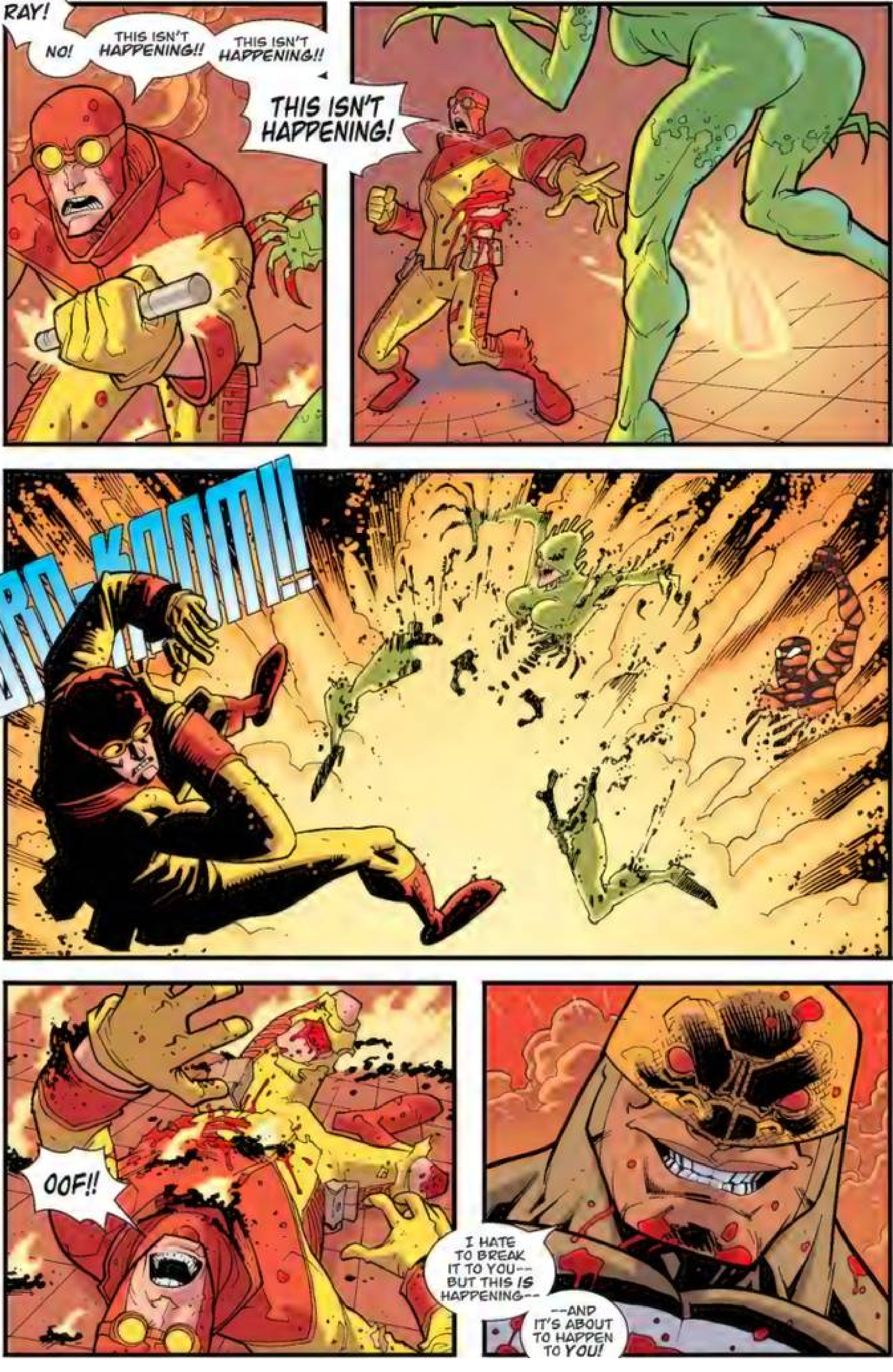

YOU ARE HIM-- THE ONE WE SPEAK OF--ARE YOU NOT?!
WHOOM!!
THAT'D BE ME--YEAH. I'M NOT TOO KEEN ON HOSTILE TAKEOVERS OF MY PLANET. IT'S KIND OF A THING I HAVE.
IT'S NOTHING PERSONAL.
STOP--YOU WISH TO STOP US? I ASSURE YOU, SOLID--WE CANNOT BE STOPPED. FOR CENTURIES WE HAVE DWELLED AIMLESSLY, UNAWARE OF EVEN OUR OWN SLAVERY-- CENTURIES WE HAVE EXISTED IN A HAZE-- MINDLESS.
WE WILL NEVER SUFFER THAT FATE AGAIN!
MARK!
I CAN'T-- I CAN'T DO ANYTHING-- I CAN'T LIFT MY ARMS!
THERE'S TOO MANY OF THEM-- FOR EVERY ONE WE KILL--THERE'S LIKE THREE MORE TO FILL THE GAP!
THIS IS IMPOSSIBLE!
I WILL REACH YOUR PLANET--THE SOLID PLANET--FORETOLD IN THE DEPTHS OF THE HOST'S MEMORY. WE WILL SPREAD OUT AMONG THIS WORLD AS A GREAT PLAGUE!
NOTHING YOU CAN DO WILL STOP US!
IRK!!
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!
TRYING TO SEE IF THERE'S SOMETHING HE HASN'T THOUGHT OF.

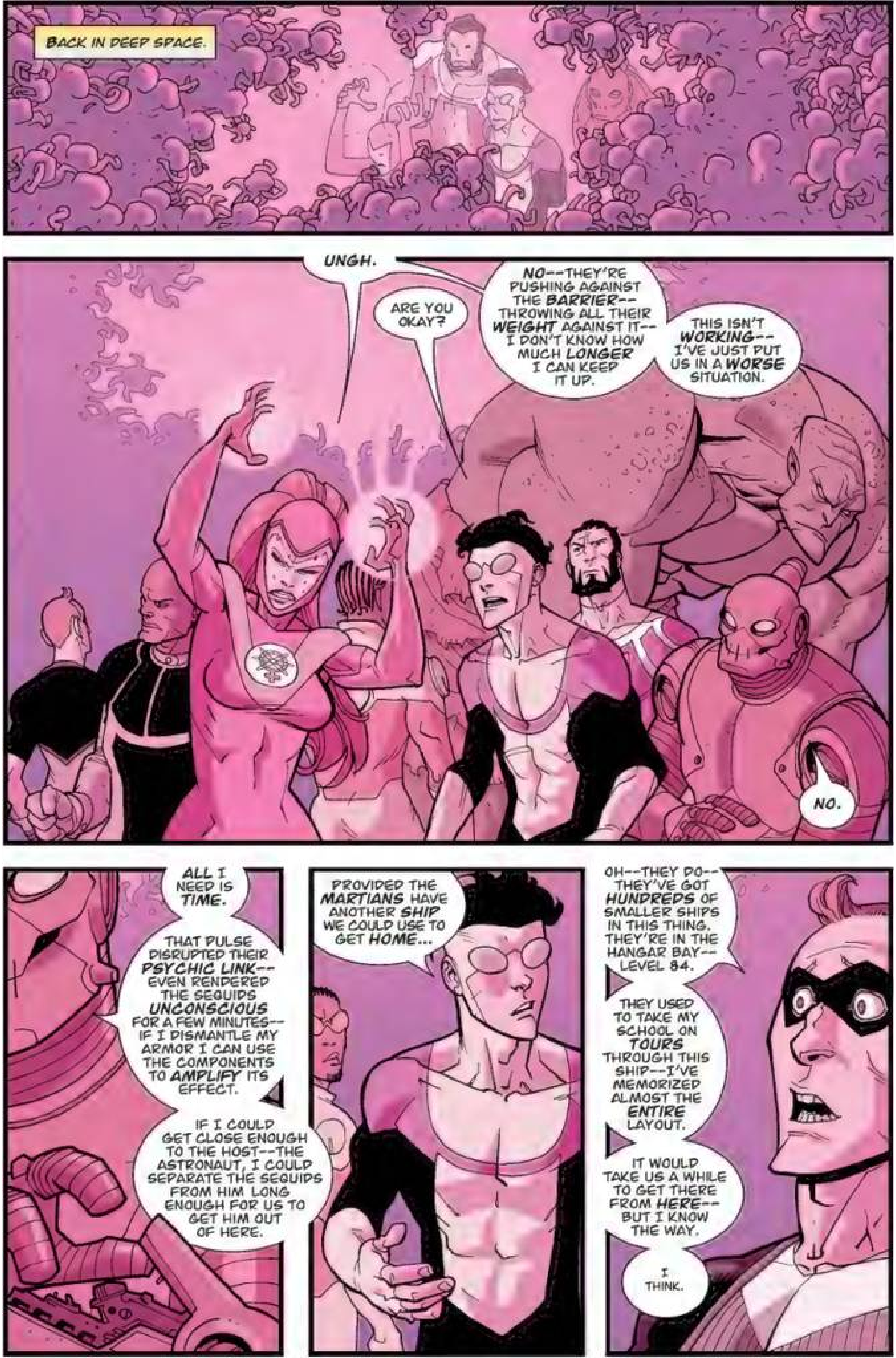

VZZZ KKKKKKKK!!
NOW--WHILE THEY'RE STUNNED--KILL THEM ALL!
GRRNN.
NO!!
WE'VE GOT TO TAKE THIS TIME TO REGROUP--THERE'S NO TIME TO KILL THEM ALL! WE NEED TO COME UP WITH ANOTHER PLAN!!
QUICKLY--KILL THE SEQUIDS IN HERE WITH US BEFORE THEY COME TO.
WHAT DID YOU DO TO THEM?
THEIR "ONE MIND"--THE LINK BETWEEN THEM--I THINK I FOUND A WAY TO DISRUPT IT.

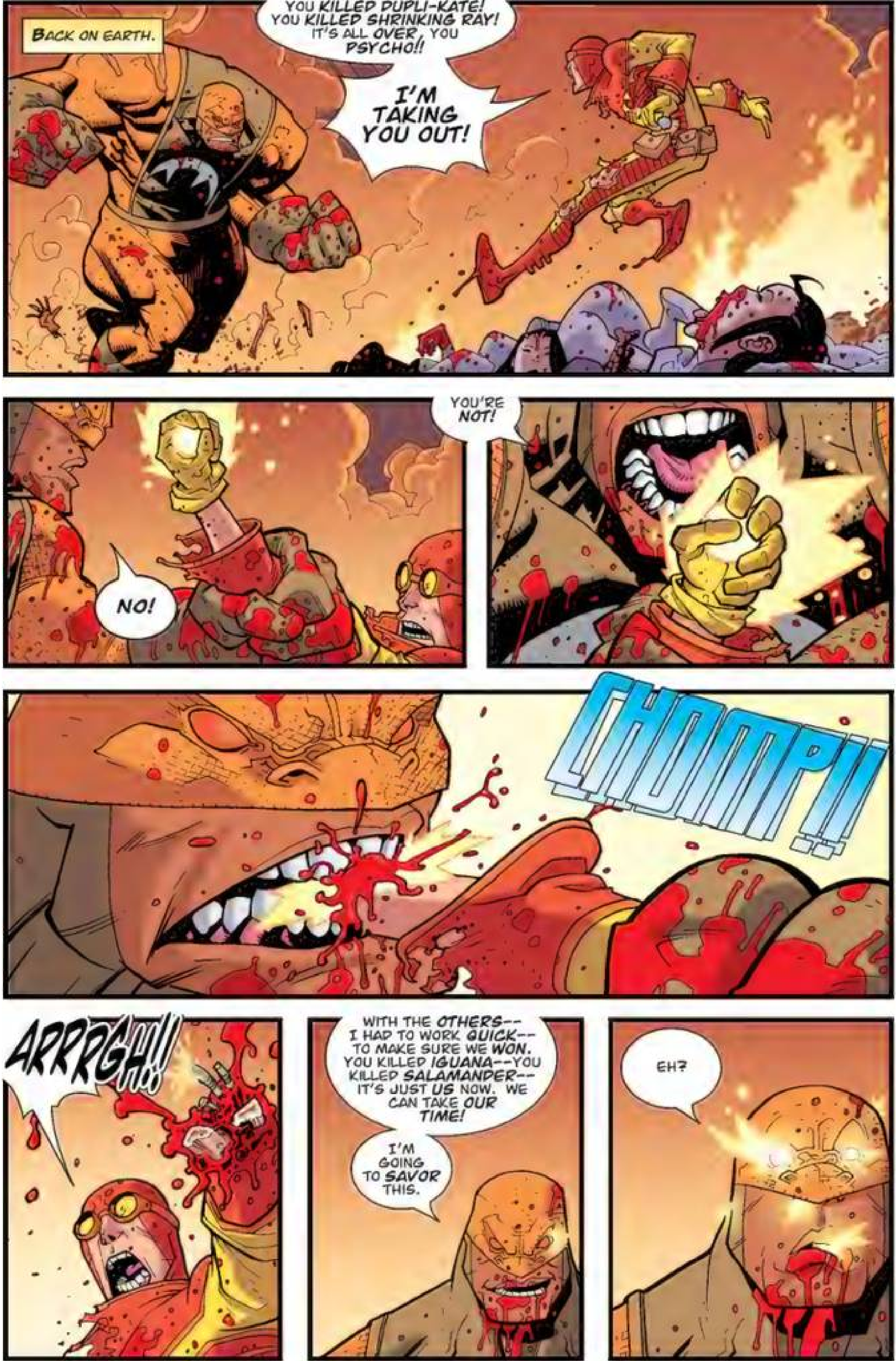

MEANWHILE, ON EARTH. AMBER BENNETT IS OUT SEEING A MOVIE WITH GARY--HER "FRIEND" FROM COLLEGE.
I GOT THE POPCORN AND THE DRINKS--LET'S GET IN THERE BEFORE ALL THE GOOD SEATS ARE TAKEN.
YEAH, NO, NO-- I UNDERSTAND. I COMPLETELY UNDERSTAND.
OKAY-- BYE.
SORRY ABOUT THAT... I DIDN'T KNOW YOU WERE ON THE PHONE.
ANYTHING IMPORTANT?
WELL, THAT WAS MY BOSS FROM WORK. SOME GUYS UP AND QUIT TONIGHT...
HE ASKED ME TO COME IN.
OH, SO YOU'VE GOT TO GO, THEN?
NO.
IT'S OKAY... I UNDERSTAND. THEY NEED YOU--
WAIT A MINUTE-- DID YOU SAY "NO?"
YEAH. I'M WITH YOU. I MEAN, I KNOW THIS ISN'T SERIOUS--I KNOW YOU'VE GOT A BOYFRIEND--AND THAT'S COOL, I GET IT.
BUT WE'RE OUT TOGETHER-- IT'D BE RUDE OF ME JUST TO RUN OFF LIKE THAT ALL OF A SUDDEN.
BESIDES--IT'S MY NIGHT OFF. THEY CAN FIND SOMEONE ELSE.
YEAH.

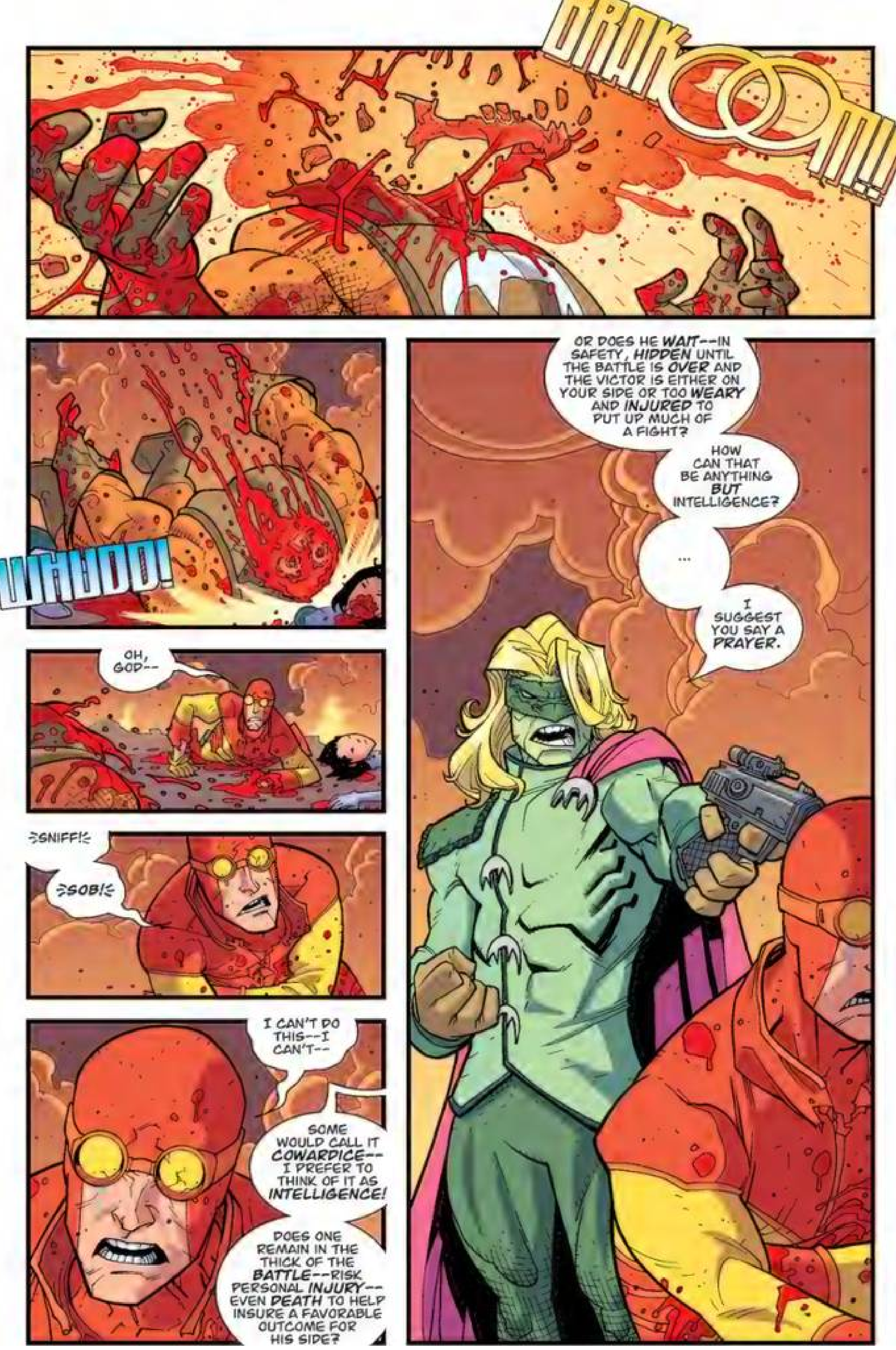

ELSEWHERE ON EARTH.
YOU ARE OUT-NUMBERED, OUT-GUNNED AND OUT-CLASSED!!
YOU'RE DEAD!!
WRAKOOM!!
DEAD!!
KRUKK!!
WRUKK!
SPLKK!
SSHKK!
BASSH!
27
GGRKK!
KATE!!!
OH, GOD-- KATE!!!
POOM!

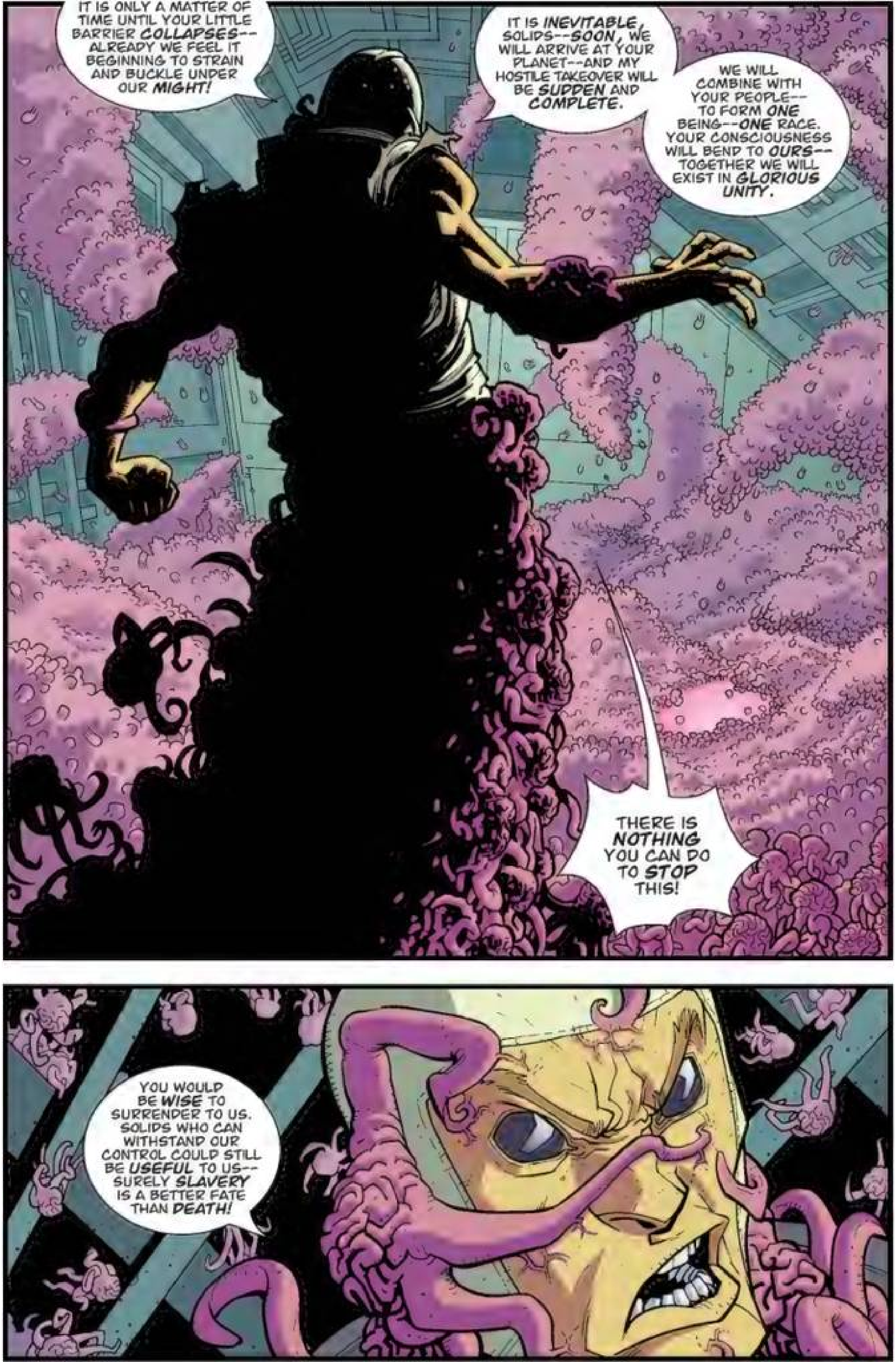

YEAH--THAT WAS ALL OF THEM--GOT THEM ALL!
THAT WAS FUN.
YOU MON--
SVAASH!
DON'T WORRY, RED--YOU'LL BE FOLLOWING HER SOON ENOUGH!
DON'T BE SO SURE!
WROKK!!
YOU KILLED KATE!! YOU KILLED DUPLI-KATE!
I'M GOING TO MAKE YOU PAY!
YOU KNOW WHAT YOU ARE?
DESSERT!

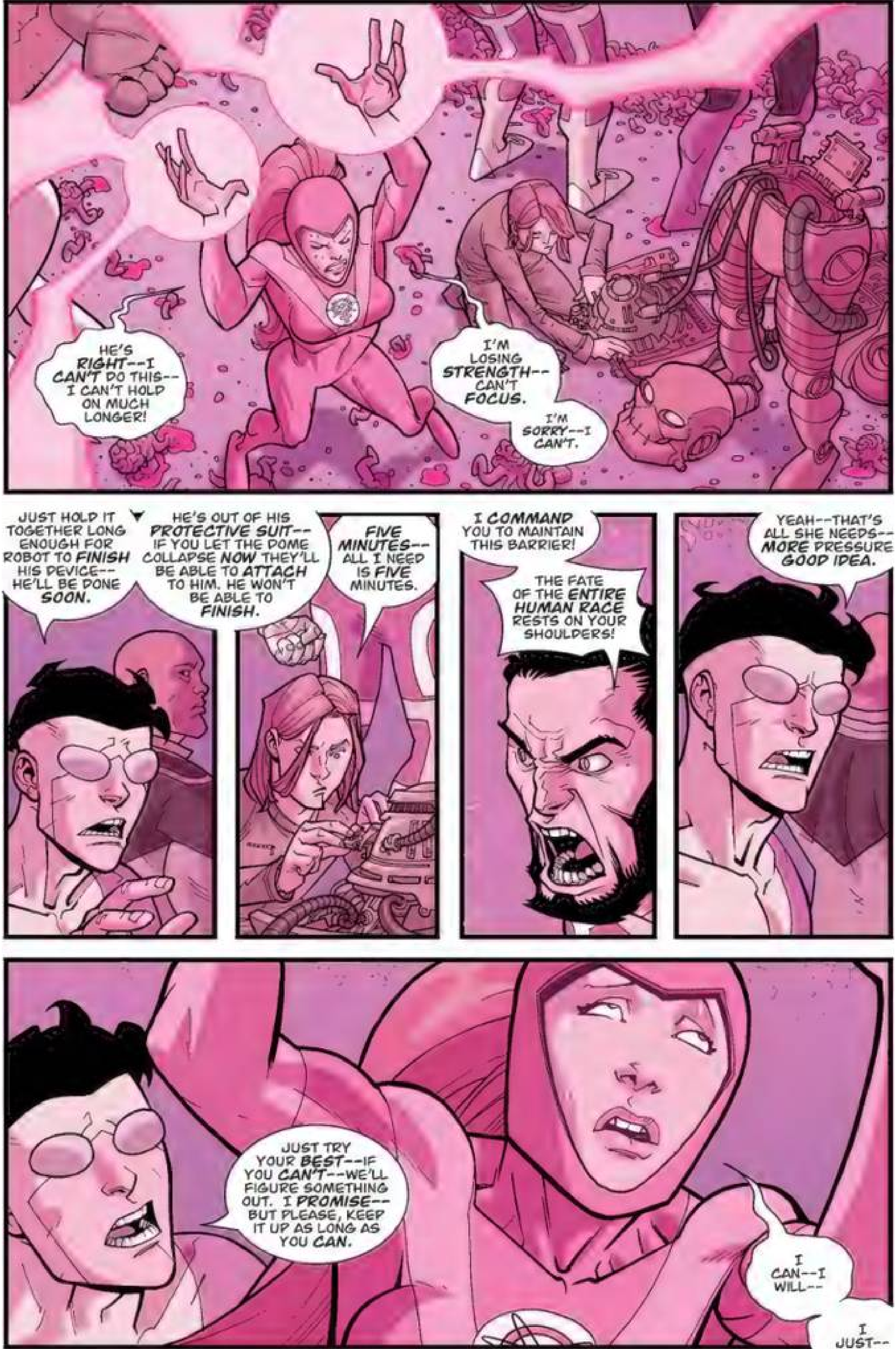

RAY!
NO! THIS ISN'T HAPPENING!! THIS ISN'T HAPPENING!!
THIS ISN'T HAPPENING!
BRO-KOOM!!
OOF!!
I HATE TO BREAK IT TO YOU-- BUT THIS *IS* HAPPENING--
--AND IT'S ABOUT TO HAPPEN TO *YOU!*

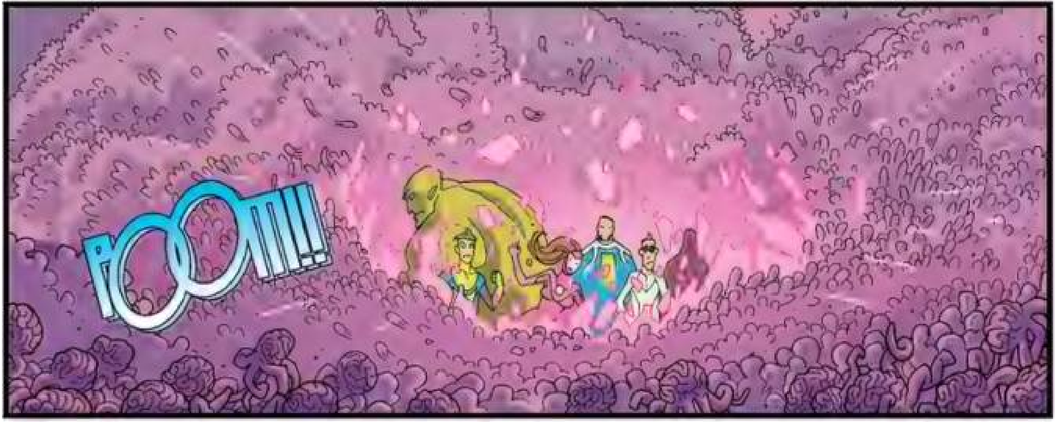

BACK IN DEEP SPACE.
UNGH.
ARE YOU OKAY?
NO--THEY'RE PUSHING AGAINST THE BARRIER--THROWING ALL THEIR WEIGHT AGAINST IT--I DON'T KNOW HOW MUCH LONGER I CAN KEEP IT UP.
THIS ISN'T WORKING--I'VE JUST PUT US IN A WORSE SITUATION.
NO.
ALL I NEED IS TIME.
THAT PULSE DISRUPTED THEIR PSYCHIC LINK--EVEN RENDERED THE SEQUIDS UNCONSCIOUS FOR A FEW MINUTES--IF I DISMANTLE MY ARMOR I CAN USE THE COMPONENTS TO AMPLIFY ITS EFFECT.
IF I COULD GET CLOSE ENOUGH TO THE HOST--THE ASTRONAUT, I COULD SEPARATE THE SEQUIDS FROM HIM LONG ENOUGH FOR US TO GET HIM OUT OF HERE.
PROVIDED THE MARTIANS HAVE ANOTHER SHIP WE COULD USE TO GET HOME...
OH--THEY DO--THEY'VE GOT HUNDREDS OF SMALLER SHIPS IN THIS THING. THEY'RE IN THE HANGAR BAY--LEVEL 84.
THEY USED TO TAKE MY SCHOOL ON TOURS THROUGH THIS SHIP--I'VE MEMORIZED ALMOST THE ENTIRE LAYOUT.
IT WOULD TAKE US A WHILE TO GET THERE FROM HERE--BUT I KNOW THE WAY.
I THINK.

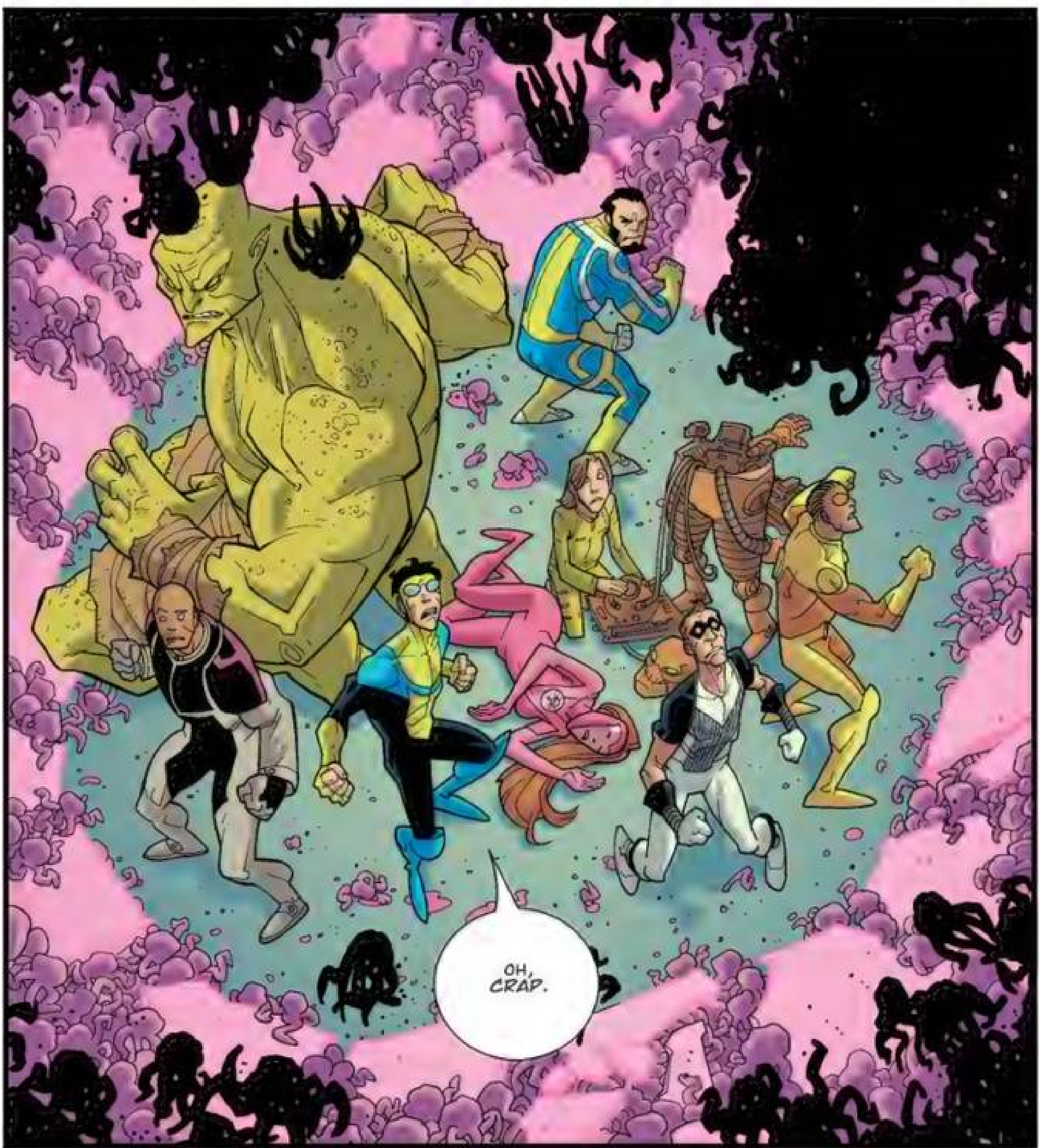

BACK ON EARTH.
YOU KILLED DUPLI-KATE! YOU KILLED SHRINKING RAY! IT'S ALL OVER, YOU PSYCHO!!
I'M TAKING YOU OUT!
NO!
YOU'RE NOT!
CHOMP!!
ARRRGH!!
WITH THE OTHERS-- I HAD TO WORK QUICK-- TO MAKE SURE WE WON. YOU KILLED IGUANA--YOU KILLED SALAMANDER-- IT'S JUST US NOW. WE CAN TAKE OUR TIME!
I'M GOING TO SAVOR THIS.
EH?


DRAKOOM!!
WHUDD!
OH, GOD--
SNIFF!
SOB!
I CAN'T DO THIS--I CAN'T--
SOME WOULD CALL IT COWARDICE--I PREFER TO THINK OF IT AS INTELLIGENCE!
DOES ONE REMAIN IN THE THICK OF THE BATTLE--RISK PERSONAL INJURY--EVEN DEATH TO HELP INSURE A FAVORABLE OUTCOME FOR HIS SIDE?
OR DOES HE WAIT--IN SAFETY, HIDDEN UNTIL THE BATTLE IS OVER AND THE VICTOR IS EITHER ON YOUR SIDE OR TOO WEARY AND INJURED TO PUT UP MUCH OF A FIGHT?
HOW CAN THAT BE ANYTHING BUT INTELLIGENCE?
...
I SUGGEST YOU SAY A PRAYER.

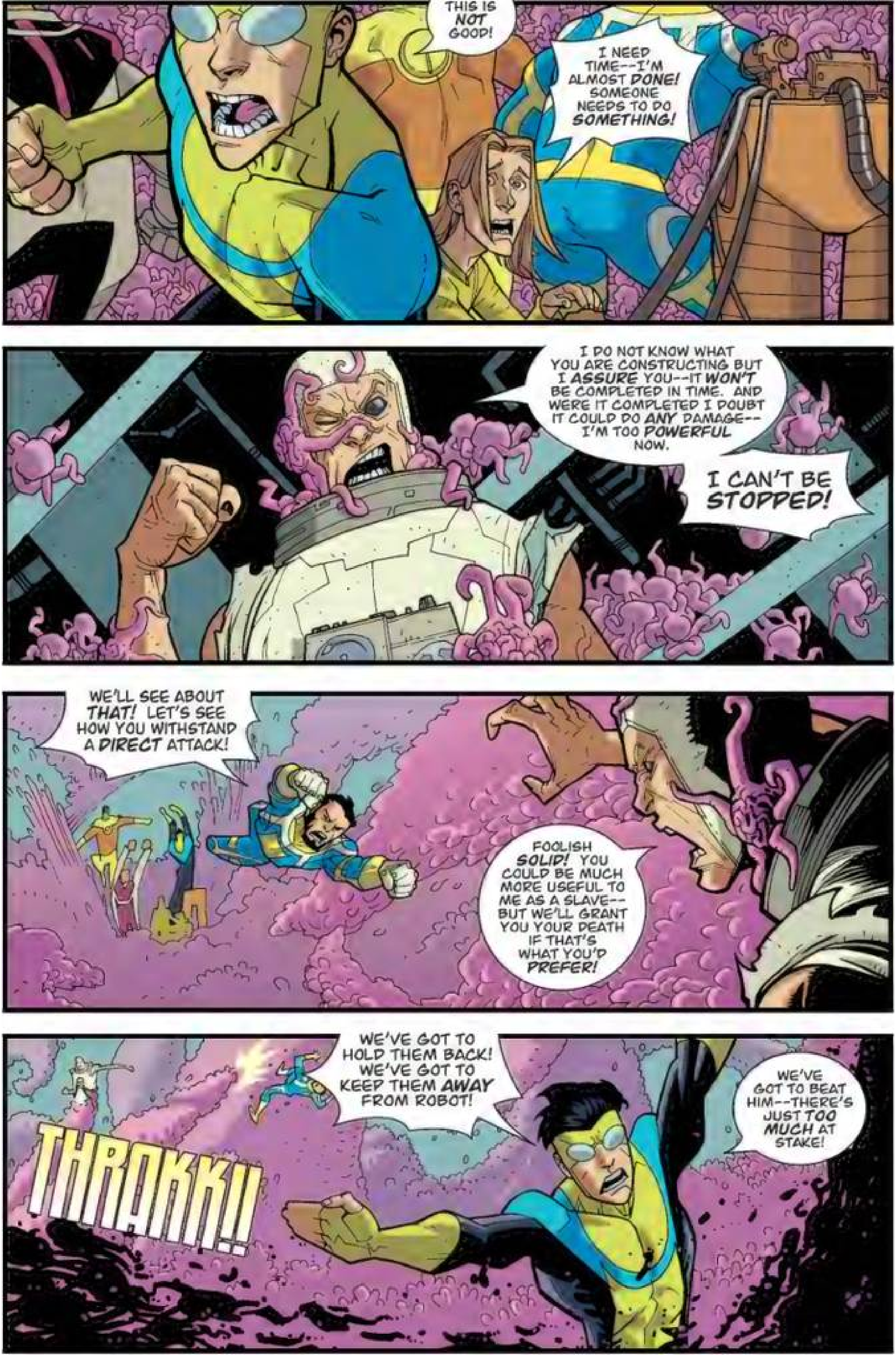

IT IS ONLY A MATTER OF TIME UNTIL YOUR LITTLE BARRIER COLLAPSES--ALREADY WE FEEL IT BEGINNING TO STRAIN AND BUCKLE UNDER OUR MIGHT!
IT IS INEVITABLE, SOLIDS--SOON, WE WILL ARRIVE AT YOUR PLANET--AND MY HOSTILE TAKEOVER WILL BE SUDDEN AND COMPLETE.
WE WILL COMBINE WITH YOUR PEOPLE--TO FORM ONE BEING--ONE RACE. YOUR CONSCIOUSNESS WILL BEND TO OURS--TOGETHER WE WILL EXIST IN GLORIOUS UNITY.
THERE IS NOTHING YOU CAN DO TO STOP THIS!
YOU WOULD BE WISE TO SURRENDER TO US. SOLIDS WHO CAN WITHSTAND OUR CONTROL COULD STILL BE USEFUL TO US--SURELY SLAVERY IS A BETTER FATE THAN DEATH!

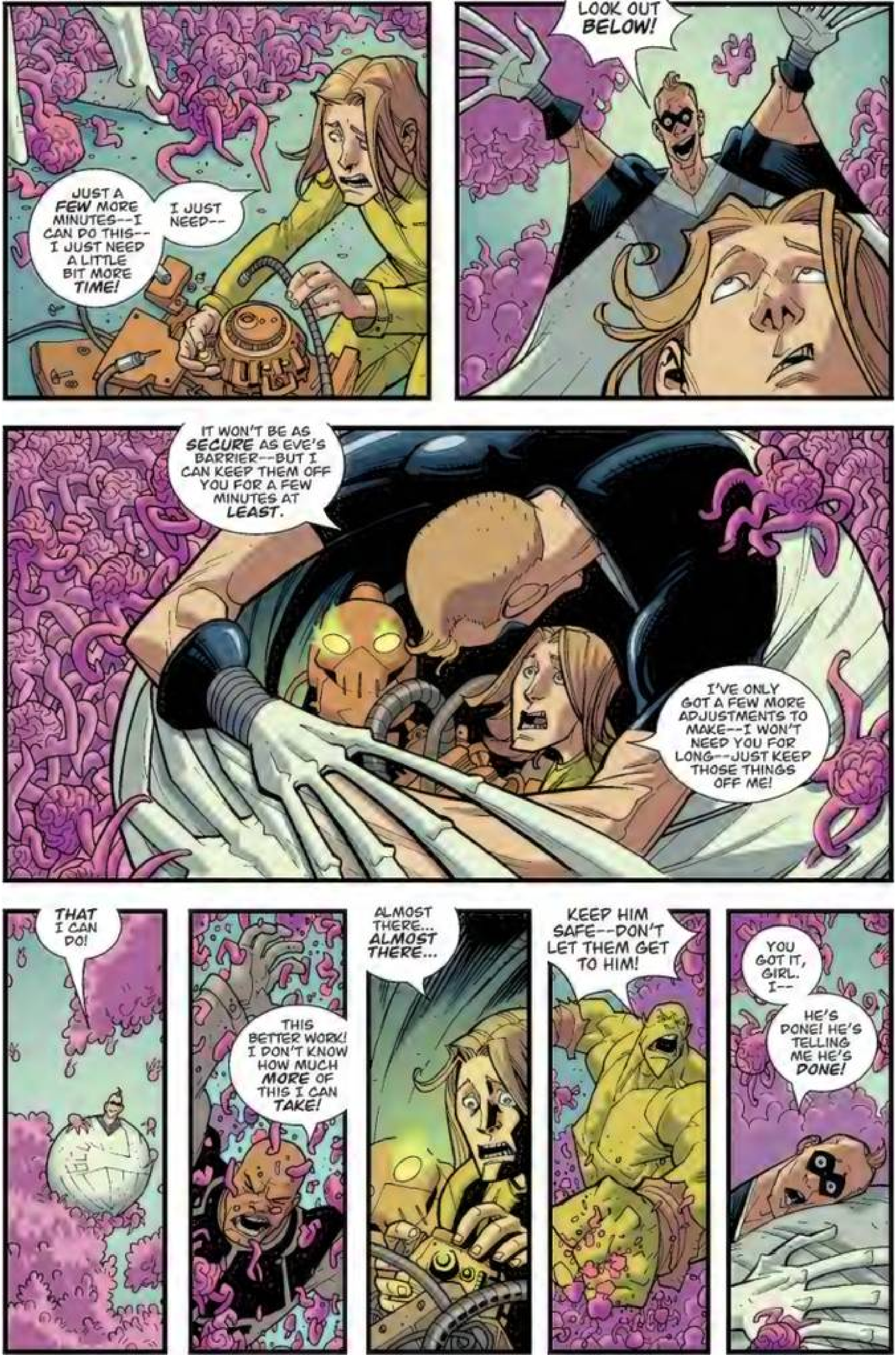

HE'S **RIGHT**--I **CAN'T** DO THIS--I CAN'T HOLD ON MUCH LONGER!
I'M LOSING **STRENGTH**--CAN'T **FOCUS**.
I'M SORRY--I CAN'T.
JUST HOLD IT TOGETHER LONG ENOUGH FOR ROBOT TO **FINISH** HIS DEVICE--HE'LL BE DONE **SOON**.
HE'S OUT OF HIS **PROTECTIVE SUIT**--IF YOU LET THE DOME COLLAPSE **NOW** THEY'LL BE ABLE TO **ATTACH** TO HIM. HE WON'T BE ABLE TO **FINISH**.
FIVE MINUTES--ALL I NEED IS **FIVE** MINUTES.
I **COMMAND** YOU TO MAINTAIN THIS BARRIER!
THE FATE OF THE **ENTIRE HUMAN RACE** RESTS ON YOUR SHOULDERS!
YEAH--THAT'S ALL SHE NEEDS--**MORE** PRESSURE. **GOOD IDEA.**
JUST TRY YOUR **BEST**--IF YOU **CAN'T**--WE'LL FIGURE SOMETHING OUT. I **PROMISE**--BUT PLEASE, KEEP IT UP AS LONG AS YOU **CAN**.
I CAN--I WILL--
I JUST--

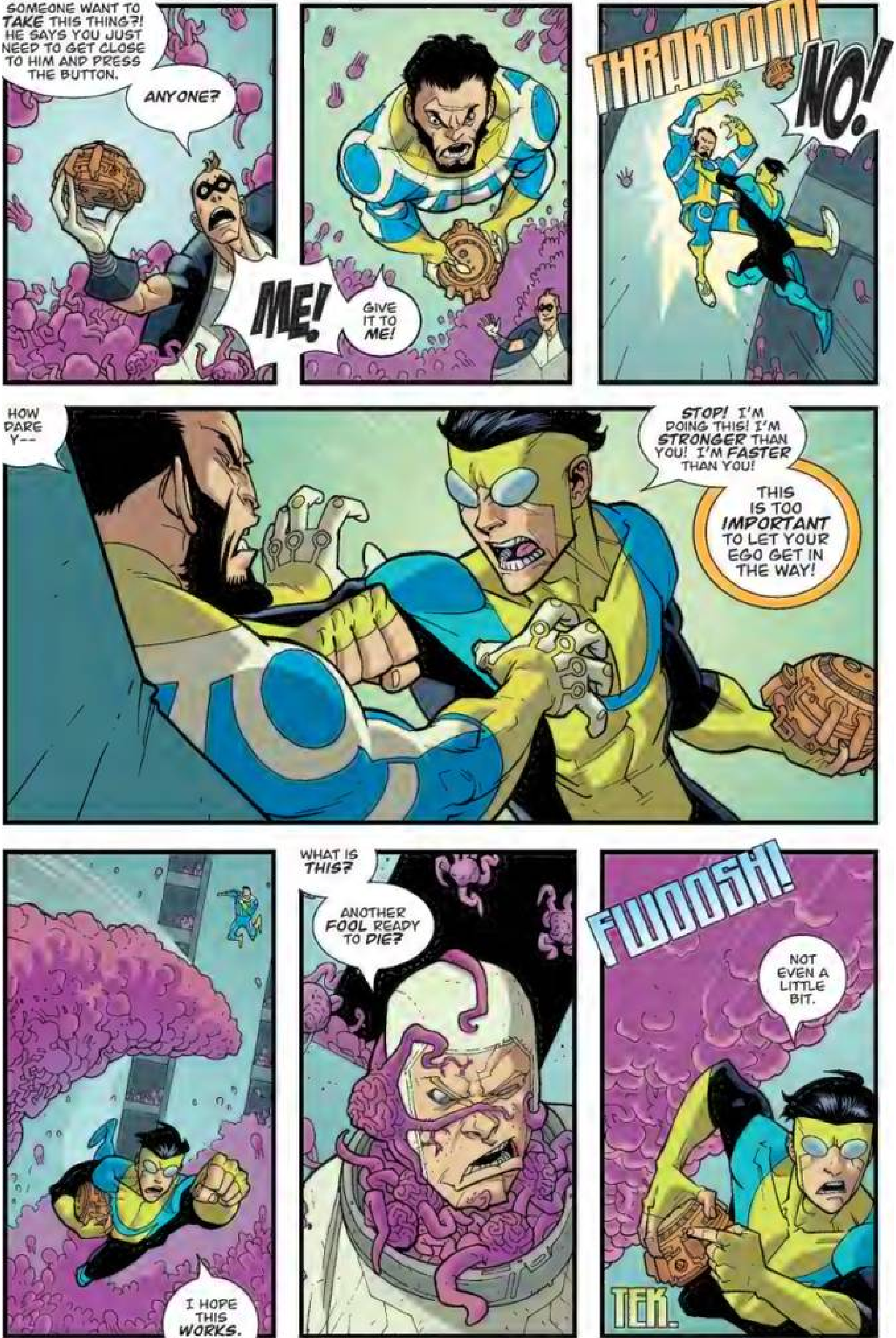

POOM!!!

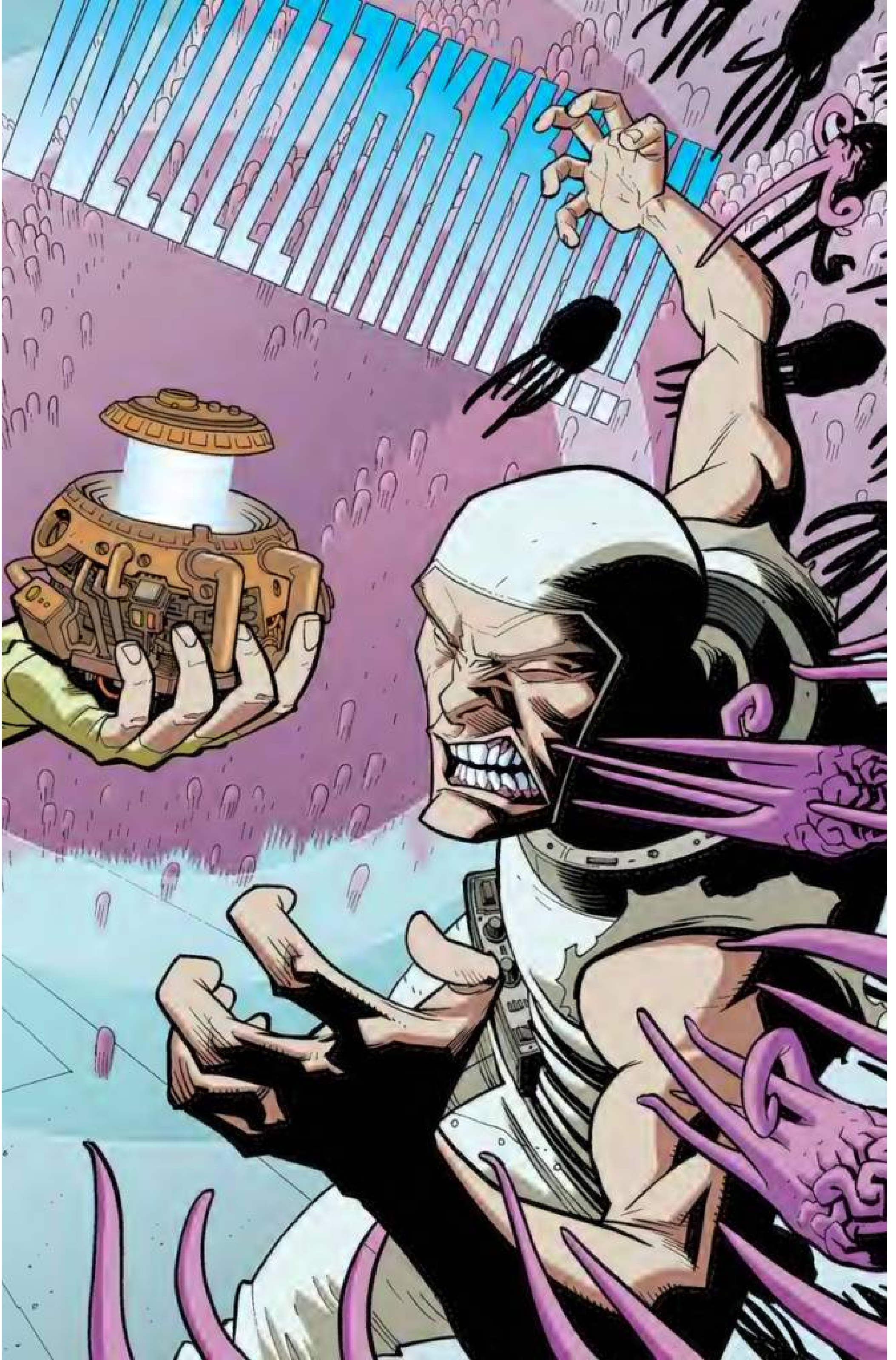

OH, CRAP.

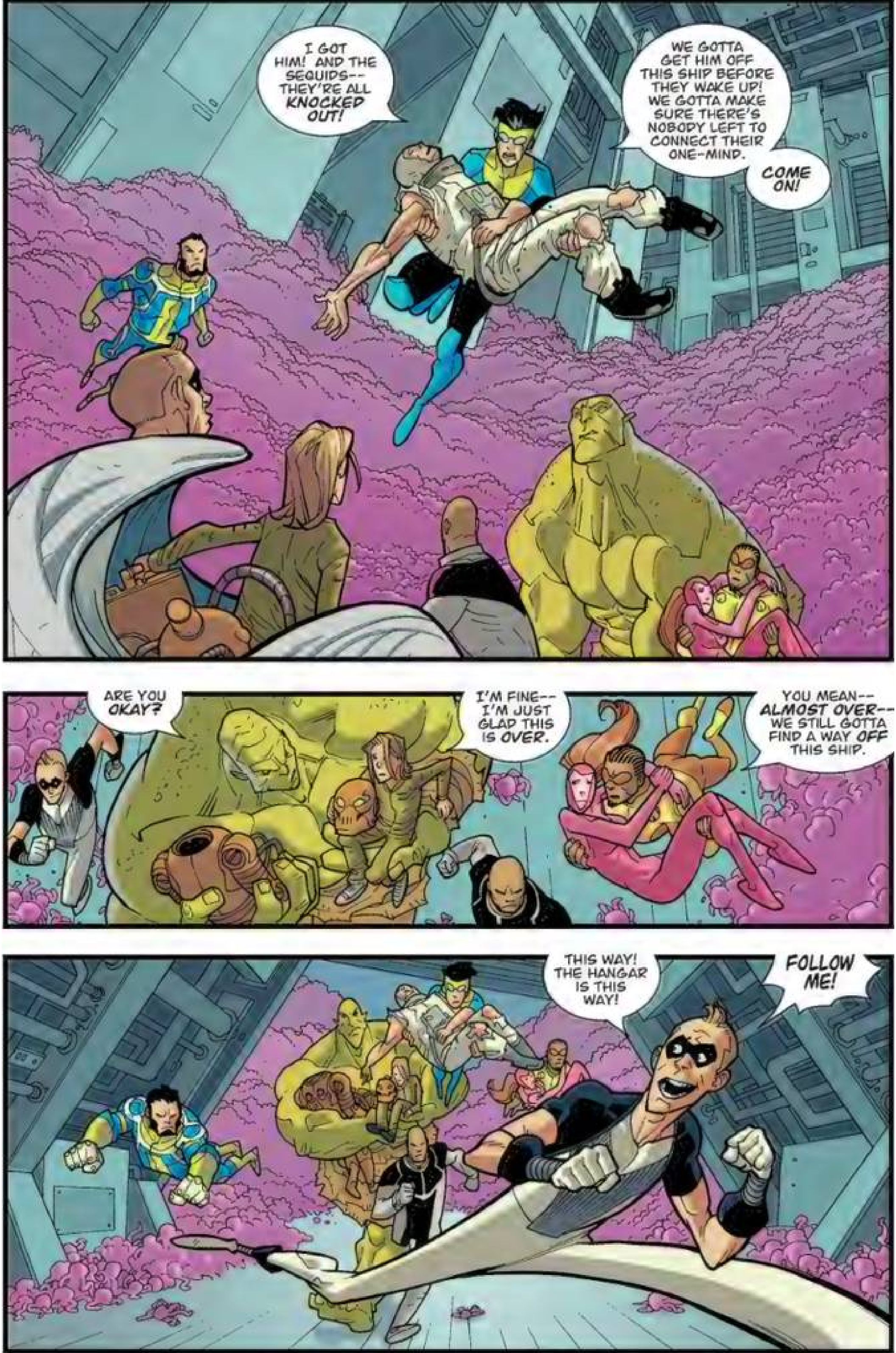
ISSUE FORTY-ONE

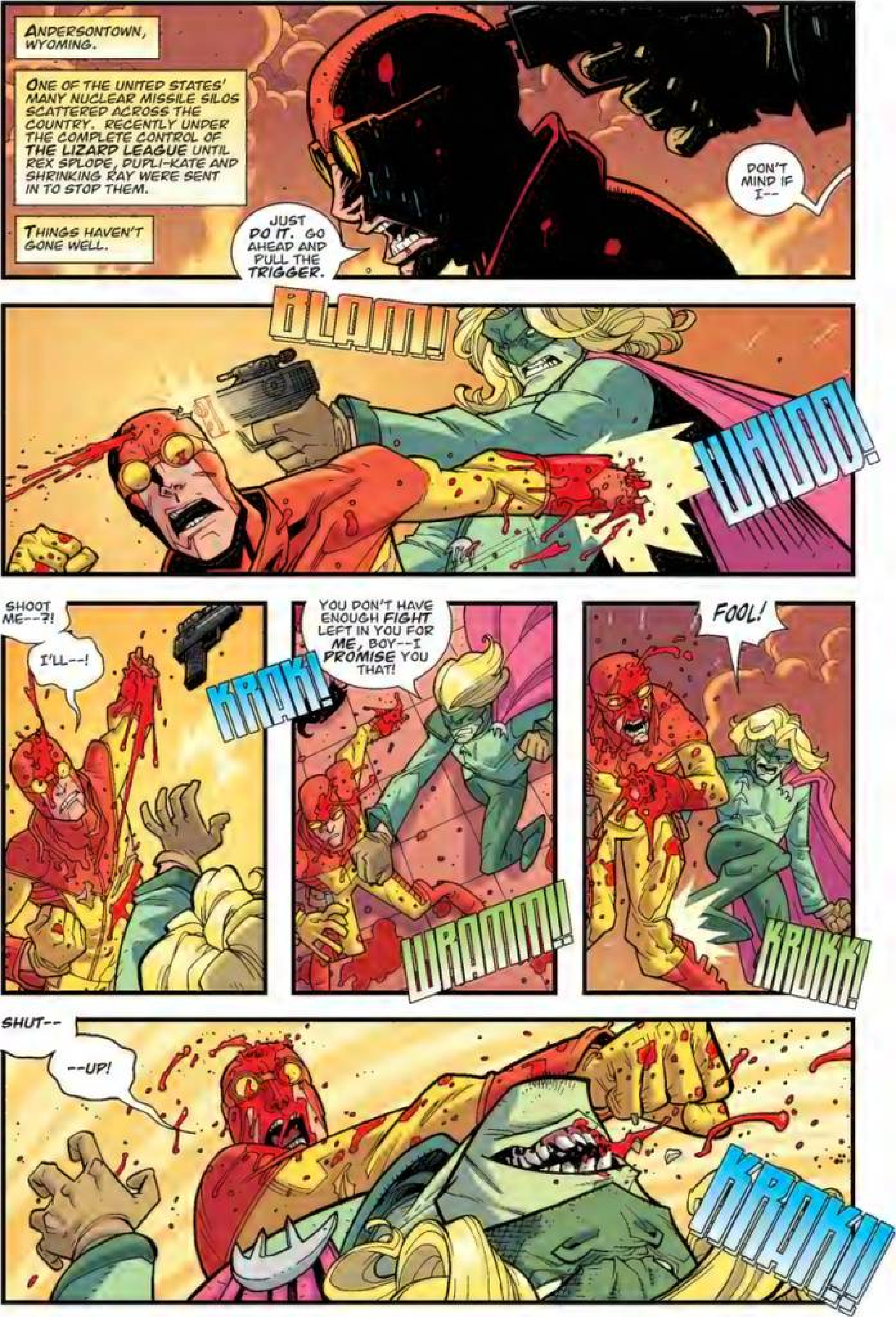

THIS IS **NOT** GOOD!
I NEED TIME--I'M ALMOST **DONE!** SOMEONE NEEDS TO DO **SOMETHING!**
I DO NOT KNOW WHAT YOU ARE CONSTRUCTING BUT I **ASSURE** YOU--IT **WON'T** BE COMPLETED IN TIME. AND WERE IT COMPLETED I DOUBT IT COULD DO **ANY** DAMAGE--I'M TOO **POWERFUL** NOW.
I CAN'T BE **STOPPED!**
WE'LL SEE ABOUT **THAT!** LET'S SEE HOW YOU WITHSTAND A **DIRECT** ATTACK!
FOOLISH **SOLID!** YOU COULD BE MUCH MORE USEFUL TO ME AS A SLAVE--BUT WE'LL GRANT YOU YOUR DEATH IF THAT'S WHAT YOU'D **PREFER!**
THRAKK!!
WE'VE GOT TO HOLD THEM BACK! WE'VE GOT TO KEEP THEM **AWAY** FROM ROBOT!
WE'VE GOT TO BEAT HIM--THERE'S JUST **TOO MUCH** AT STAKE!

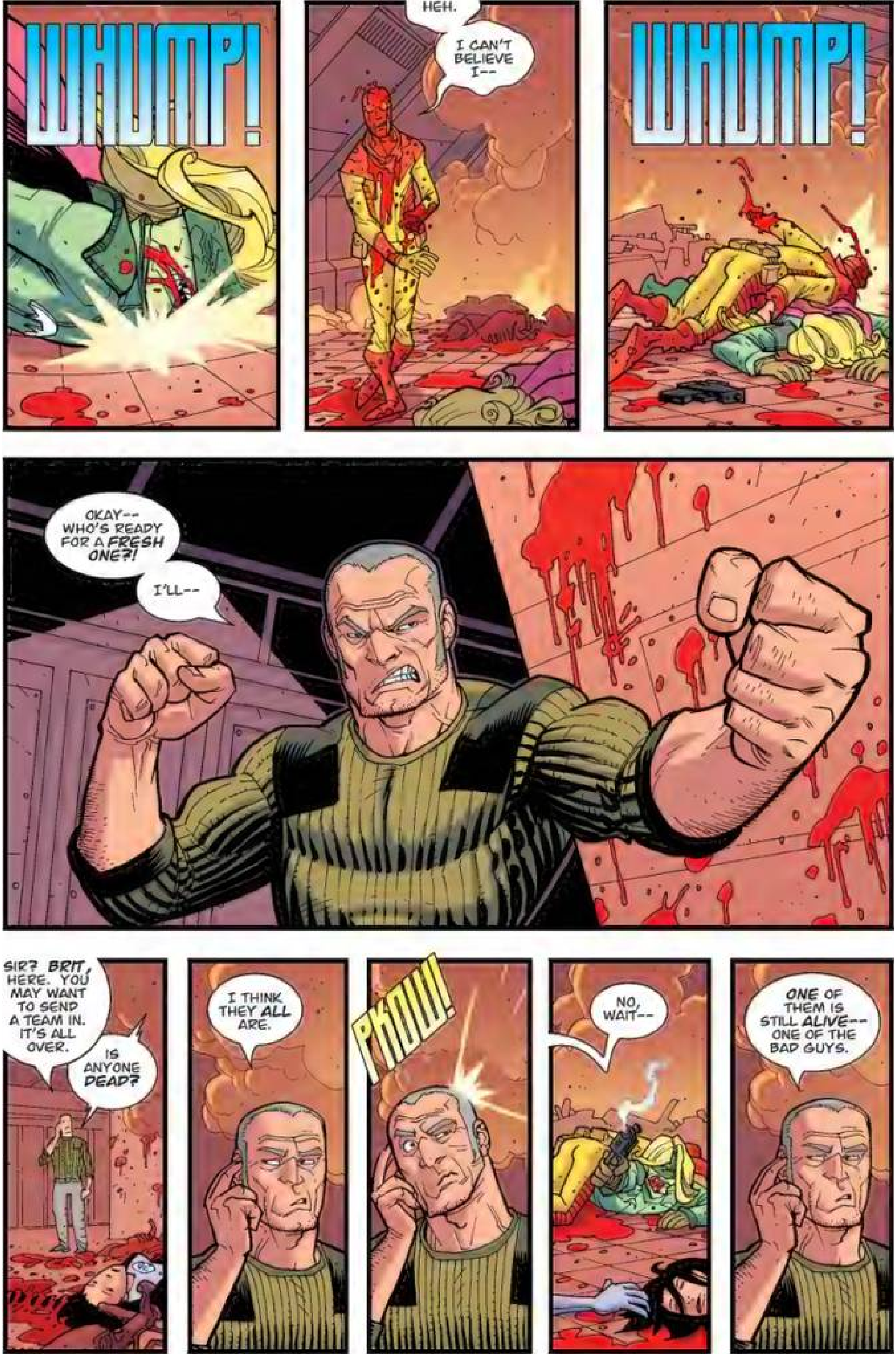

JUST A FEW MORE MINUTES--I CAN DO THIS--I JUST NEED A LITTLE BIT MORE TIME!
I JUST NEED--
LOOK OUT BELOW!
IT WON'T BE AS SECURE AS EVE'S BARRIER--BUT I CAN KEEP THEM OFF YOU FOR A FEW MINUTES AT LEAST.
I'VE ONLY GOT A FEW MORE ADJUSTMENTS TO MAKE--I WON'T NEED YOU FOR LONG--JUST KEEP THOSE THINGS OFF ME!
THAT I CAN DO!
THIS BETTER WORK! I DON'T KNOW HOW MUCH MORE OF THIS I CAN TAKE!
ALMOST THERE... ALMOST THERE...
KEEP HIM SAFE--DON'T LET THEM GET TO HIM!
YOU GOT IT, GIRL. I--
HE'S DONE! HE'S TELLING ME HE'S DONE!

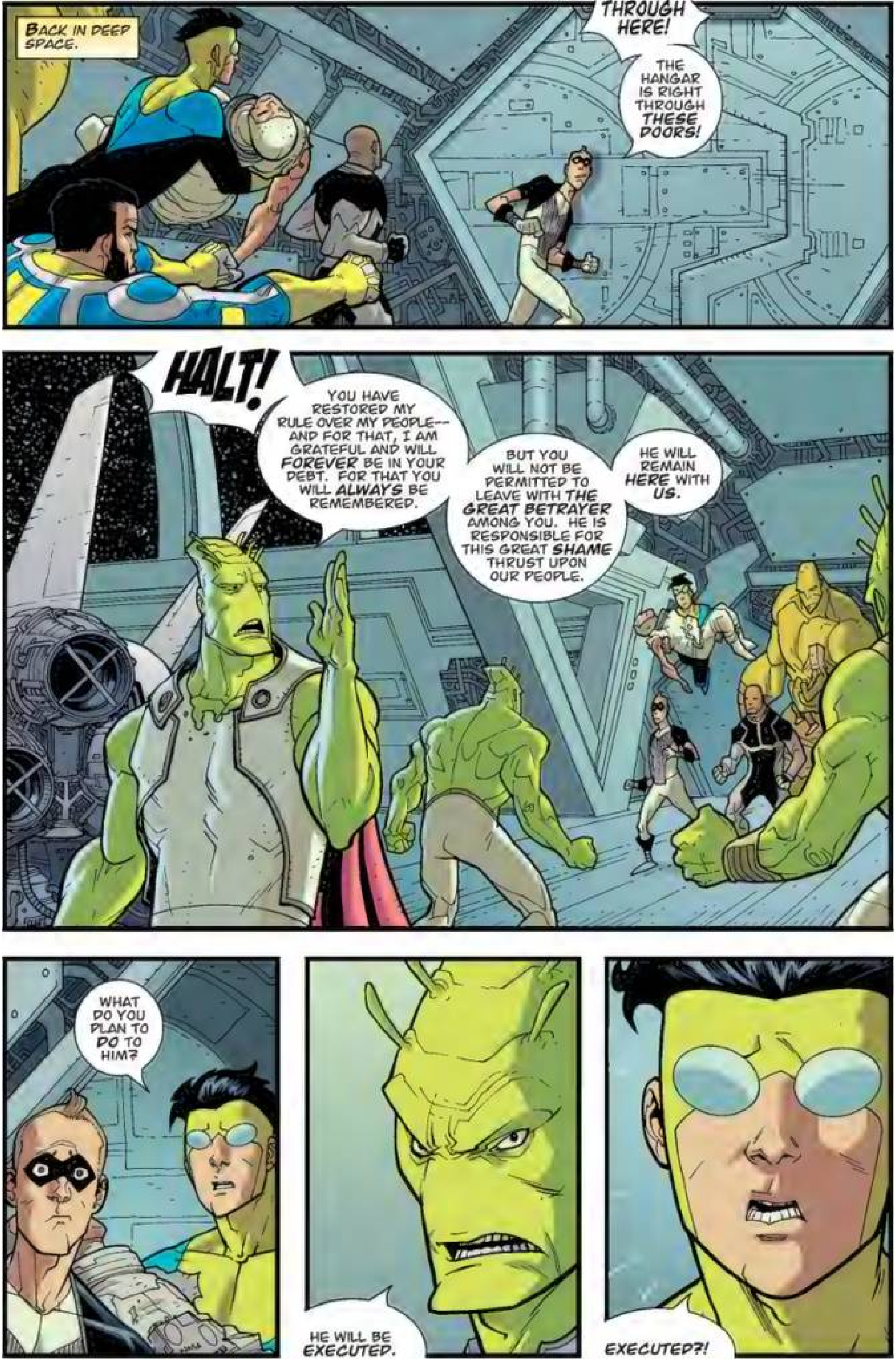

SOMEONE WANT TO TAKE THIS THING?! HE SAYS YOU JUST NEED TO GET CLOSE TO HIM AND PRESS THE BUTTON.
ANYONE?
ME!
GIVE IT TO ME!
THRAKOOM!
NO!
HOW DARE Y--
STOP! I'M DOING THIS! I'M STRONGER THAN YOU! I'M FASTER THAN YOU!
THIS IS TOO IMPORTANT TO LET YOUR EGO GET IN THE WAY!
I HOPE THIS WORKS.
WHAT IS THIS?
ANOTHER FOOL READY TO DIE?
FWOOSH!
NOT EVEN A LITTLE BIT.
TEK.

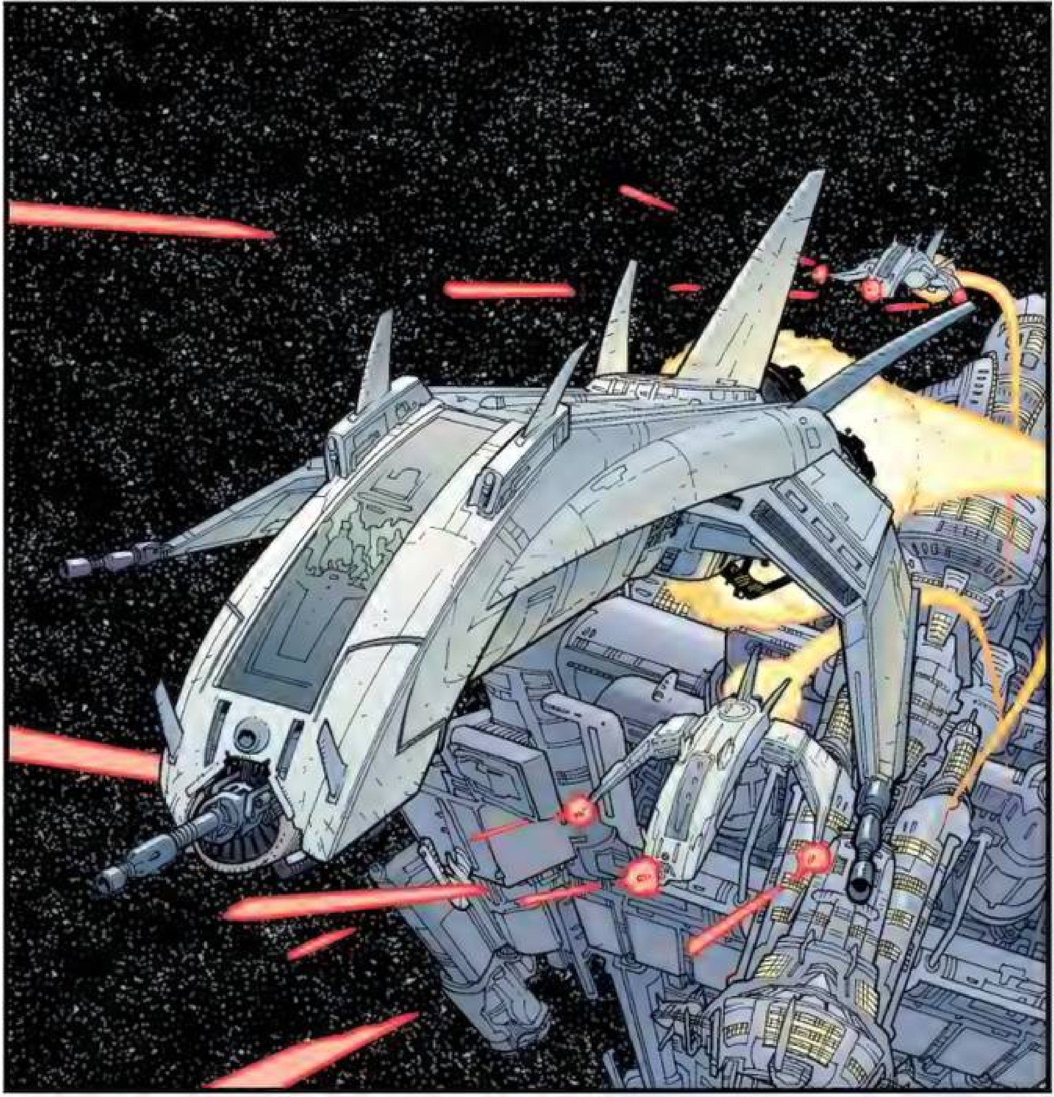

ZZZZZZTKKKKK...

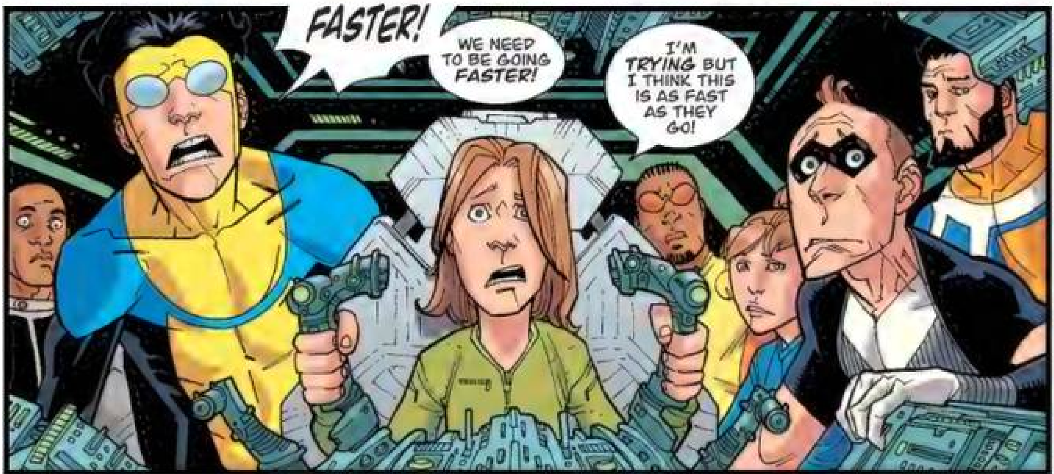

I GOT HIM! AND THE SEQUIDS-- THEY'RE ALL KNOCKED OUT!
WE GOTTA GET HIM OFF THIS SHIP BEFORE THEY WAKE UP! WE GOTTA MAKE SURE THERE'S NOBODY LEFT TO CONNECT THEIR ONE-MIND.
COME ON!
ARE YOU OKAY?
I'M FINE-- I'M JUST GLAD THIS IS OVER.
YOU MEAN-- ALMOST OVER-- WE STILL GOTTA FIND A WAY OFF THIS SHIP.
THIS WAY! THE HANGAR IS THIS WAY!
FOLLOW ME!

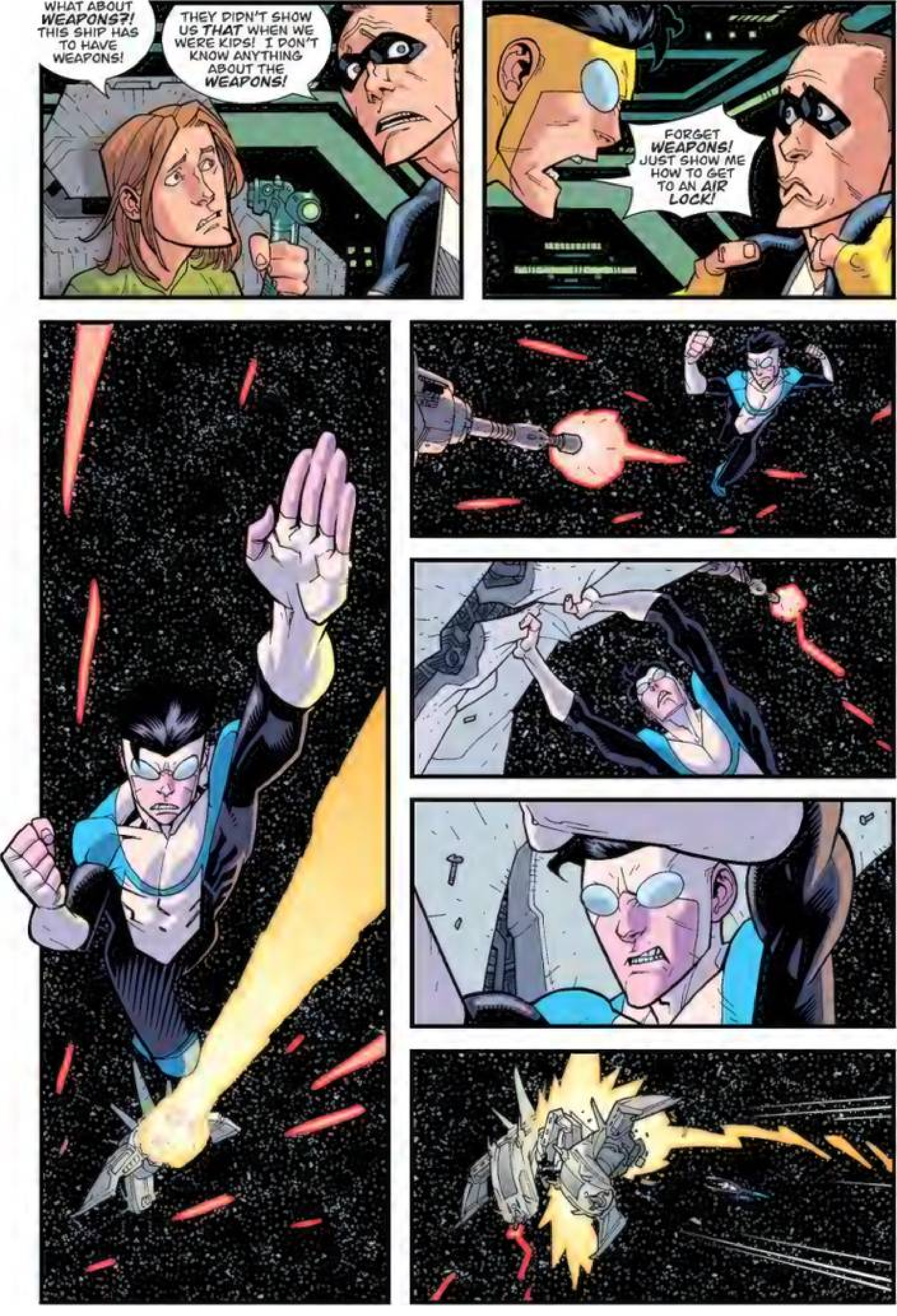

ANDERSONTOWN, WYOMING.
ONE OF THE UNITED STATES' MANY NUCLEAR MISSILE SILOS SCATTERED ACROSS THE COUNTRY. RECENTLY UNDER THE COMPLETE CONTROL OF THE LIZARD LEAGUE UNTIL REX SPLODE, DUPLI-KATE AND SHRINKING RAY WERE SENT IN TO STOP THEM.
THINGS HAVEN'T GONE WELL.
JUST DO IT. GO AHEAD AND PULL THE TRIGGER.
DON'T MIND IF I--
BLAM!
WHUDD!
SHOOT ME--?!
I'LL--!
KROK!
YOU DON'T HAVE ENOUGH FIGHT LEFT IN YOU FOR ME, BOY--I PROMISE YOU THAT!
WRAMM!!
FOOL!
KRUKK!
SHUT--
--UP!
KRAKK!!

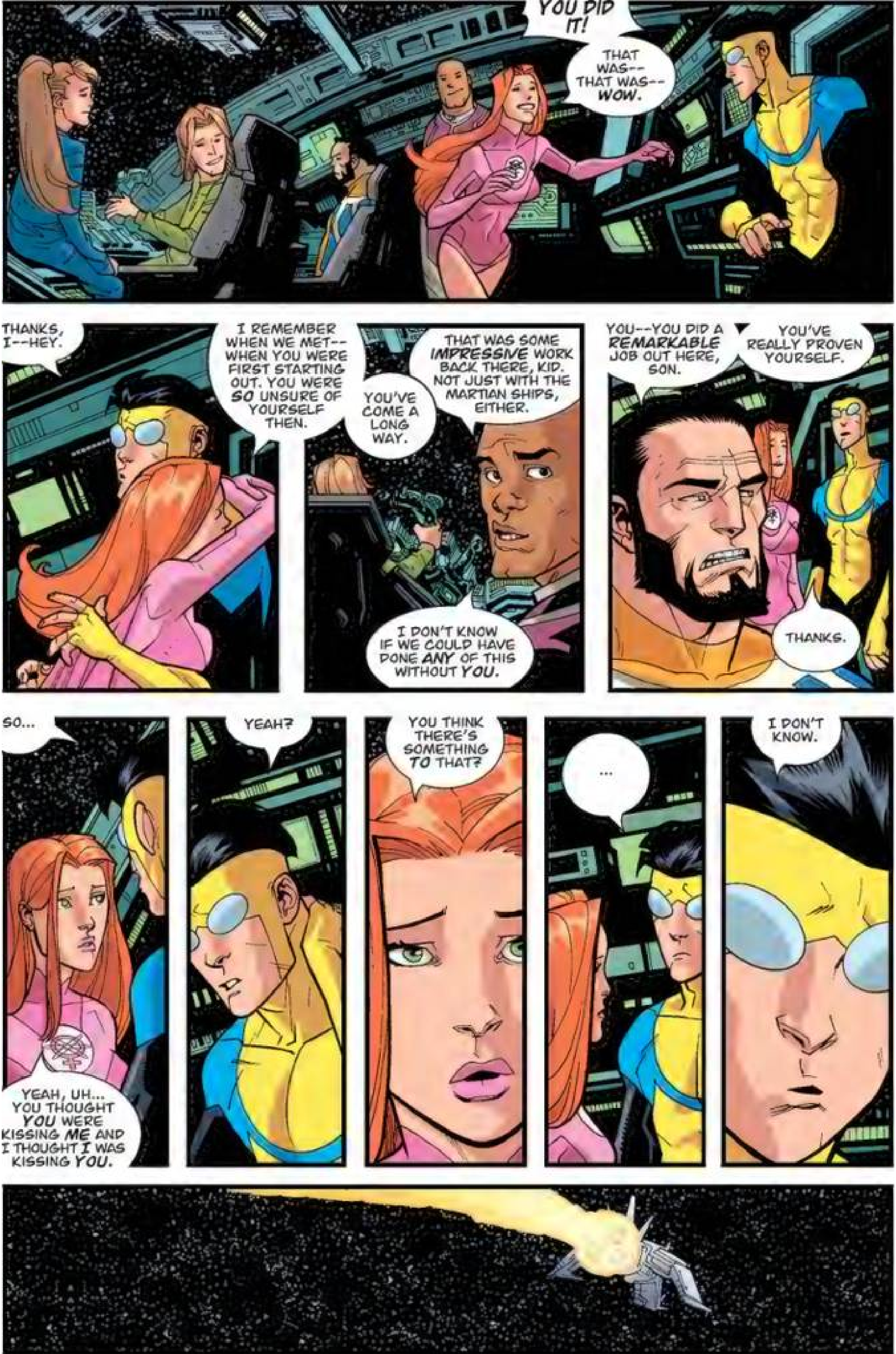

WHUMP!
HEH.
I CAN'T BELIEVE I--
WHUMP!
OKAY-- WHO'S READY FOR A FRESH ONE?!
I'LL--
SIR? BRIT, HERE. YOU MAY WANT TO SEND A TEAM IN. IT'S ALL OVER.
IS ANYONE DEAD?
I THINK THEY ALL ARE.
PKOW!
NO, WAIT--
ONE OF THEM IS STILL ALIVE-- ONE OF THE BAD GUYS.

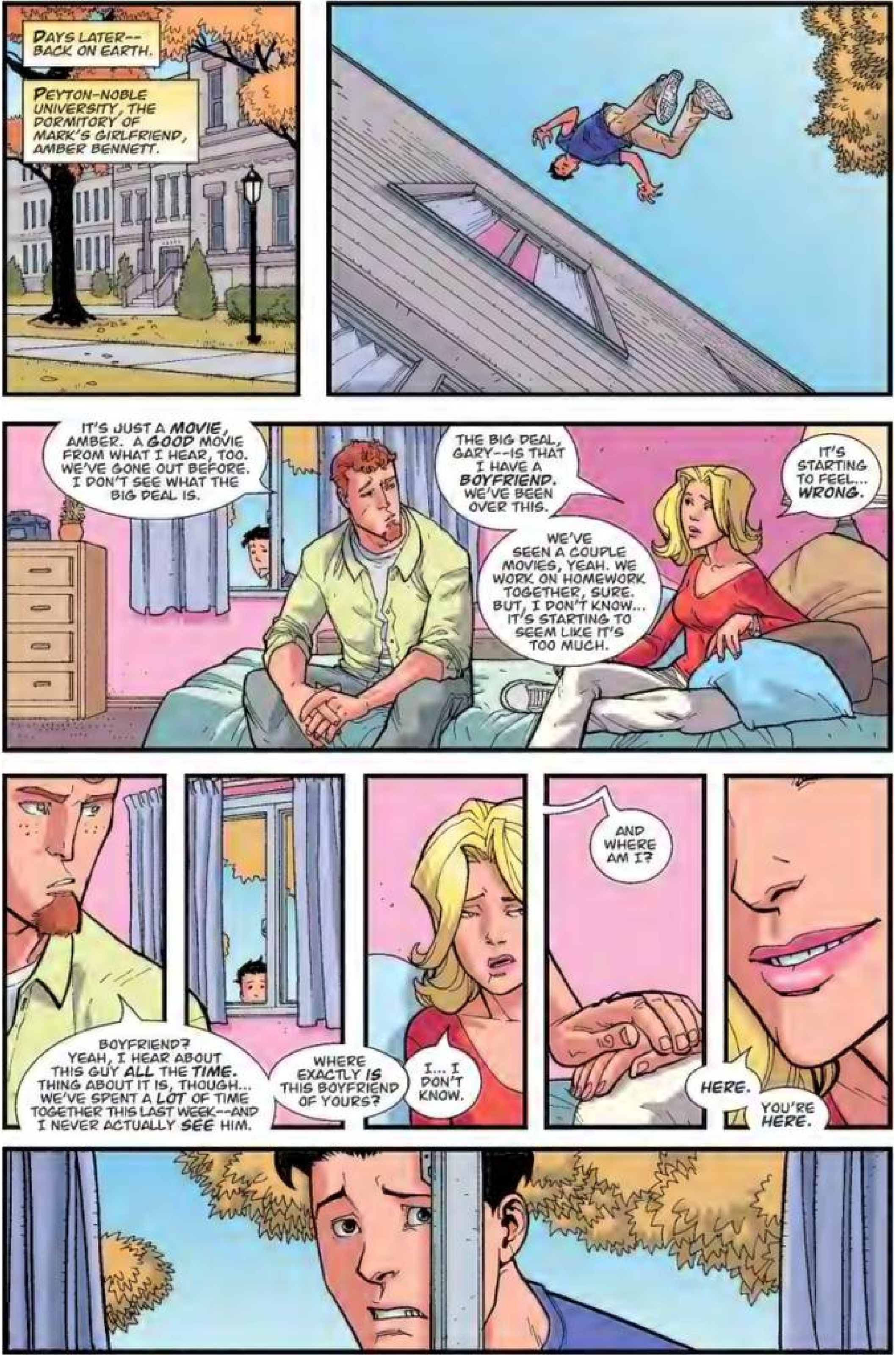

BACK IN DEEP SPACE.
THROUGH HERE!
THE HANGAR IS RIGHT THROUGH THESE DOORS!
HALT!
YOU HAVE RESTORED MY RULE OVER MY PEOPLE-- AND FOR THAT, I AM GRATEFUL AND WILL FOREVER BE IN YOUR DEBT. FOR THAT YOU WILL ALWAYS BE REMEMBERED.
BUT YOU WILL NOT BE PERMITTED TO LEAVE WITH THE GREAT BETRAYER AMONG YOU. HE IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS GREAT SHAME THRUST UPON OUR PEOPLE.
HE WILL REMAIN HERE WITH US.
WHAT DO YOU PLAN TO DO TO HIM?
HE WILL BE EXECUTED.
EXECUTED?!

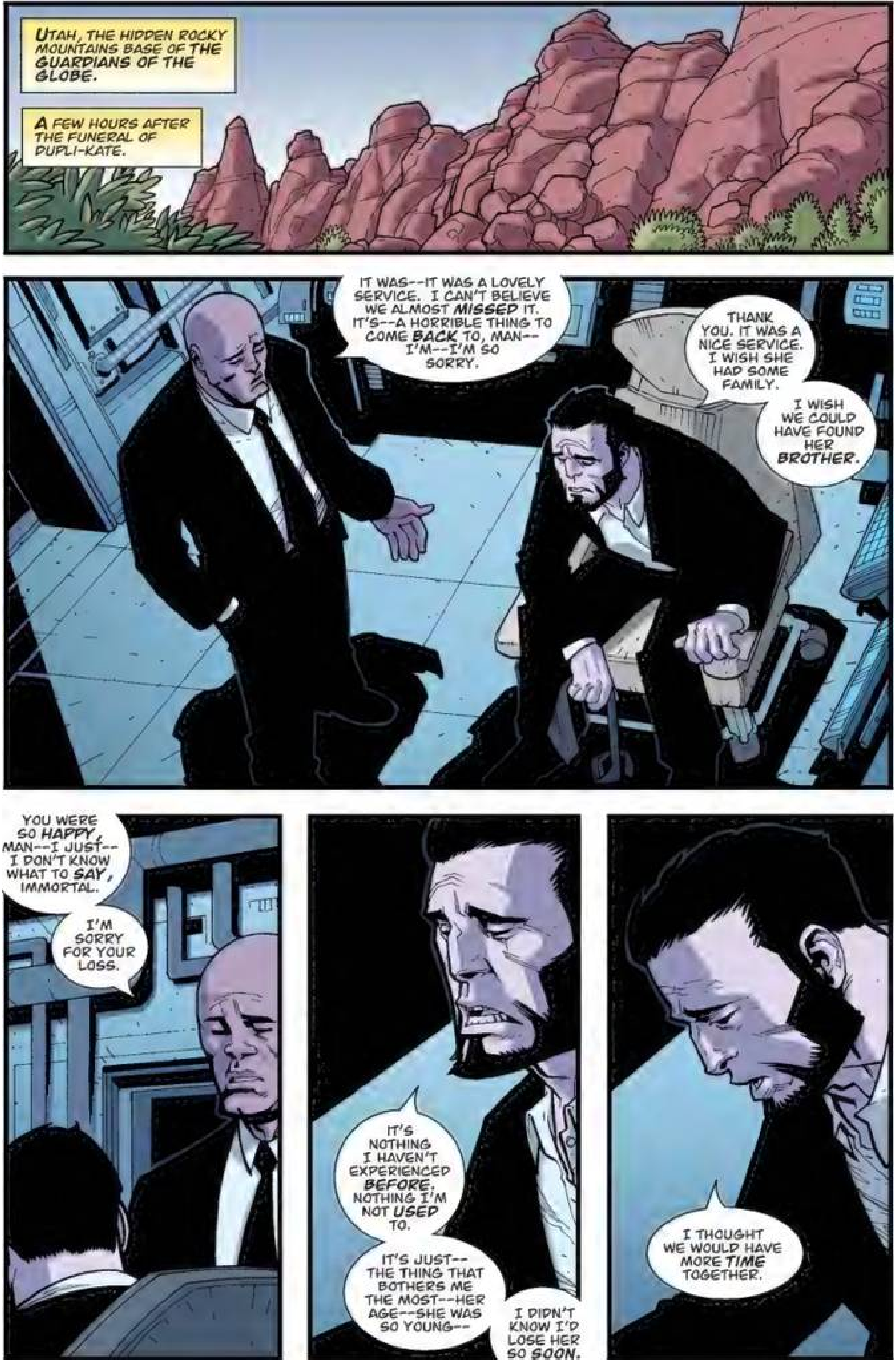


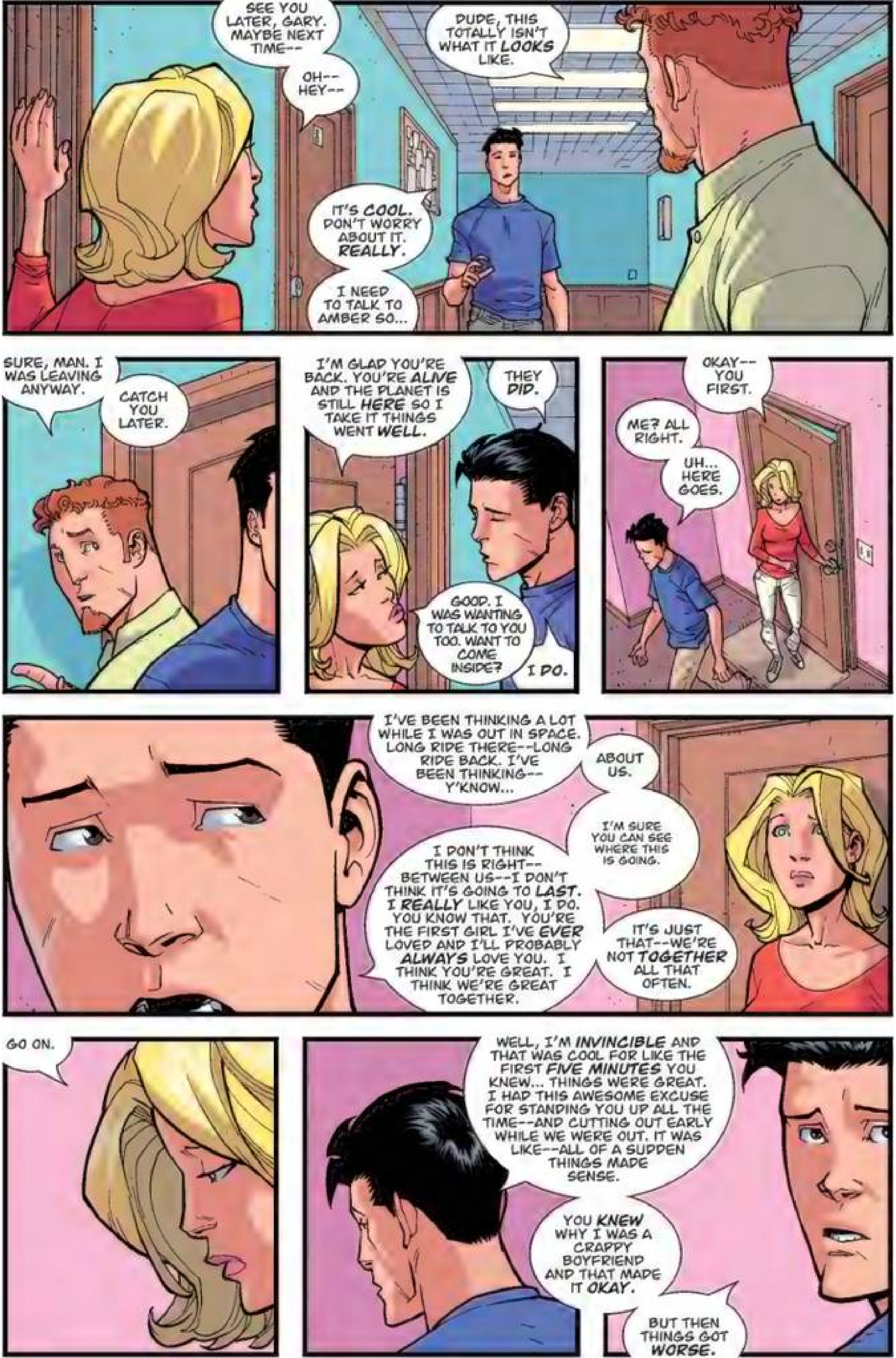

FASTER!
WE NEED TO BE GOING FASTER!
I'M TRYING BUT I THINK THIS IS AS FAST AS THEY GO!

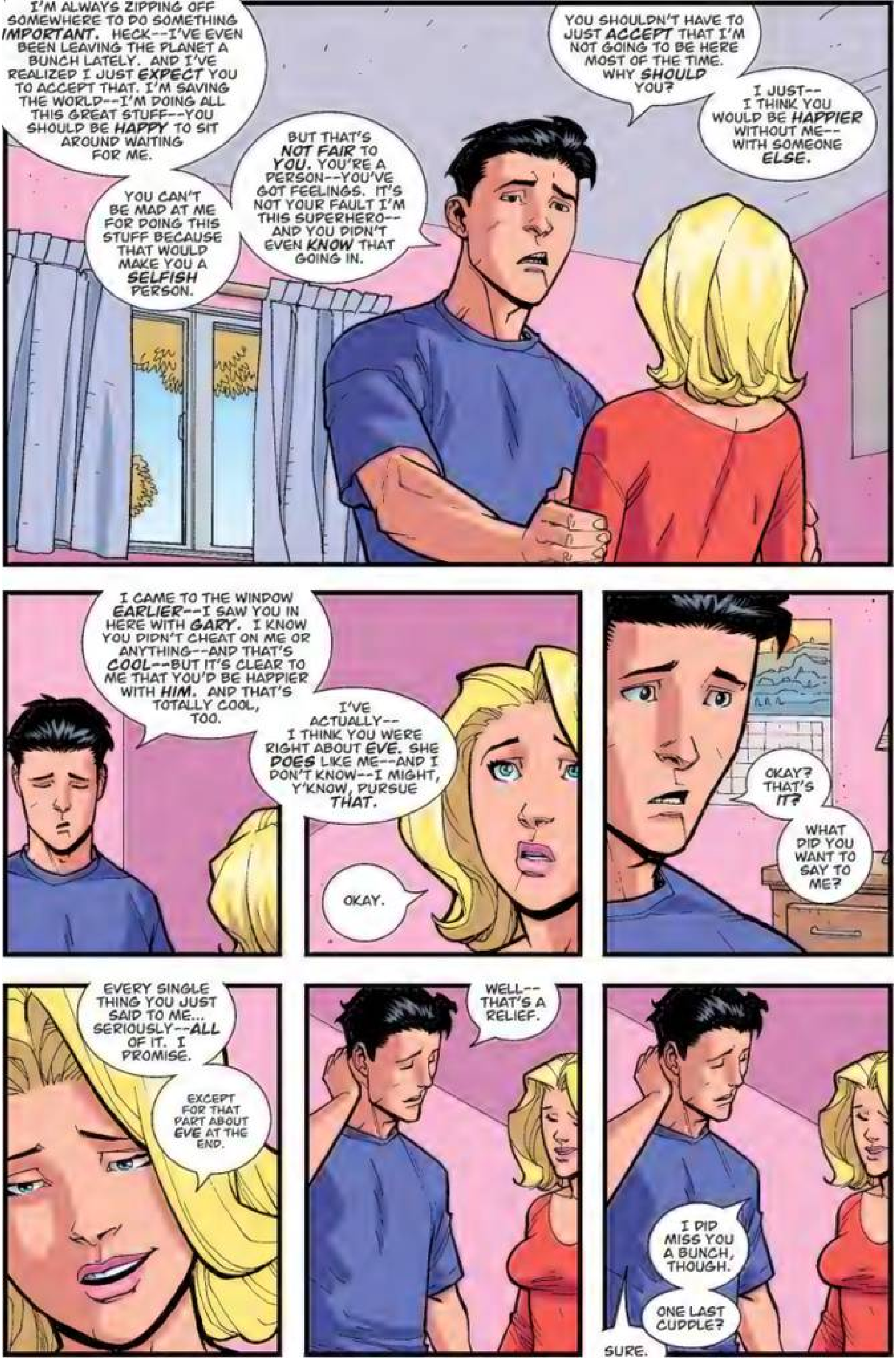

WHAT ABOUT *WEAPONS?!* THIS SHIP HAS TO HAVE WEAPONS!
THEY DIDN'T SHOW US *THAT* WHEN WE WERE KIDS! I DON'T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT THE *WEAPONS!*
FORGET *WEAPONS!* JUST SHOW ME HOW TO GET TO AN *AIR LOCK!*

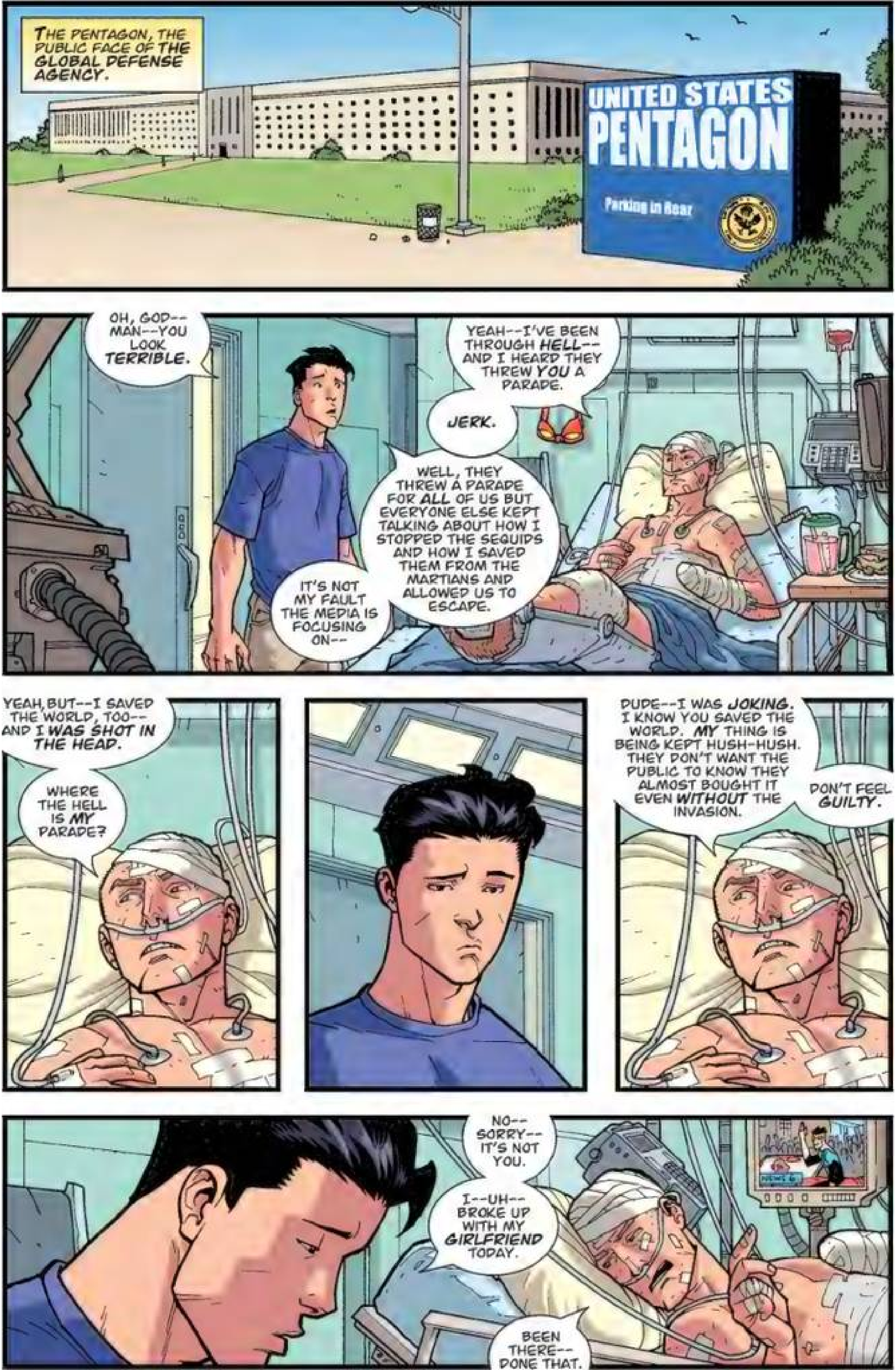

YOU DID IT!
THAT WAS-- THAT WAS-- WOW.
THANKS, I--HEY.
I REMEMBER WHEN WE MET-- WHEN YOU WERE FIRST STARTING OUT. YOU WERE SO UNSURE OF YOURSELF THEN.
YOU'VE COME A LONG WAY.
THAT WAS SOME IMPRESSIVE WORK BACK THERE, KID. NOT JUST WITH THE MARTIAN SHIPS, EITHER.
I DON'T KNOW IF WE COULD HAVE DONE ANY OF THIS WITHOUT YOU.
YOU--YOU DID A REMARKABLE JOB OUT HERE, SON.
YOU'VE REALLY PROVEN YOURSELF.
THANKS.
SO...
YEAH, UH... YOU THOUGHT YOU WERE KISSING ME AND I THOUGHT I WAS KISSING YOU.
YEAH?
YOU THINK THERE'S SOMETHING TO THAT?
...
I DON'T KNOW.

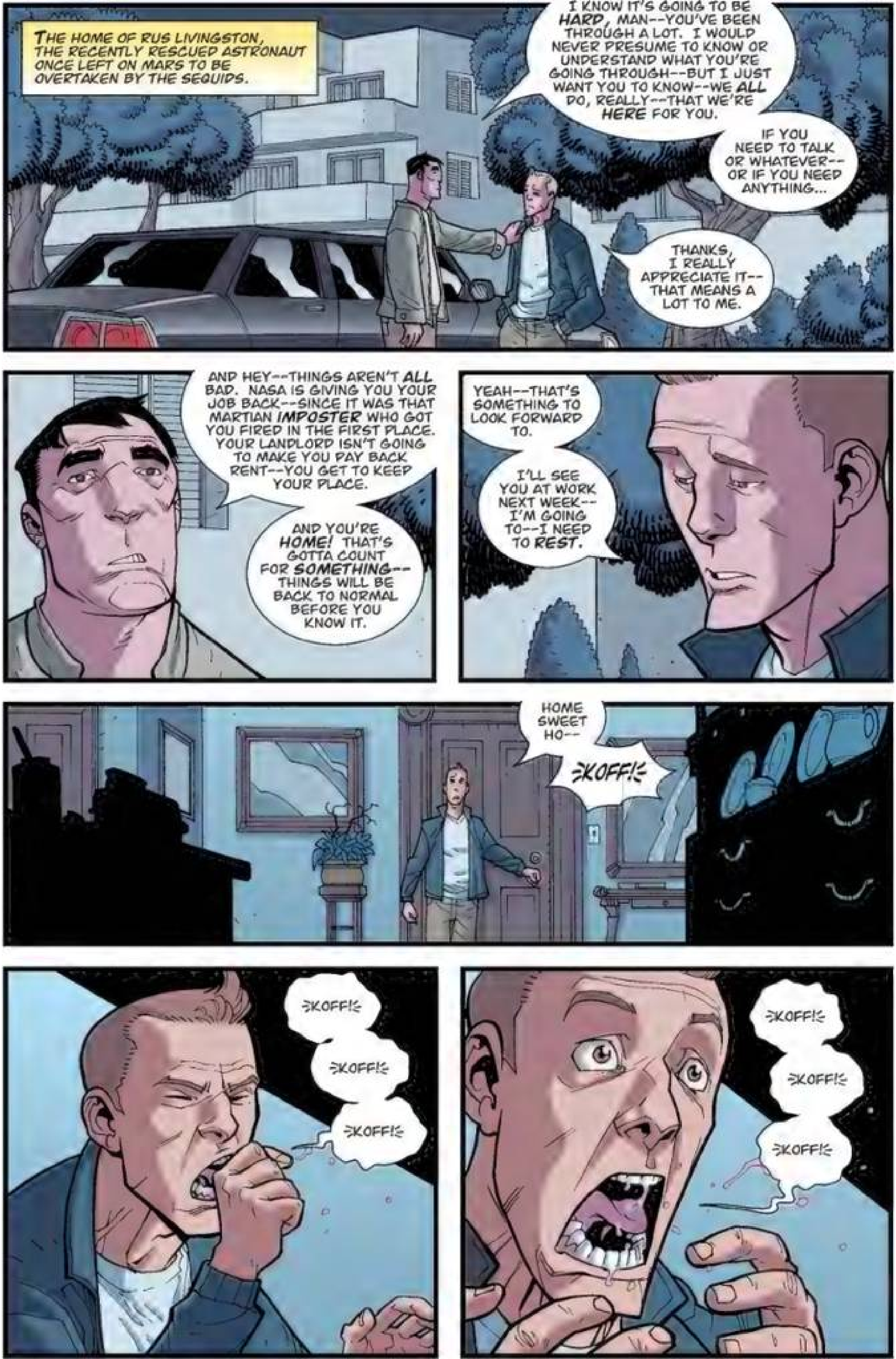

DAYS LATER-- BACK ON EARTH.
PEYTON-NOBLE UNIVERSITY, THE DORMITORY OF MARK'S GIRLFRIEND, AMBER BENNETT.
IT'S JUST A MOVIE, AMBER. A GOOD MOVIE FROM WHAT I HEAR, TOO. WE'VE GONE OUT BEFORE. I DON'T SEE WHAT THE BIG DEAL IS.
THE BIG DEAL, GARY--IS THAT I HAVE A BOYFRIEND. WE'VE BEEN OVER THIS.
WE'VE SEEN A COUPLE MOVIES, YEAH. WE WORK ON HOMEWORK TOGETHER, SURE. BUT, I DON'T KNOW... IT'S STARTING TO SEEM LIKE IT'S TOO MUCH.
IT'S STARTING TO FEEL... WRONG.
BOYFRIEND? YEAH, I HEAR ABOUT THIS GUY ALL THE TIME. THING ABOUT IT IS, THOUGH... WE'VE SPENT A LOT OF TIME TOGETHER THIS LAST WEEK--AND I NEVER ACTUALLY SEE HIM.
WHERE EXACTLY IS THIS BOYFRIEND OF YOURS?
I... I DON'T KNOW.
AND WHERE AM I?
HERE.
YOU'RE HERE.

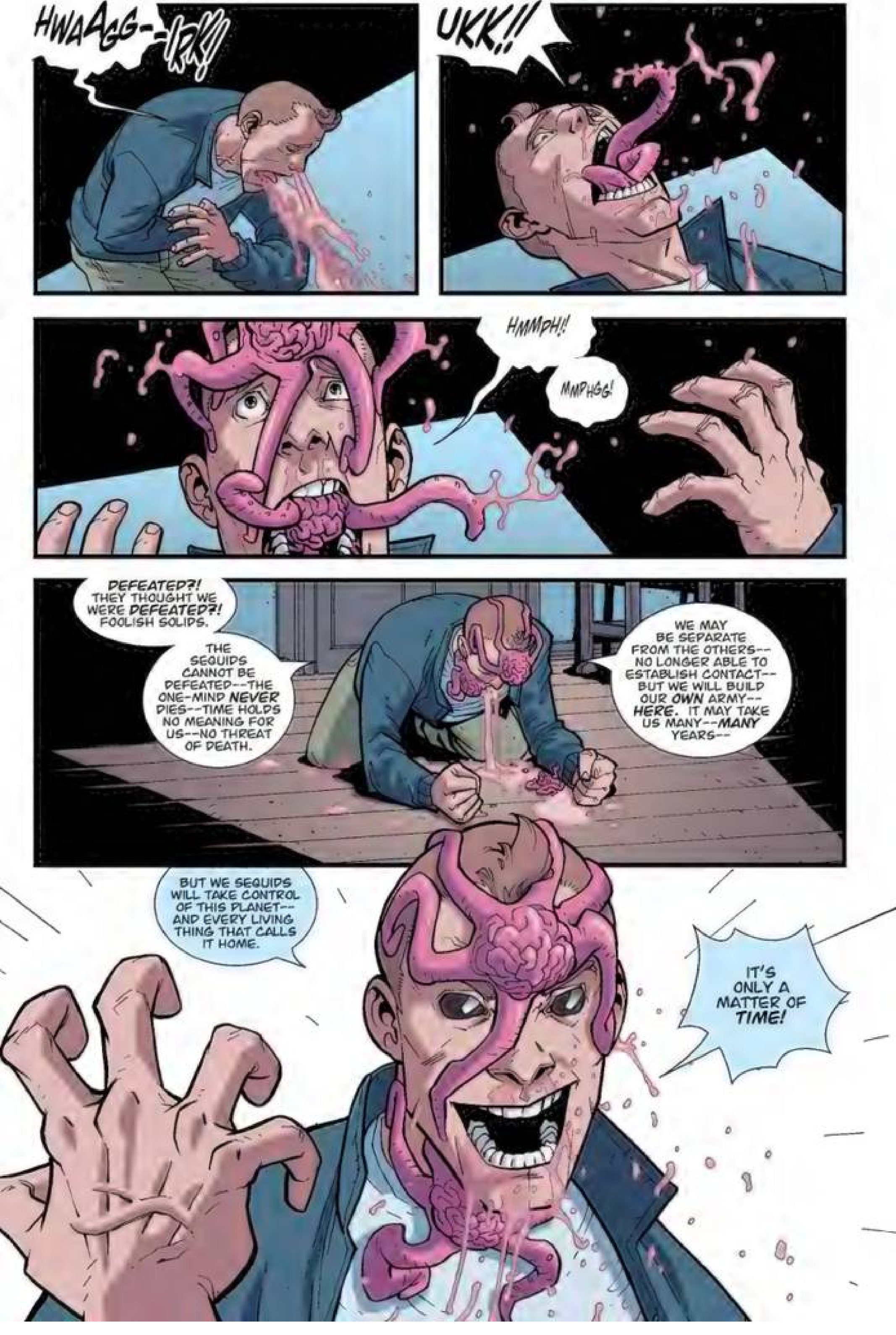

UTAH, THE HIDDEN ROCKY MOUNTAINS BASE OF THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE.
A FEW HOURS AFTER THE FUNERAL OF DUPLI-KATE.
IT WAS--IT WAS A LOVELY SERVICE. I CAN'T BELIEVE WE ALMOST MISSED IT. IT'S--A HORRIBLE THING TO COME BACK TO, MAN-- I'M--I'M SO SORRY.
THANK YOU. IT WAS A NICE SERVICE. I WISH SHE HAD SOME FAMILY.
I WISH WE COULD HAVE FOUND HER BROTHER.
YOU WERE SO HAPPY, MAN--I JUST-- I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY, IMMORTAL.
I'M SORRY FOR YOUR LOSS.
IT'S NOTHING I HAVEN'T EXPERIENCED BEFORE. NOTHING I'M NOT USED TO.
IT'S JUST-- THE THING THAT BOTHERS ME THE MOST--HER AGE--SHE WAS SO YOUNG--
I DIDN'T KNOW I'D LOSE HER SO SOON.
I THOUGHT WE WOULD HAVE MORE TIME TOGETHER.

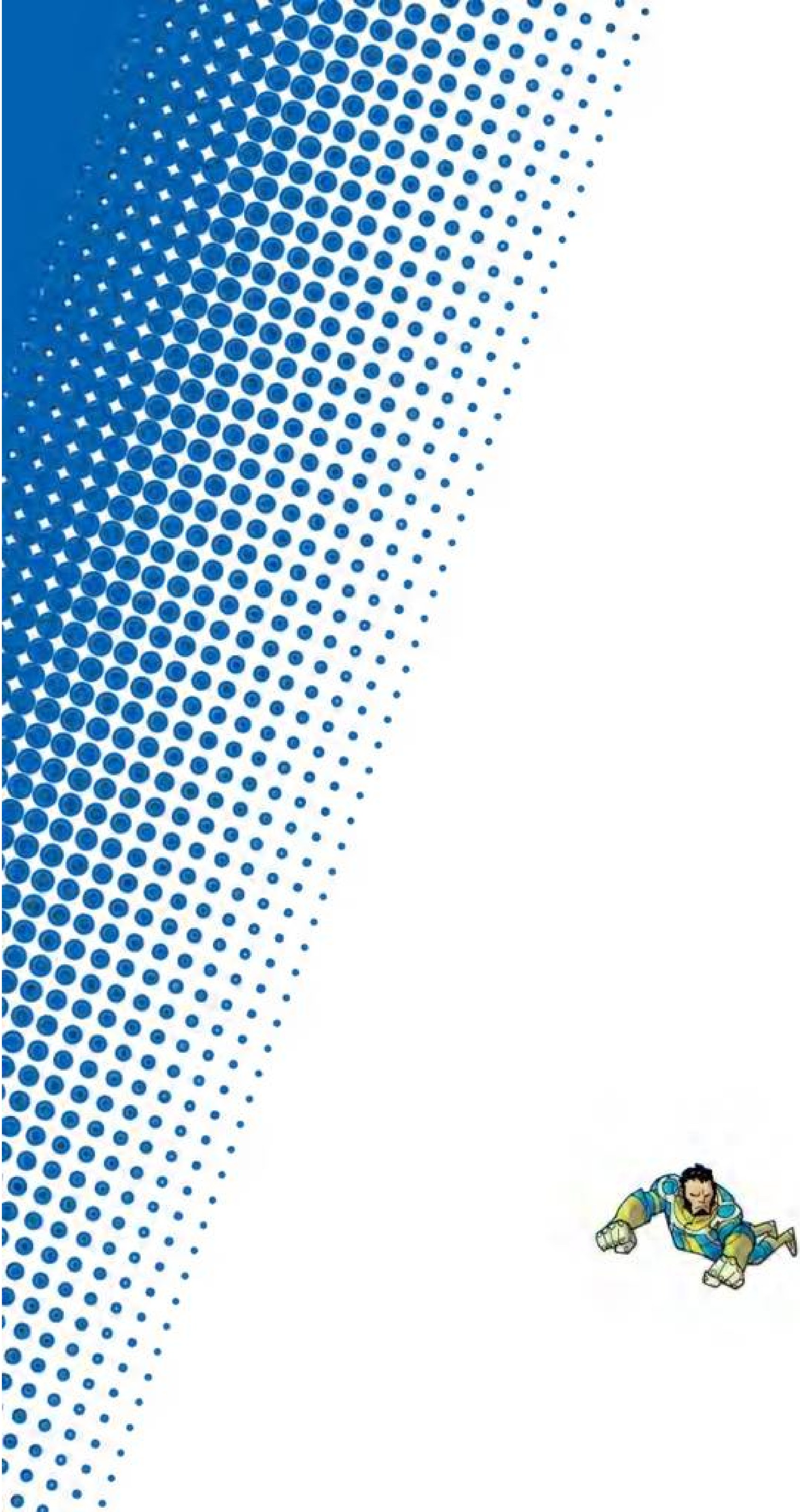

SEE YOU LATER, GARY. MAYBE NEXT TIME--
OH-- HEY--
DUDE, THIS TOTALLY ISN'T WHAT IT *LOOKS* LIKE.
IT'S *COOL*. DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT. *REALLY*.
I NEED TO TALK TO AMBER SO...
SURE, MAN. I WAS LEAVING ANYWAY.
CATCH YOU LATER.
I'M GLAD YOU'RE BACK. YOU'RE *ALIVE* AND THE PLANET IS STILL *HERE* SO I TAKE IT THINGS WENT *WELL*.
THEY *DID*.
GOOD. I WAS WANTING TO TALK TO YOU TOO. WANT TO COME INSIDE?
I *DO*.
OKAY-- YOU FIRST.
ME? ALL RIGHT.
UH... HERE GOES.
I'VE BEEN THINKING A LOT WHILE I WAS OUT IN SPACE. LONG RIDE THERE--LONG RIDE BACK. I'VE BEEN THINKING-- Y'KNOW...
ABOUT US.
I'M SURE YOU CAN SEE WHERE THIS IS GOING.
I DON'T THINK THIS IS RIGHT-- BETWEEN US--I DON'T THINK IT'S GOING TO *LAST*. I *REALLY* LIKE YOU, I DO. YOU KNOW THAT. YOU'RE THE FIRST GIRL I'VE *EVER* LOVED AND I'LL PROBABLY *ALWAYS* LOVE YOU. I THINK YOU'RE GREAT. I THINK WE'RE GREAT TOGETHER.
IT'S JUST THAT--WE'RE NOT *TOGETHER* ALL THAT OFTEN.
GO ON.
WELL, I'M *INVINCIBLE* AND THAT WAS COOL FOR LIKE THE FIRST *FIVE MINUTES* YOU KNEW... THINGS WERE GREAT. I HAD THIS AWESOME EXCUSE FOR STANDING YOU UP ALL THE TIME--AND CUTTING OUT EARLY WHILE WE WERE OUT. IT WAS LIKE--ALL OF A SUDDEN THINGS MADE SENSE.
YOU *KNEW* WHY I WAS A CRAPPY BOYFRIEND AND THAT MADE IT *OKAY*.
BUT THEN THINGS GOT *WORSE*.


I'M ALWAYS ZIPPING OFF SOMEWHERE TO DO SOMETHING IMPORTANT. HECK--I'VE EVEN BEEN LEAVING THE PLANET A BUNCH LATELY. AND I'VE REALIZED I JUST EXPECT YOU TO ACCEPT THAT. I'M SAVING THE WORLD--I'M DOING ALL THIS GREAT STUFF--YOU SHOULD BE HAPPY TO SIT AROUND WAITING FOR ME.
YOU CAN'T BE MAD AT ME FOR DOING THIS STUFF BECAUSE THAT WOULD MAKE YOU A SELFISH PERSON.
BUT THAT'S NOT FAIR TO YOU. YOU'RE A PERSON--YOU'VE GOT FEELINGS. IT'S NOT YOUR FAULT I'M THIS SUPERHERO--AND YOU DIDN'T EVEN KNOW THAT GOING IN.
YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE TO JUST ACCEPT THAT I'M NOT GOING TO BE HERE MOST OF THE TIME. WHY SHOULD YOU?
I JUST--I THINK YOU WOULD BE HAPPIER WITHOUT ME--WITH SOMEONE ELSE.
I CAME TO THE WINDOW EARLIER--I SAW YOU IN HERE WITH GARY. I KNOW YOU DIDN'T CHEAT ON ME OR ANYTHING--AND THAT'S COOL--BUT IT'S CLEAR TO ME THAT YOU'D BE HAPPIER WITH HIM. AND THAT'S TOTALLY COOL, TOO.
I'VE ACTUALLY--I THINK YOU WERE RIGHT ABOUT EVE. SHE DOES LIKE ME--AND I DON'T KNOW--I MIGHT, Y'KNOW, PURSUE THAT.
OKAY.
OKAY? THAT'S IT?
WHAT DID YOU WANT TO SAY TO ME?
EVERY SINGLE THING YOU JUST SAID TO ME... SERIOUSLY--ALL OF IT. I PROMISE.
EXCEPT FOR THAT PART ABOUT EVE AT THE END.
WELL--THAT'S A RELIEF.
I DID MISS YOU A BUNCH, THOUGH.
ONE LAST CUDDLE?
SURE.

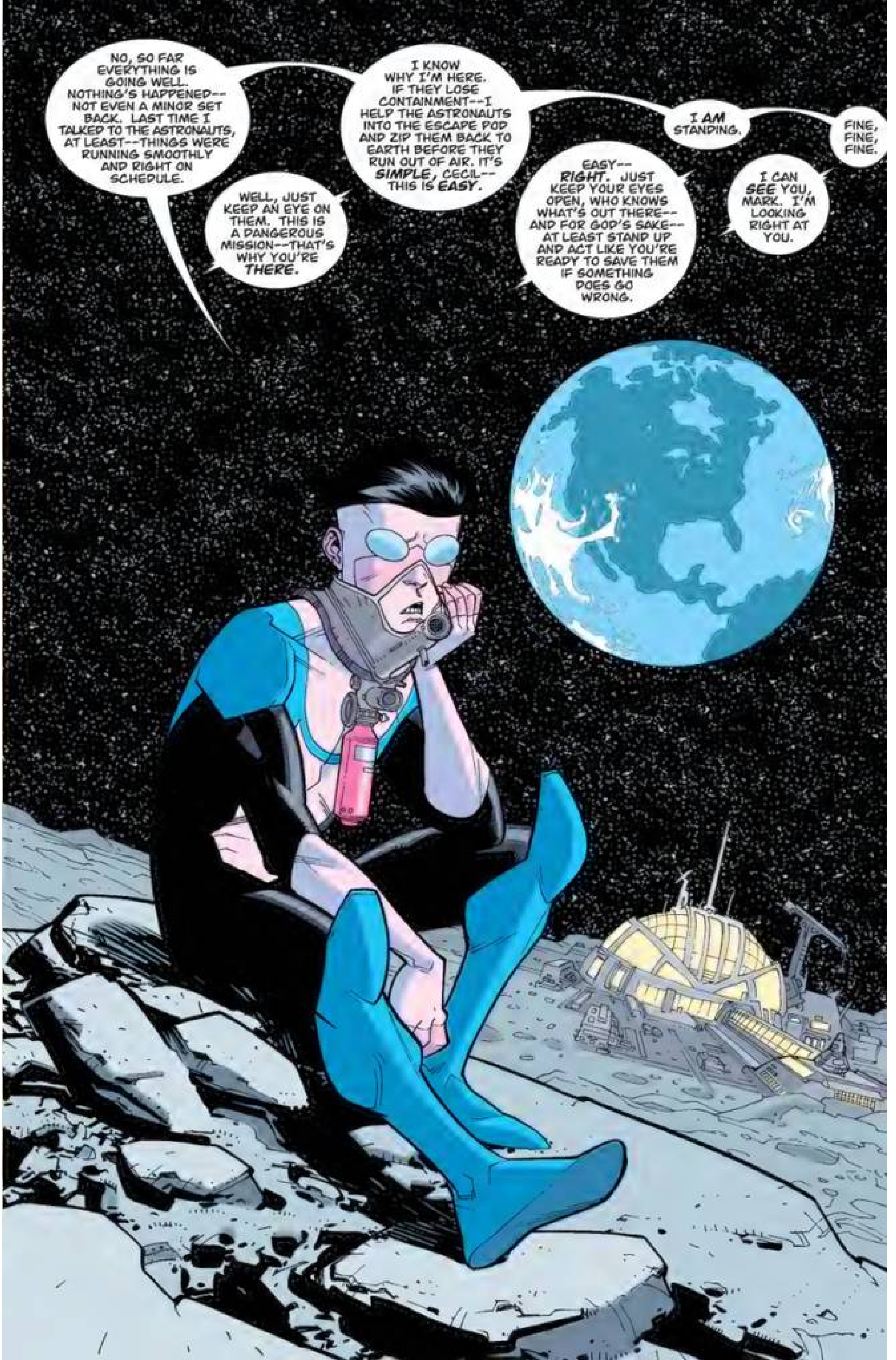

THE PENTAGON, THE PUBLIC FACE OF THE GLOBAL DEFENSE AGENCY.
UNITED STATES PENTAGON
Parking in Rear
OH, GOD-- MAN--YOU LOOK TERRIBLE.
YEAH--I'VE BEEN THROUGH HELL-- AND I HEARD THEY THREW YOU A PARADE.
JERK.
WELL, THEY THREW A PARADE FOR ALL OF US BUT EVERYONE ELSE KEPT TALKING ABOUT HOW I STOPPED THE SEQUIDS AND HOW I SAVED THEM FROM THE MARTIANS AND ALLOWED US TO ESCAPE.
IT'S NOT MY FAULT THE MEDIA IS FOCUSING ON--
YEAH, BUT--I SAVED THE WORLD, TOO-- AND I WAS SHOT IN THE HEAD.
WHERE THE HELL IS MY PARADE?
DUDE--I WAS JOKING. I KNOW YOU SAVED THE WORLD. MY THING IS BEING KEPT HUSH-HUSH. THEY DON'T WANT THE PUBLIC TO KNOW THEY ALMOST BOUGHT IT EVEN WITHOUT THE INVASION.
DON'T FEEL GUILTY.
NO-- SORRY-- IT'S NOT YOU.
I--UH-- BROKE UP WITH MY GIRLFRIEND TODAY.
NEWS 6
BEEN THERE-- DONE THAT.

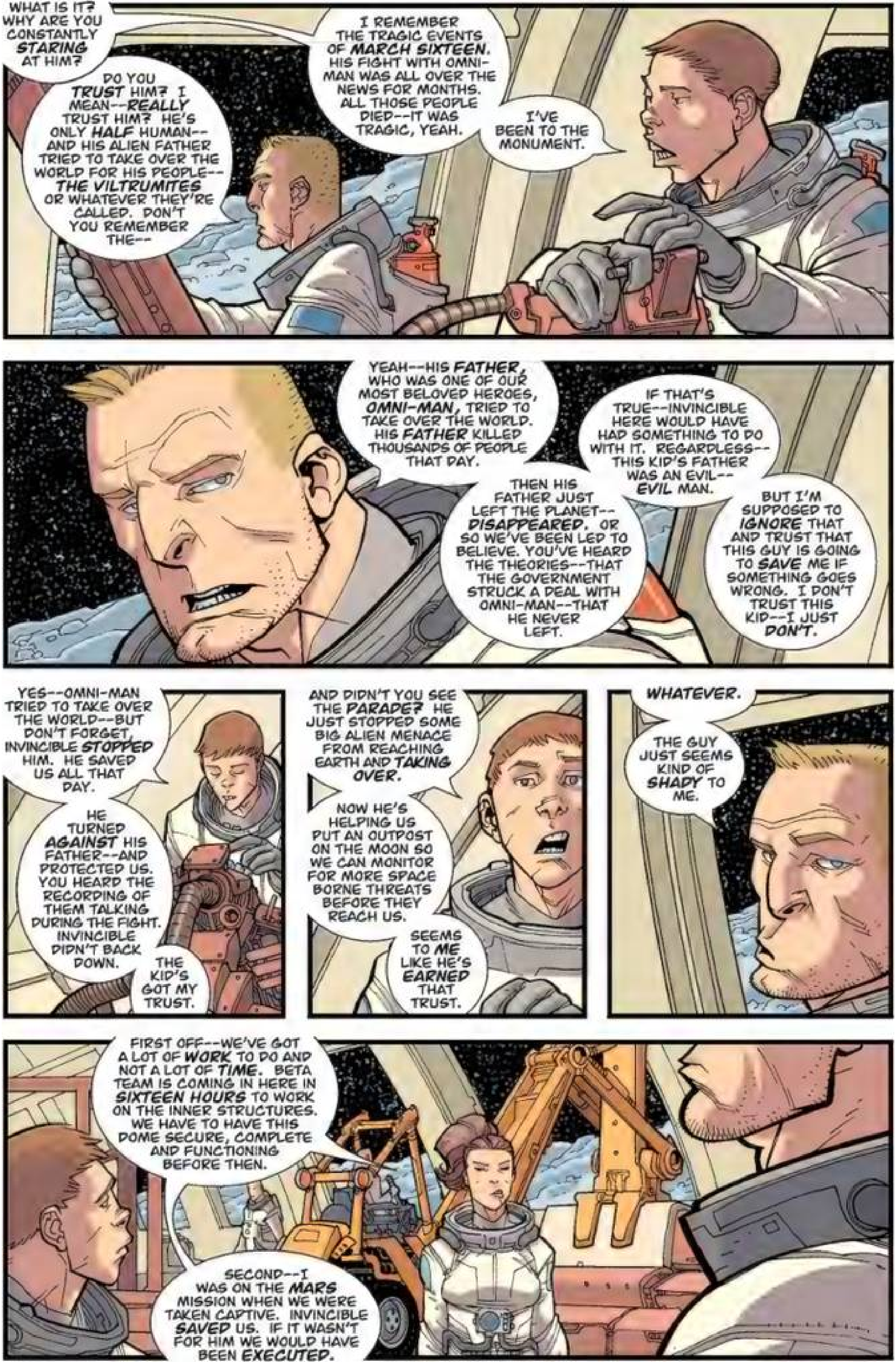

THE HOME OF RUS LIVINGSTON, THE RECENTLY RESCUED ASTRONAUT ONCE LEFT ON MARS TO BE OVERTAKEN BY THE SEQUIDS.
I KNOW IT'S GOING TO BE HARD, MAN--YOU'VE BEEN THROUGH A LOT. I WOULD NEVER PRESUME TO KNOW OR UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU'RE GOING THROUGH--BUT I JUST WANT YOU TO KNOW--WE ALL DO, REALLY--THAT WE'RE HERE FOR YOU.
IF YOU NEED TO TALK OR WHATEVER--OR IF YOU NEED ANYTHING...
THANKS, I REALLY APPRECIATE IT--THAT MEANS A LOT TO ME.
AND HEY--THINGS AREN'T ALL BAD. NASA IS GIVING YOU YOUR JOB BACK--SINCE IT WAS THAT MARTIAN IMPOSTER WHO GOT YOU FIRED IN THE FIRST PLACE. YOUR LANDLORD ISN'T GOING TO MAKE YOU PAY BACK RENT--YOU GET TO KEEP YOUR PLACE.
AND YOU'RE HOME! THAT'S GOTTA COUNT FOR SOMETHING--THINGS WILL BE BACK TO NORMAL BEFORE YOU KNOW IT.
YEAH--THAT'S SOMETHING TO LOOK FORWARD TO.
I'LL SEE YOU AT WORK NEXT WEEK--I'M GOING TO--I NEED TO REST.
HOME SWEET HO--
KOFF!
KOFF!
KOFF!
KOFF!
KOFF!
KOFF!
KOFF!

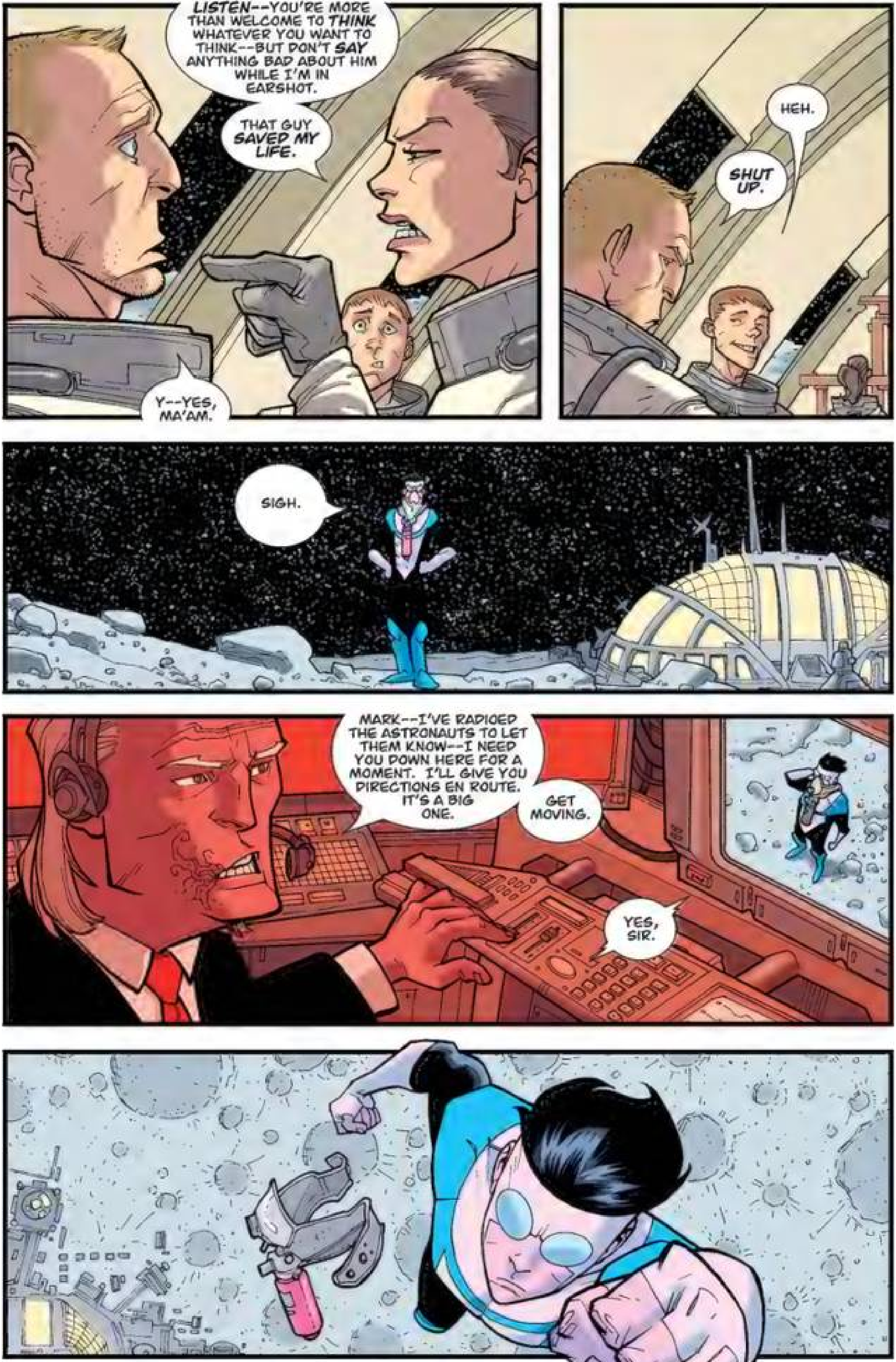

HWAAGG--IRK!!
UKK!!
HMMPH!!
MMPHGG!
DEFEATED?! THEY THOUGHT WE WERE DEFEATED?! FOOLISH SOLIDS.
THE SEQUIDS CANNOT BE DEFEATED--THE ONE-MIND NEVER DIES--TIME HOLDS NO MEANING FOR US--NO THREAT OF DEATH.
WE MAY BE SEPARATE FROM THE OTHERS--NO LONGER ABLE TO ESTABLISH CONTACT--BUT WE WILL BUILD OUR OWN ARMY--HERE. IT MAY TAKE US MANY--MANY YEARS--
BUT WE SEQUIDS WILL TAKE CONTROL OF THIS PLANET--AND EVERY LIVING THING THAT CALLS IT HOME.
IT'S ONLY A MATTER OF TIME!

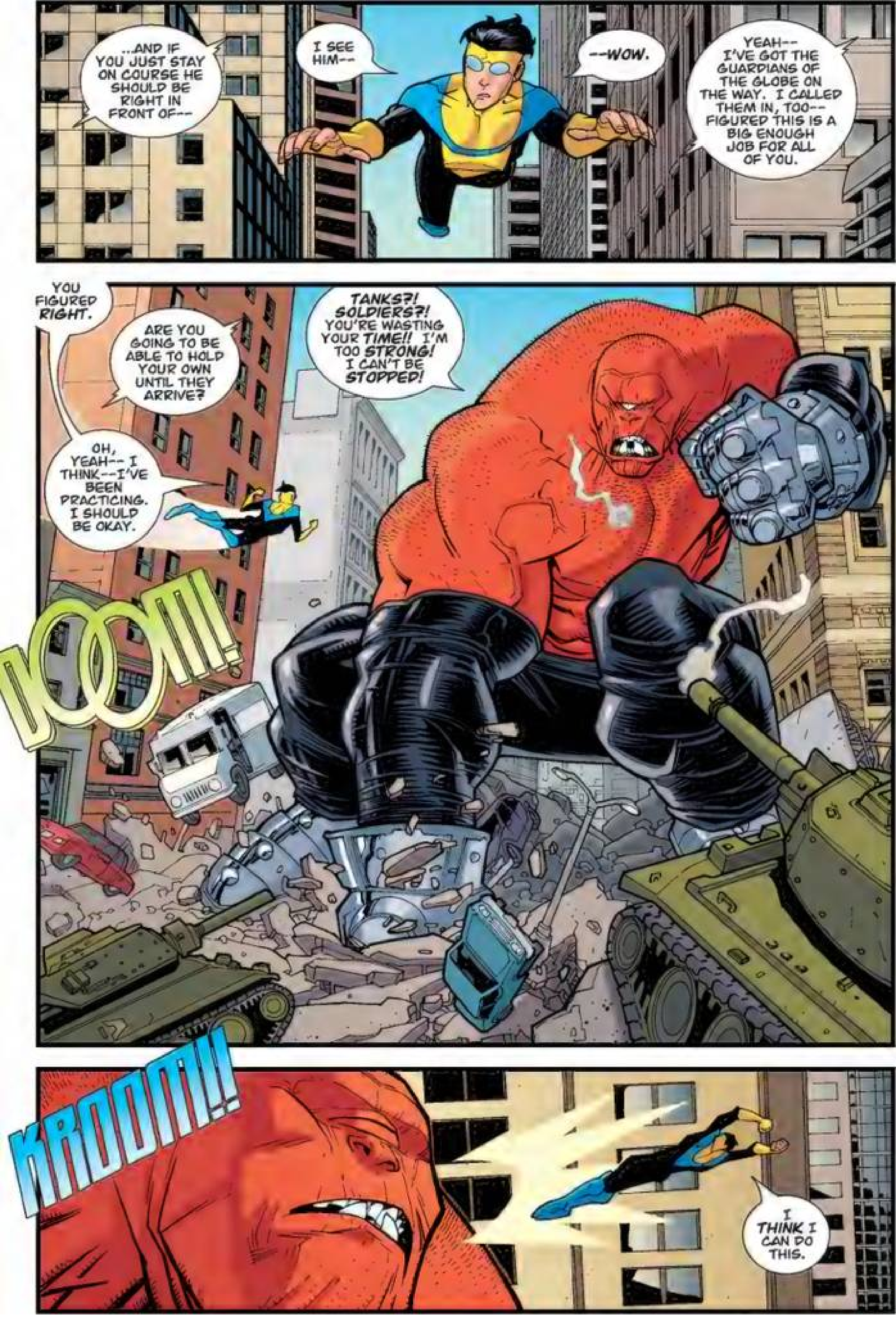


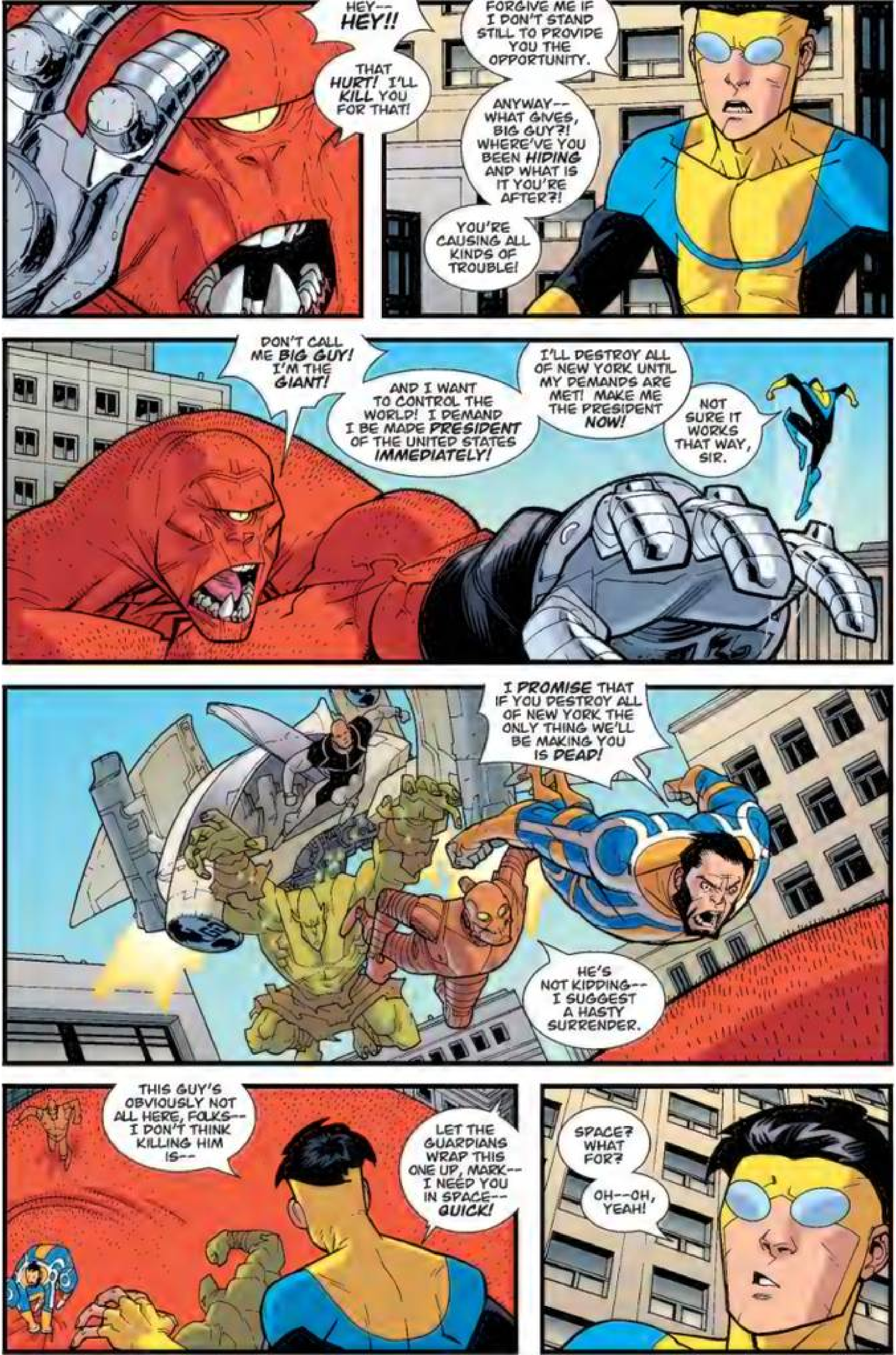
ISSUE FORTY-TWO

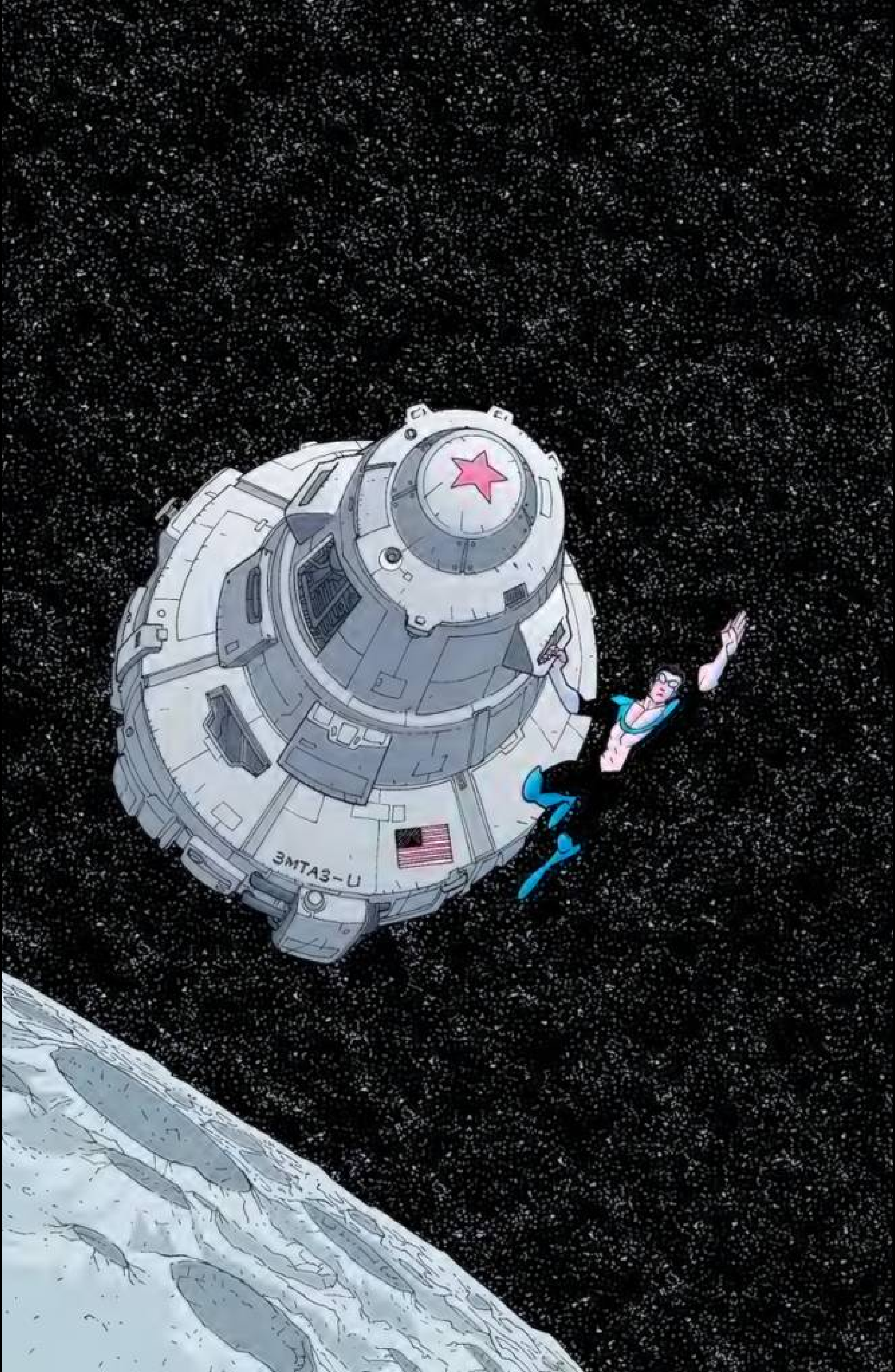

NO, SO FAR EVERYTHING IS GOING WELL. NOTHING'S HAPPENED-- NOT EVEN A MINOR SET BACK. LAST TIME I TALKED TO THE ASTRONAUTS, AT LEAST--THINGS WERE RUNNING SMOOTHLY AND RIGHT ON SCHEDULE.
WELL, JUST KEEP AN EYE ON THEM. THIS IS A DANGEROUS MISSION--THAT'S WHY YOU'RE **THERE.**
I KNOW WHY I'M HERE. IF THEY LOSE CONTAINMENT--I HELP THE ASTRONAUTS INTO THE ESCAPE POD AND ZIP THEM BACK TO EARTH BEFORE THEY RUN OUT OF AIR. IT'S **SIMPLE,** CECIL-- THIS IS **EASY.**
EASY-- **RIGHT.** JUST KEEP YOUR EYES OPEN, WHO KNOWS WHAT'S OUT THERE-- AND FOR GOD'S SAKE-- AT LEAST STAND UP AND ACT LIKE YOU'RE READY TO SAVE THEM IF SOMETHING DOES GO WRONG.
I **AM** STANDING.
I CAN **SEE** YOU, MARK. I'M LOOKING RIGHT AT YOU.
FINE, FINE, FINE.


WHAT IS IT? WHY ARE YOU CONSTANTLY STARING AT HIM?
DO YOU TRUST HIM? I MEAN--REALLY TRUST HIM? HE'S ONLY HALF HUMAN--AND HIS ALIEN FATHER TRIED TO TAKE OVER THE WORLD FOR HIS PEOPLE--THE VILTRUMITES OR WHATEVER THEY'RE CALLED. DON'T YOU REMEMBER THE--
I REMEMBER THE TRAGIC EVENTS OF MARCH SIXTEEN. HIS FIGHT WITH OMNI-MAN WAS ALL OVER THE NEWS FOR MONTHS. ALL THOSE PEOPLE DIED--IT WAS TRAGIC, YEAH.
I'VE BEEN TO THE MONUMENT.
YEAH--HIS FATHER, WHO WAS ONE OF OUR MOST BELOVED HEROES, OMNI-MAN, TRIED TO TAKE OVER THE WORLD. HIS FATHER KILLED THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE THAT DAY.
THEN HIS FATHER JUST LEFT THE PLANET--DISAPPEARED. OR SO WE'VE BEEN LED TO BELIEVE. YOU'VE HEARD THE THEORIES--THAT THE GOVERNMENT STRUCK A DEAL WITH OMNI-MAN--THAT HE NEVER LEFT.
IF THAT'S TRUE--INVINCIBLE HERE WOULD HAVE HAD SOMETHING TO DO WITH IT. REGARDLESS--THIS KID'S FATHER WAS AN EVIL--EVIL MAN.
BUT I'M SUPPOSED TO IGNORE THAT AND TRUST THAT THIS GUY IS GOING TO SAVE ME IF SOMETHING GOES WRONG. I DON'T TRUST THIS KID--I JUST DON'T.
YES--OMNI-MAN TRIED TO TAKE OVER THE WORLD--BUT DON'T FORGET, INVINCIBLE STOPPED HIM. HE SAVED US ALL THAT DAY.
HE TURNED AGAINST HIS FATHER--AND PROTECTED US. YOU HEARD THE RECORDING OF THEM TALKING DURING THE FIGHT. INVINCIBLE DIDN'T BACK DOWN.
THE KID'S GOT MY TRUST.
AND DIDN'T YOU SEE THE PARADE? HE JUST STOPPED SOME BIG ALIEN MENACE FROM REACHING EARTH AND TAKING OVER.
NOW HE'S HELPING US PUT AN OUTPOST ON THE MOON SO WE CAN MONITOR FOR MORE SPACE BORNE THREATS BEFORE THEY REACH US.
SEEMS TO ME LIKE HE'S EARNED THAT TRUST.
WHATEVER.
THE GUY JUST SEEMS KIND OF SHADY TO ME.
FIRST OFF--WE'VE GOT A LOT OF WORK TO DO AND NOT A LOT OF TIME. BETA TEAM IS COMING IN HERE IN SIXTEEN HOURS TO WORK ON THE INNER STRUCTURES. WE HAVE TO HAVE THIS DOME SECURE, COMPLETE AND FUNCTIONING BEFORE THEN.
SECOND--I WAS ON THE MARS MISSION WHEN WE WERE TAKEN CAPTIVE. INVINCIBLE SAVED US. IF IT WASN'T FOR HIM WE WOULD HAVE BEEN EXECUTED.


LISTEN--YOU'RE MORE THAN WELCOME TO THINK WHATEVER YOU WANT TO THINK--BUT DON'T SAY ANYTHING BAD ABOUT HIM WHILE I'M IN EARSHOT.
THAT GUY SAVED MY LIFE.
Y--YES, MA'AM.
HEH.
SHUT UP.
SIGH.
MARK--I'VE RADIOED THE ASTRONAUTS TO LET THEM KNOW--I NEED YOU DOWN HERE FOR A MOMENT. I'LL GIVE YOU DIRECTIONS EN ROUTE. IT'S A BIG ONE.
GET MOVING.
YES, SIR.


...AND IF YOU JUST STAY ON COURSE HE SHOULD BE RIGHT IN FRONT OF--
I SEE HIM--
--WOW.
YEAH-- I'VE GOT THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE ON THE WAY. I CALLED THEM IN, TOO-- FIGURED THIS IS A BIG ENOUGH JOB FOR ALL OF YOU.
YOU FIGURED RIGHT.
ARE YOU GOING TO BE ABLE TO HOLD YOUR OWN UNTIL THEY ARRIVE?
OH, YEAH-- I THINK--I'VE BEEN PRACTICING. I SHOULD BE OKAY.
TANKS?! SOLDIERS?! YOU'RE WASTING YOUR TIME!! I'M TOO STRONG! I CAN'T BE STOPPED!
DOOM!!
KROOM!!
I THINK I CAN DO THIS.


HEY-- HEY!!
THAT HURT! I'LL KILL YOU FOR THAT!
FORGIVE ME IF I DON'T STAND STILL TO PROVIDE YOU THE OPPORTUNITY.
ANYWAY-- WHAT GIVES, BIG GUY?! WHERE'VE YOU BEEN HIDING AND WHAT IS IT YOU'RE AFTER?!
YOU'RE CAUSING ALL KINDS OF TROUBLE!
DON'T CALL ME BIG GUY! I'M THE GIANT!
AND I WANT TO CONTROL THE WORLD! I DEMAND I BE MADE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES IMMEDIATELY!
I'LL DESTROY ALL OF NEW YORK UNTIL MY DEMANDS ARE MET! MAKE ME THE PRESIDENT NOW!
NOT SURE IT WORKS THAT WAY, SIR.
I PROMISE THAT IF YOU DESTROY ALL OF NEW YORK THE ONLY THING WE'LL BE MAKING YOU IS DEAD!
HE'S NOT KIDDING-- I SUGGEST A HASTY SURRENDER.
THIS GUY'S OBVIOUSLY NOT ALL HERE, FOLKS-- I DON'T THINK KILLING HIM IS--
LET THE GUARDIANS WRAP THIS ONE UP, MARK-- I NEED YOU IN SPACE-- QUICK!
SPACE? WHAT FOR?
OH--OH, YEAH!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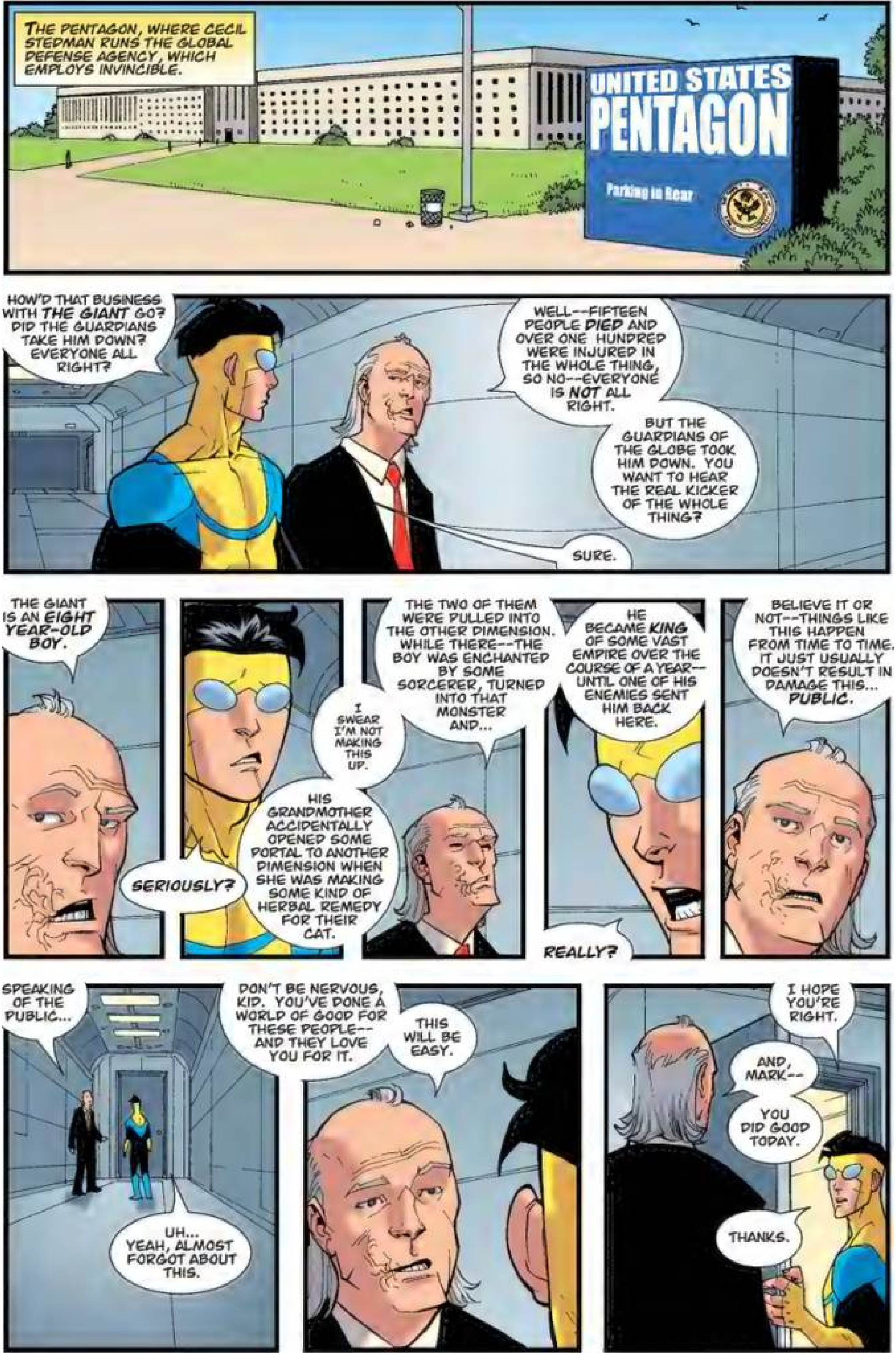
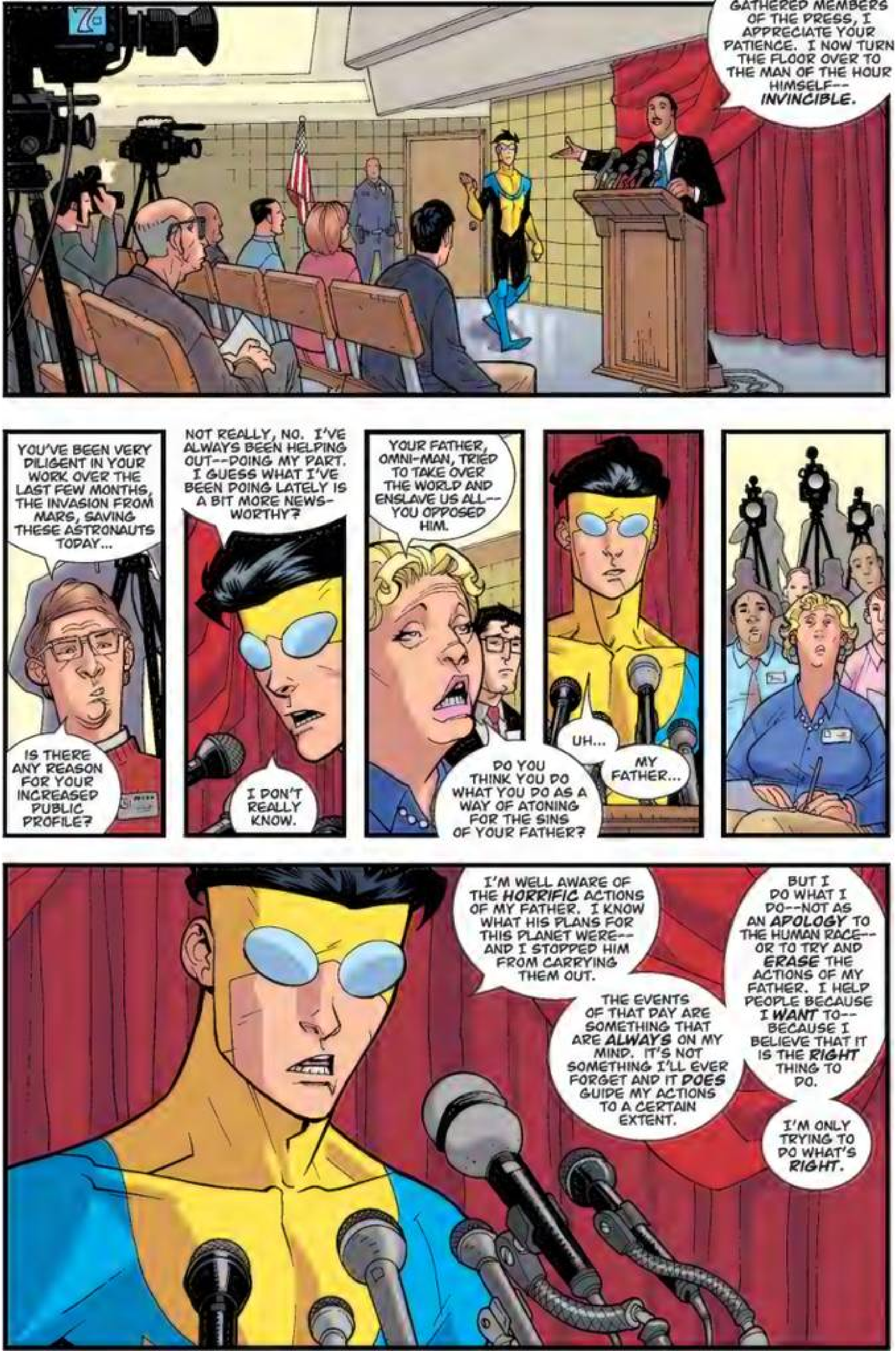
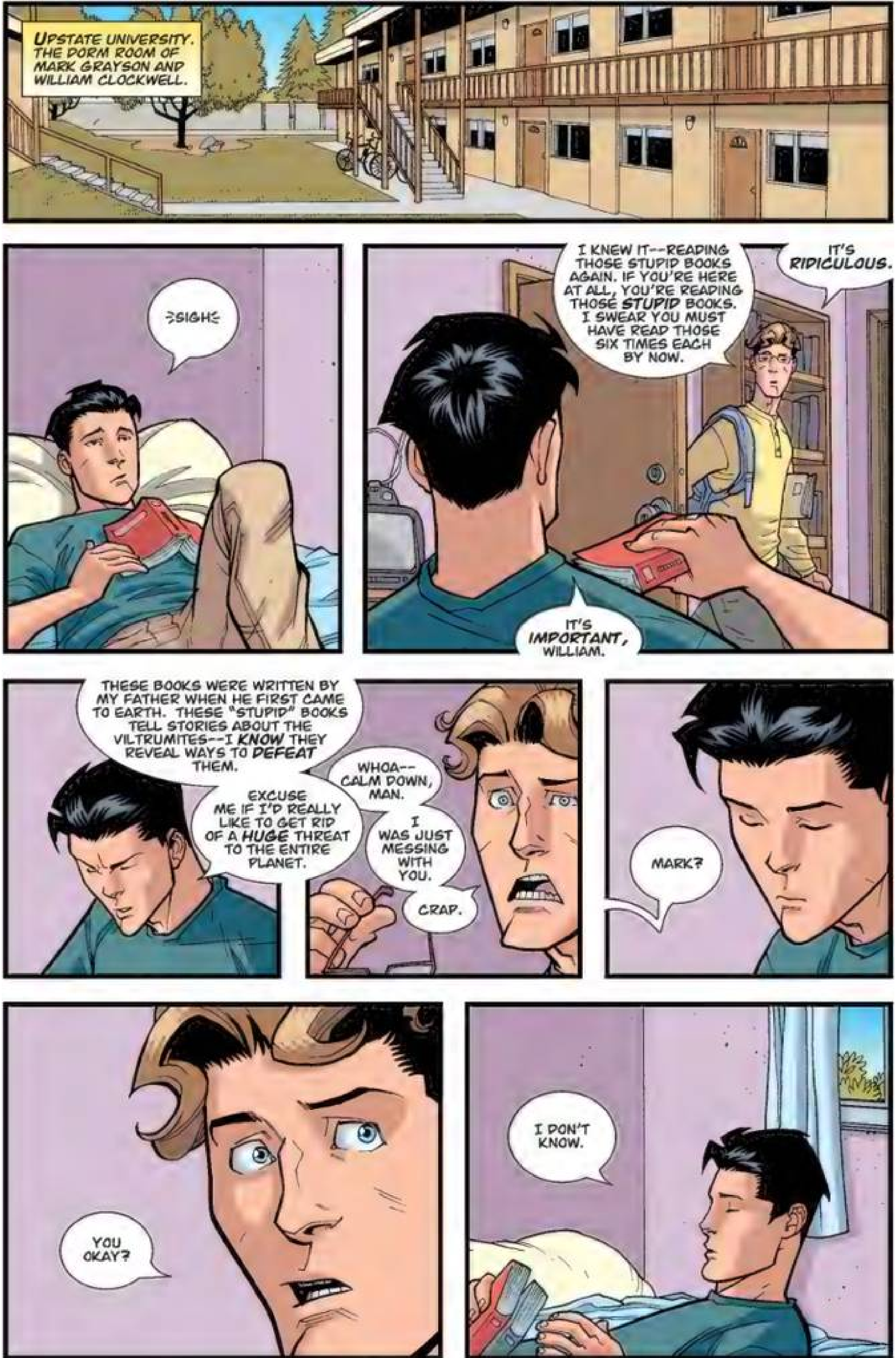
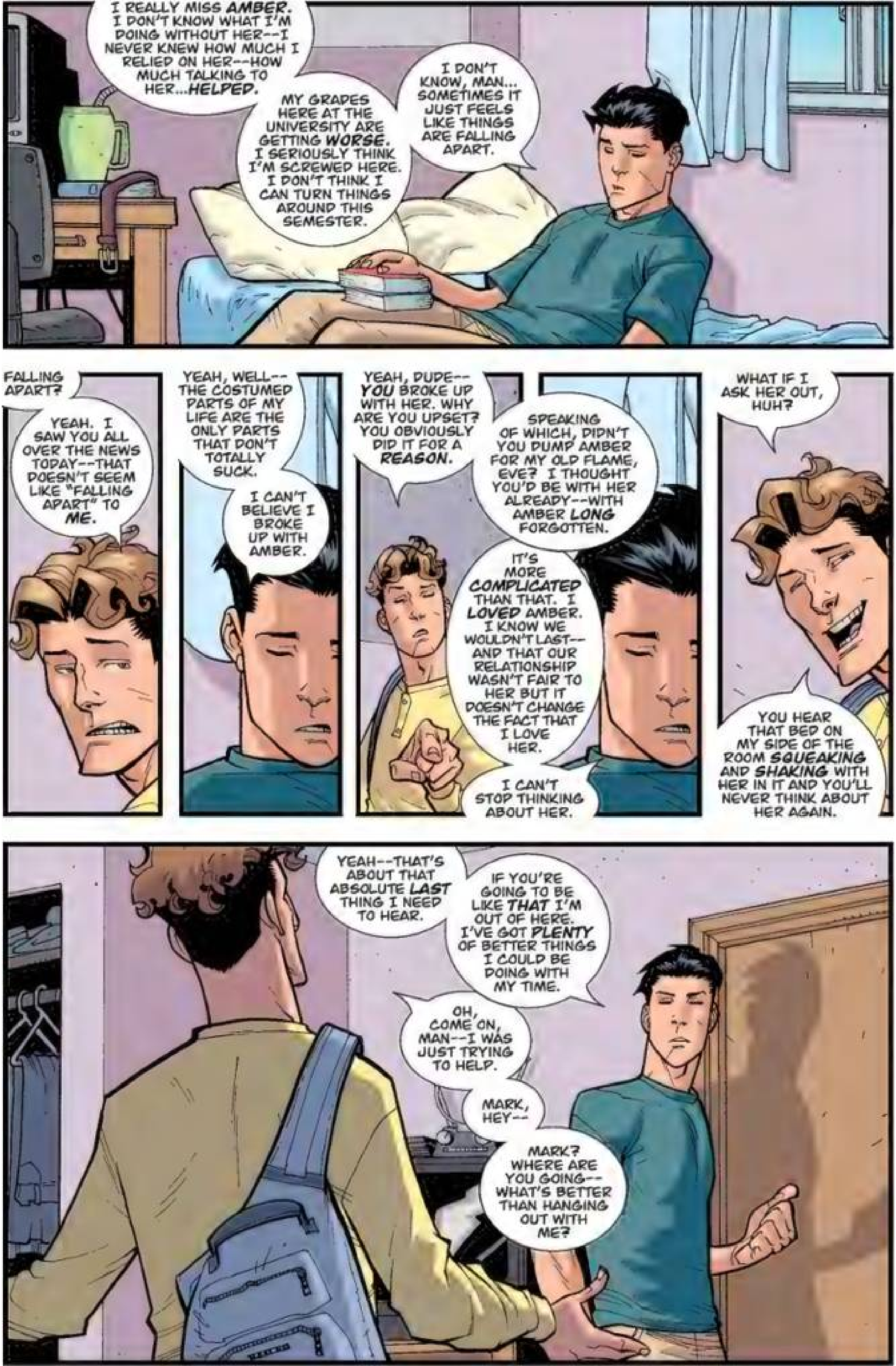
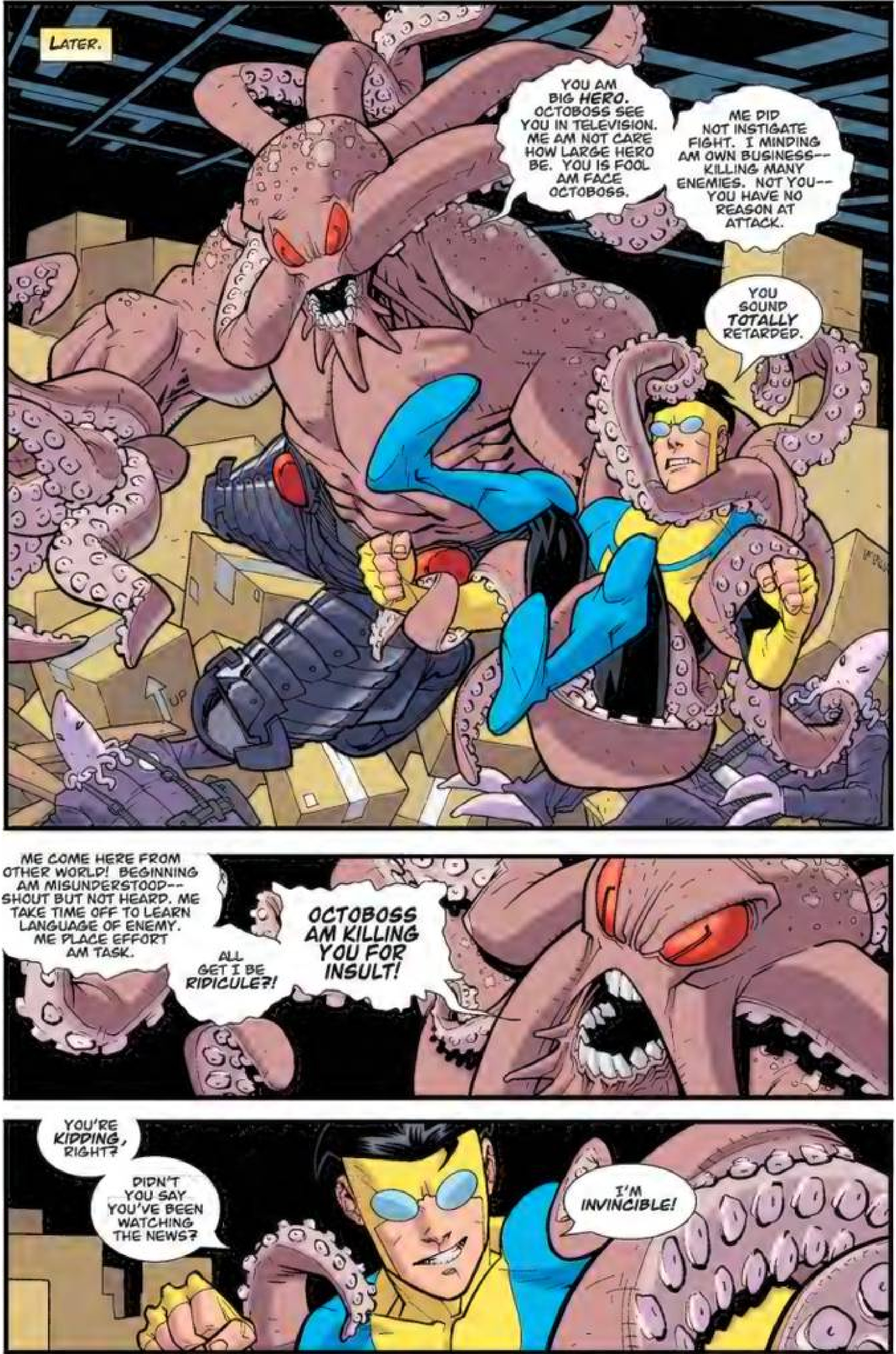
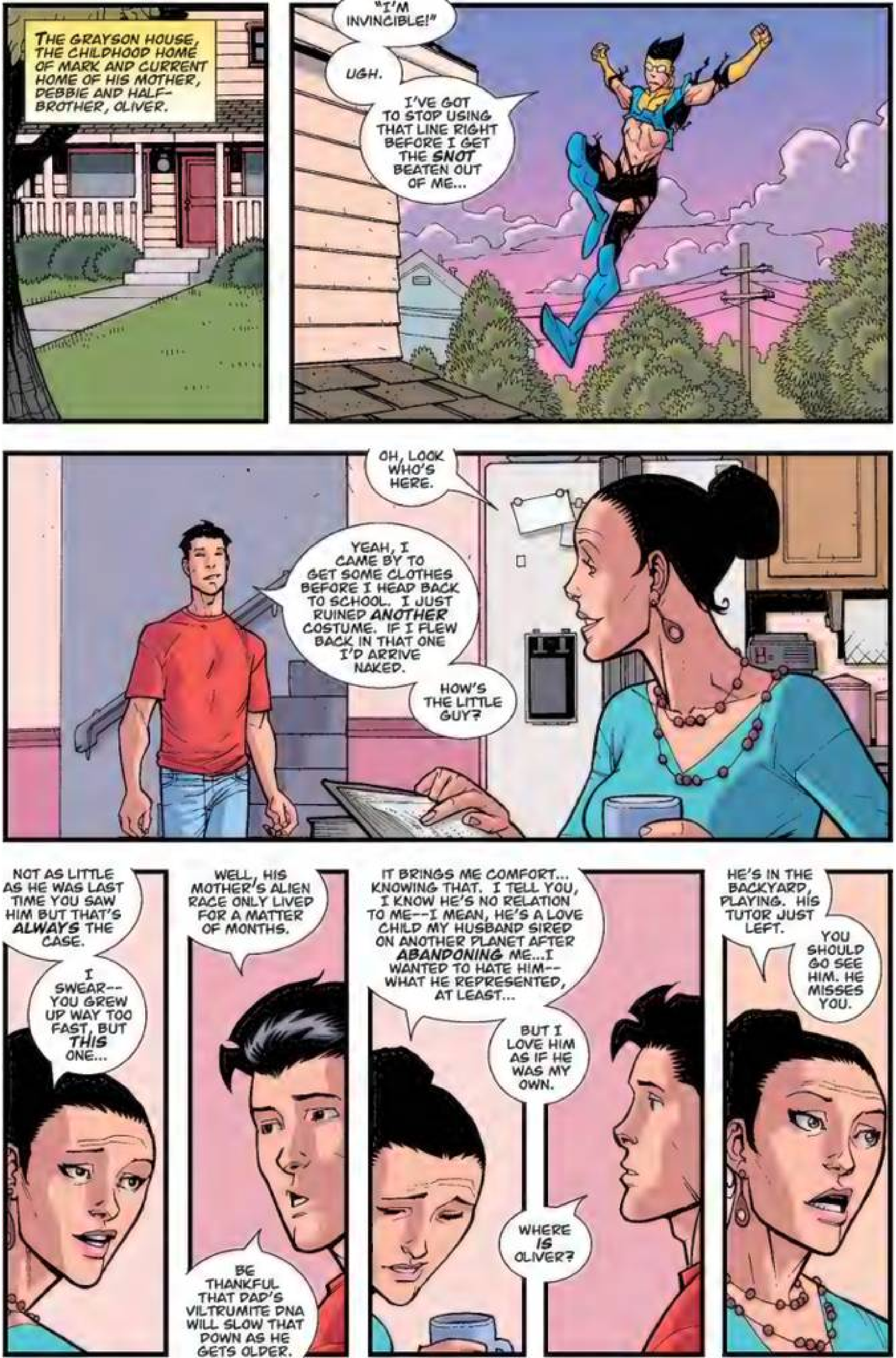

THE PENTAGON, WHERE CECIL STEDMAN RUNS THE GLOBAL DEFENSE AGENCY, WHICH EMPLOYS INVINCIBLE.
UNITED STATES PENTAGON
Parking in Rear
HOW'D THAT BUSINESS WITH THE GIANT GO? DID THE GUARDIANS TAKE HIM DOWN? EVERYONE ALL RIGHT?
WELL--FIFTEEN PEOPLE DIED AND OVER ONE HUNDRED WERE INJURED IN THE WHOLE THING, SO NO--EVERYONE IS NOT ALL RIGHT.
BUT THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE TOOK HIM DOWN. YOU WANT TO HEAR THE REAL KICKER OF THE WHOLE THING?
SURE.
THE GIANT IS AN EIGHT YEAR-OLD BOY.
SERIOUSLY?
I SWEAR I'M NOT MAKING THIS UP.
HIS GRANDMOTHER ACCIDENTALLY OPENED SOME PORTAL TO ANOTHER DIMENSION WHEN SHE WAS MAKING SOME KIND OF HERBAL REMEDY FOR THEIR CAT.
THE TWO OF THEM WERE PULLED INTO THE OTHER DIMENSION. WHILE THERE--THE BOY WAS ENCHANTED BY SOME SORCERER, TURNED INTO THAT MONSTER AND...
HE BECAME KING OF SOME VAST EMPIRE OVER THE COURSE OF A YEAR--UNTIL ONE OF HIS ENEMIES SENT HIM BACK HERE.
REALLY?
BELIEVE IT OR NOT--THINGS LIKE THIS HAPPEN FROM TIME TO TIME. IT JUST USUALLY DOESN'T RESULT IN DAMAGE THIS... PUBLIC.
SPEAKING OF THE PUBLIC...
UH... YEAH, ALMOST FORGOT ABOUT THIS.
DON'T BE NERVOUS, KID. YOU'VE DONE A WORLD OF GOOD FOR THESE PEOPLE--AND THEY LOVE YOU FOR IT.
THIS WILL BE EASY.
I HOPE YOU'RE RIGHT.
AND, MARK--
YOU DID GOOD TODAY.
THANKS.

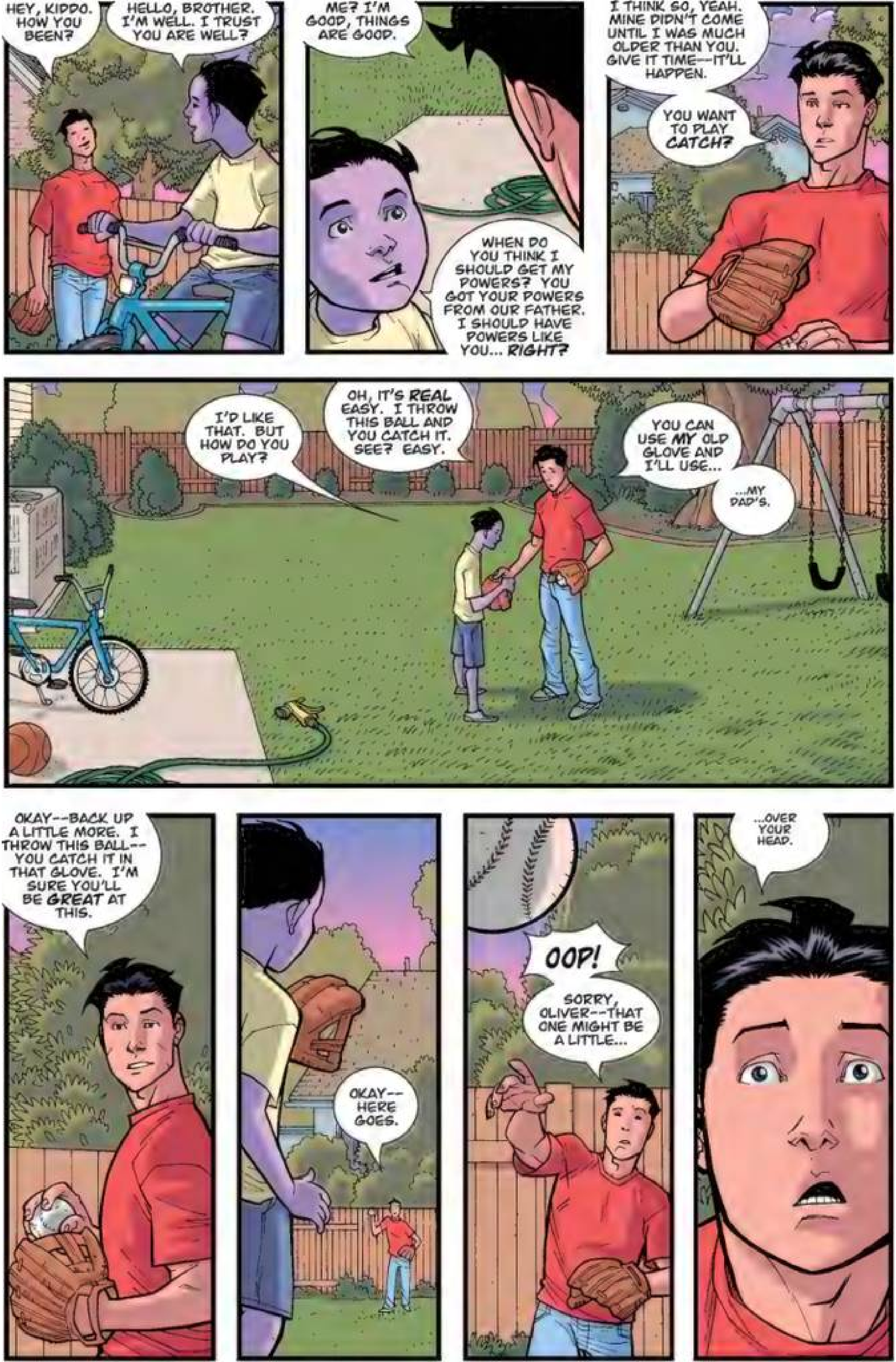

GATHERED MEMBERS OF THE PRESS, I APPRECIATE YOUR PATIENCE. I NOW TURN THE FLOOR OVER TO THE MAN OF THE HOUR HIMSELF-- *INVINCIBLE.*
YOU'VE BEEN VERY DILIGENT IN YOUR WORK OVER THE LAST FEW MONTHS, THE INVASION FROM MARS, SAVING THESE ASTRONAUTS TODAY...
IS THERE ANY REASON FOR YOUR INCREASED PUBLIC PROFILE?
NOT REALLY, NO. I'VE ALWAYS BEEN HELPING OUT--DOING MY PART. I GUESS WHAT I'VE BEEN DOING LATELY IS A BIT MORE NEWSWORTHY?
I DON'T REALLY KNOW.
YOUR FATHER, OMNI-MAN, TRIED TO TAKE OVER THE WORLD AND ENSLAVE US ALL-- YOU OPPOSED HIM.
DO YOU THINK YOU DO WHAT YOU DO AS A WAY OF ATONING FOR THE SINS OF YOUR FATHER?
UH...
MY FATHER...
I'M WELL AWARE OF THE *HORRIFIC* ACTIONS OF MY FATHER. I KNOW WHAT HIS PLANS FOR THIS PLANET WERE-- AND I STOPPED HIM FROM CARRYING THEM OUT.
THE EVENTS OF THAT DAY ARE SOMETHING THAT ARE *ALWAYS* ON MY MIND. IT'S NOT SOMETHING I'LL EVER FORGET AND IT *DOES* GUIDE MY ACTIONS TO A CERTAIN EXTENT.
BUT I DO WHAT I DO--NOT AS AN *APOLOGY* TO THE HUMAN RACE-- OR TO TRY AND *ERASE* THE ACTIONS OF MY FATHER. I HELP PEOPLE BECAUSE I *WANT* TO-- BECAUSE I BELIEVE THAT IT IS THE *RIGHT* THING TO DO.
I'M ONLY TRYING TO DO WHAT'S *RIGHT*.

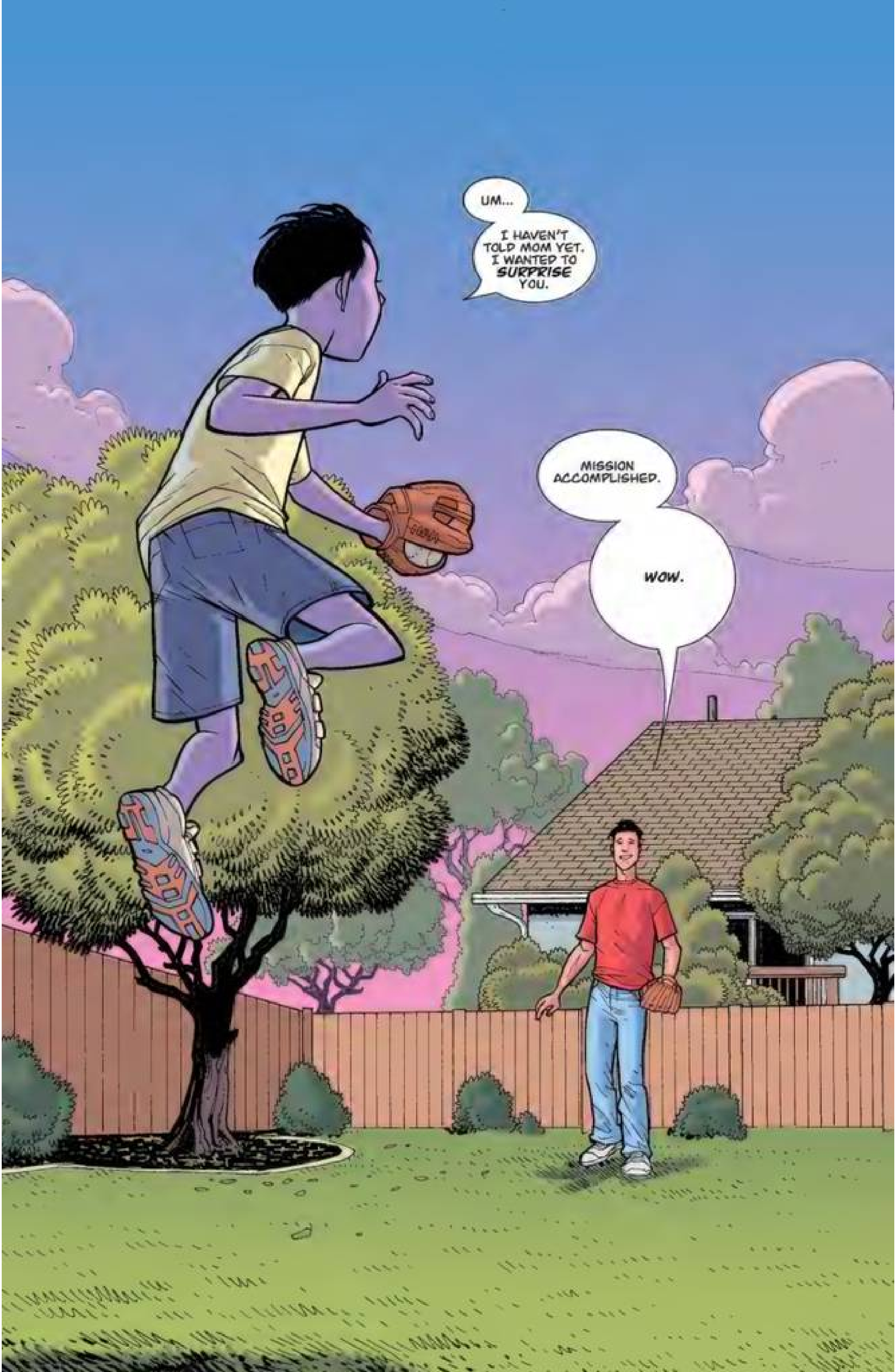

UPSTATE UNIVERSITY. THE DORM ROOM OF MARK GRAYSON AND WILLIAM CLOCKWELL.
=SIGH=
I KNEW IT--READING THOSE STUPID BOOKS AGAIN. IF YOU'RE HERE AT ALL, YOU'RE READING THOSE STUPID BOOKS. I SWEAR YOU MUST HAVE READ THOSE SIX TIMES EACH BY NOW.
IT'S RIDICULOUS.
IT'S IMPORTANT, WILLIAM.
THESE BOOKS WERE WRITTEN BY MY FATHER WHEN HE FIRST CAME TO EARTH. THESE "STUPID" BOOKS TELL STORIES ABOUT THE VILTRUMITES--I KNOW THEY REVEAL WAYS TO DEFEAT THEM.
EXCUSE ME IF I'D REALLY LIKE TO GET RID OF A HUGE THREAT TO THE ENTIRE PLANET.
WHOA-- CALM DOWN, MAN.
I WAS JUST MESSING WITH YOU.
CRAP.
MARK?
YOU OKAY?
I DON'T KNOW.


I REALLY MISS **AMBER.** I DON'T KNOW WHAT I'M DOING WITHOUT HER--I NEVER KNEW HOW MUCH I RELIED ON HER--HOW MUCH TALKING TO HER...**HELPED.**
MY GRADES HERE AT THE UNIVERSITY ARE GETTING **WORSE.** I SERIOUSLY THINK I'M SCREWED HERE. I DON'T THINK I CAN TURN THINGS AROUND THIS SEMESTER.
I DON'T KNOW, MAN... SOMETIMES IT JUST FEELS LIKE THINGS ARE FALLING APART.
FALLING APART?
YEAH. I SAW YOU ALL OVER THE NEWS TODAY--THAT DOESN'T SEEM LIKE "FALLING APART" TO **ME.**
YEAH, WELL-- THE COSTUMED PARTS OF MY LIFE ARE THE ONLY PARTS THAT DON'T TOTALLY SUCK.
I CAN'T BELIEVE I BROKE UP WITH AMBER.
YEAH, DUDE-- **YOU** BROKE UP WITH HER. WHY ARE YOU UPSET? YOU OBVIOUSLY DID IT FOR A **REASON.**
SPEAKING OF WHICH, DIDN'T YOU DUMP AMBER FOR MY OLD FLAME, EVE? I THOUGHT YOU'D BE WITH HER ALREADY--WITH AMBER **LONG** FORGOTTEN.
IT'S MORE **COMPLICATED** THAN THAT. I **LOVED** AMBER. I KNOW WE WOULDN'T LAST-- AND THAT OUR RELATIONSHIP WASN'T FAIR TO HER BUT IT DOESN'T CHANGE THE FACT THAT I LOVE HER.
I CAN'T STOP THINKING ABOUT HER.
WHAT IF I ASK HER OUT, HUH?
YOU HEAR THAT BED ON MY SIDE OF THE ROOM **SQUEAKING** AND **SHAKING** WITH HER IN IT AND YOU'LL NEVER THINK ABOUT HER AGAIN.
YEAH--THAT'S ABOUT THAT ABSOLUTE **LAST** THING I NEED TO HEAR.
IF YOU'RE GOING TO BE LIKE **THAT** I'M OUT OF HERE. I'VE GOT **PLENTY** OF BETTER THINGS I COULD BE DOING WITH MY TIME.
OH, COME ON, MAN--I WAS JUST TRYING TO HELP.
MARK, HEY--
MARK? WHERE ARE YOU GOING-- WHAT'S BETTER THAN HANGING OUT WITH **ME?**

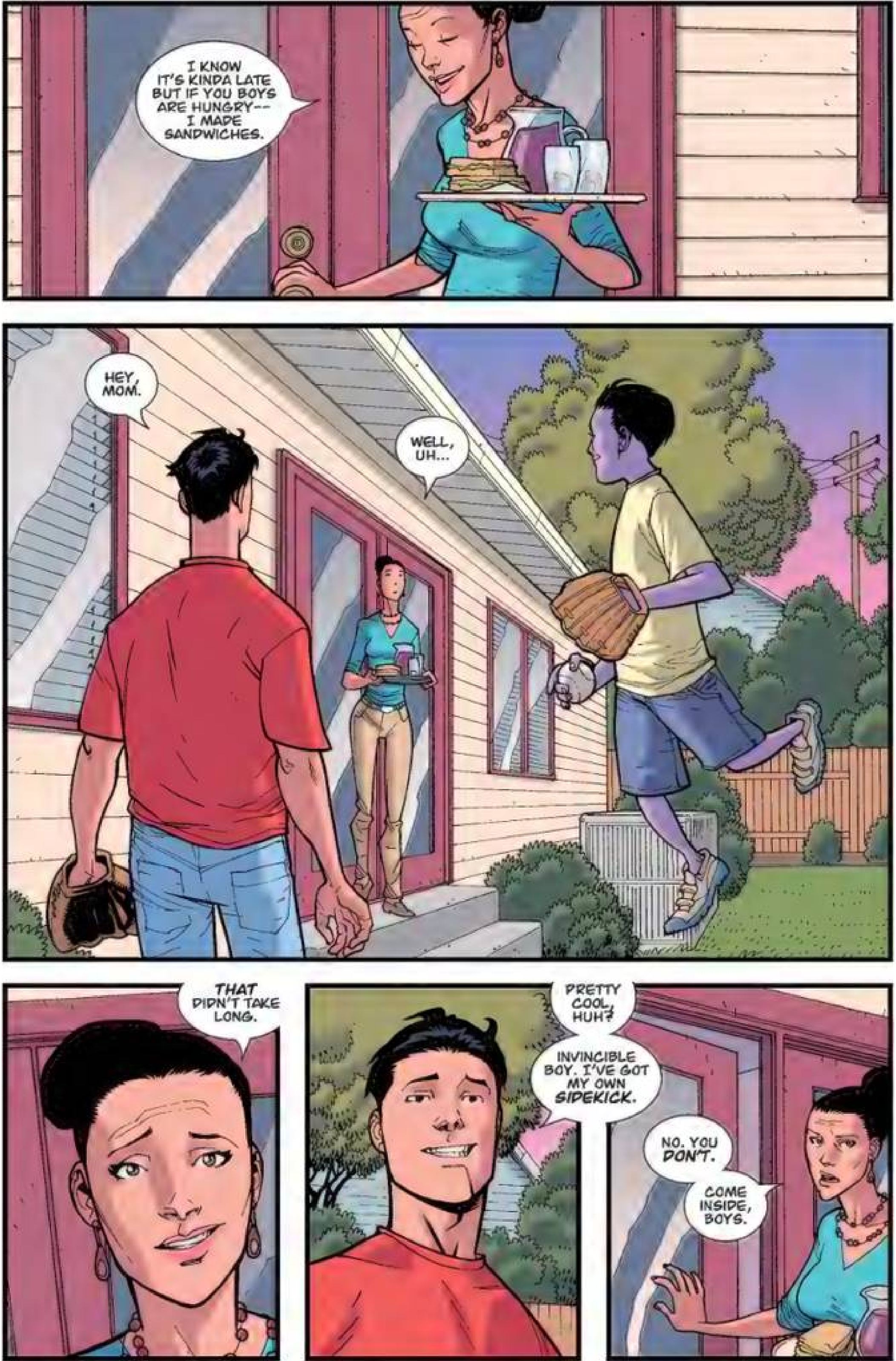

LATER.
YOU AM BIG HERO. OCTOBOSS SEE YOU IN TELEVISION. ME AM NOT CARE HOW LARGE HERO BE. YOU IS FOOL AM FACE OCTOBOSS.
ME DID NOT INSTIGATE FIGHT. I MINDING AM OWN BUSINESS-- KILLING MANY ENEMIES. NOT YOU-- YOU HAVE NO REASON AT ATTACK.
YOU SOUND TOTALLY RETARDED.
UP
ME COME HERE FROM OTHER WORLD! BEGINNING AM MISUNDERSTOOD-- SHOUT BUT NOT HEARD. ME TAKE TIME OFF TO LEARN LANGUAGE OF ENEMY. ME PLACE EFFORT AM TASK.
ALL GET I BE RIDICULE?!
OCTOBOSS AM KILLING YOU FOR INSULT!
YOU'RE KIDDING, RIGHT?
DIDN'T YOU SAY YOU'VE BEEN WATCHING THE NEWS?
I'M INVINCIBLE!

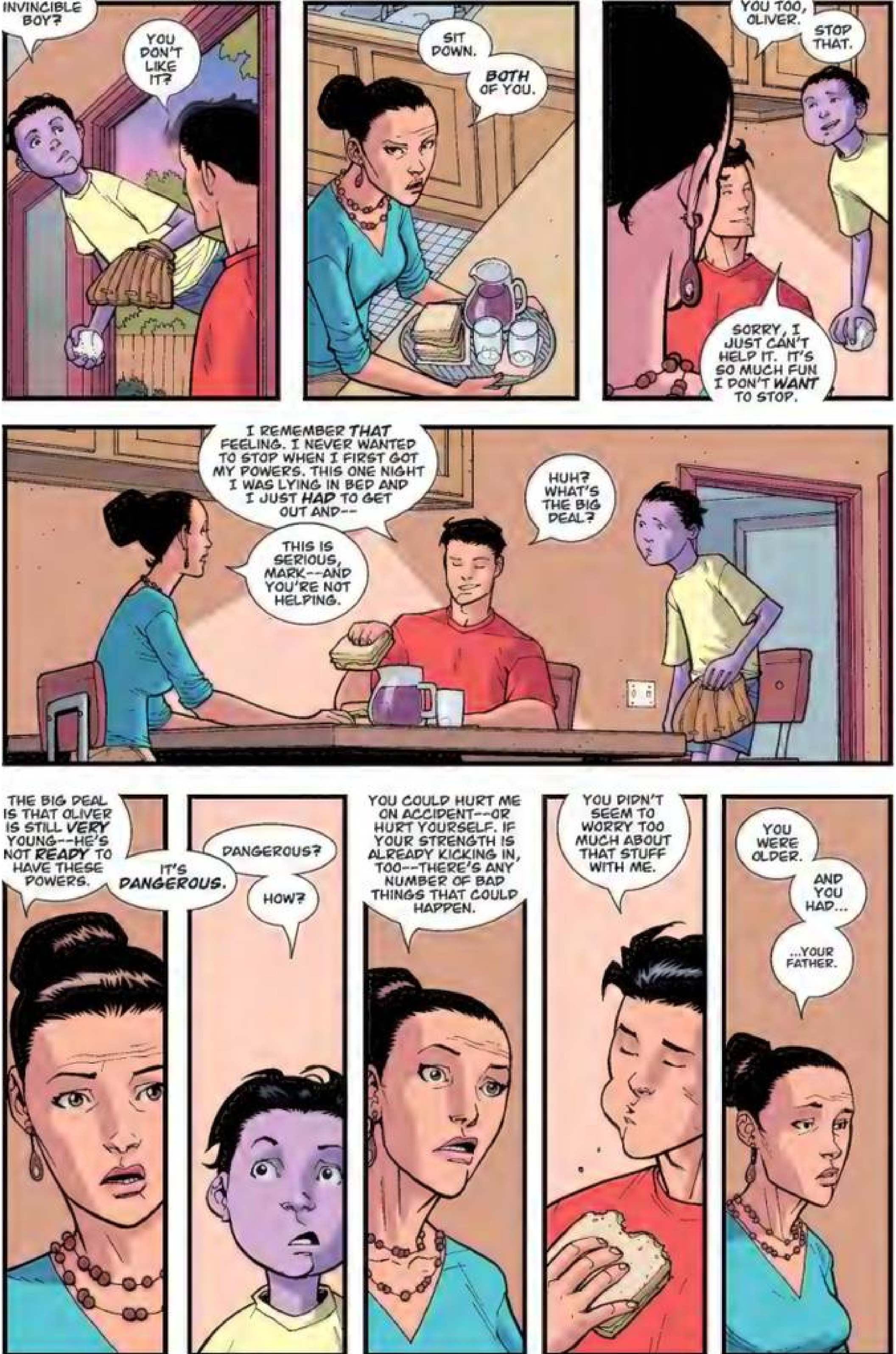

THE GRAYSON HOUSE, THE CHILDHOOD HOME OF MARK AND CURRENT HOME OF HIS MOTHER, DEBBIE AND HALF-BROTHER, OLIVER.
"I'M INVINCIBLE!"
UGH.
I'VE GOT TO STOP USING THAT LINE RIGHT BEFORE I GET THE SNOT BEATEN OUT OF ME...
OH, LOOK WHO'S HERE.
YEAH, I CAME BY TO GET SOME CLOTHES BEFORE I HEAD BACK TO SCHOOL. I JUST RUINED ANOTHER COSTUME. IF I FLEW BACK IN THAT ONE I'D ARRIVE NAKED.
HOW'S THE LITTLE GUY?
NOT AS LITTLE AS HE WAS LAST TIME YOU SAW HIM BUT THAT'S ALWAYS THE CASE.
I SWEAR-- YOU GREW UP WAY TOO FAST, BUT THIS ONE...
WELL, HIS MOTHER'S ALIEN RACE ONLY LIVED FOR A MATTER OF MONTHS.
BE THANKFUL THAT DAD'S VILTRUMITE DNA WILL SLOW THAT DOWN AS HE GETS OLDER.
IT BRINGS ME COMFORT... KNOWING THAT. I TELL YOU, I KNOW HE'S NO RELATION TO ME--I MEAN, HE'S A LOVE CHILD MY HUSBAND SIRED ON ANOTHER PLANET AFTER ABANDONING ME...I WANTED TO HATE HIM-- WHAT HE REPRESENTED, AT LEAST...
BUT I LOVE HIM AS IF HE WAS MY OWN.
WHERE IS OLIVER?
HE'S IN THE BACKYARD, PLAYING. HIS TUTOR JUST LEFT.
YOU SHOULD GO SEE HIM. HE MISSES YOU.

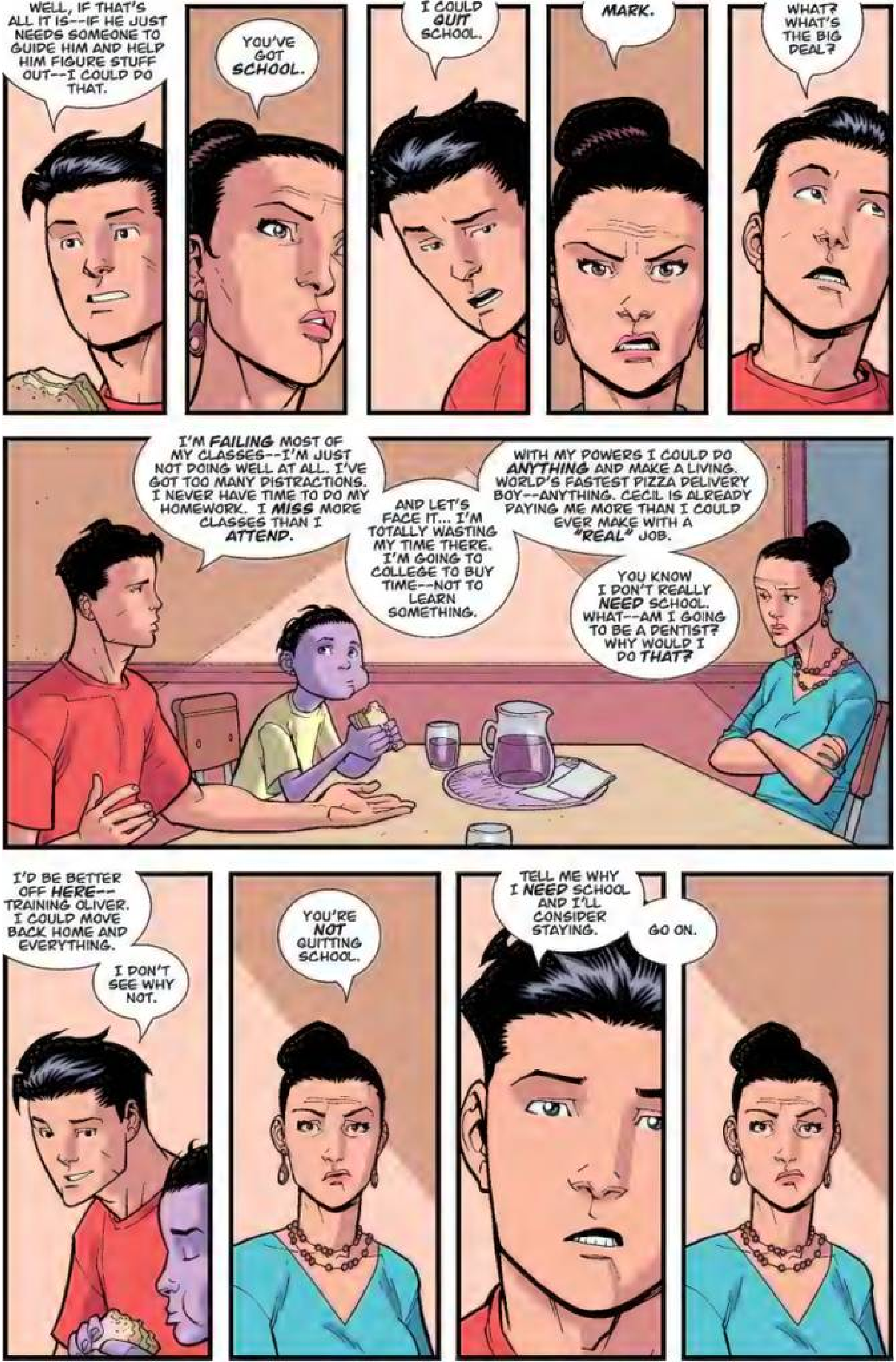

HEY, KIDDO. HOW YOU BEEN?
HELLO, BROTHER. I'M WELL. I TRUST YOU ARE WELL?
ME? I'M GOOD, THINGS ARE GOOD.
WHEN DO YOU THINK I SHOULD GET MY POWERS? YOU GOT YOUR POWERS FROM OUR FATHER. I SHOULD HAVE POWERS LIKE YOU... RIGHT?
I THINK SO, YEAH. MINE DIDN'T COME UNTIL I WAS MUCH OLDER THAN YOU. GIVE IT TIME--IT'LL HAPPEN.
YOU WANT TO PLAY CATCH?
I'D LIKE THAT. BUT HOW DO YOU PLAY?
OH, IT'S REAL EASY. I THROW THIS BALL AND YOU CATCH IT. SEE? EASY.
YOU CAN USE MY OLD GLOVE AND I'LL USE...
...MY DAD'S.
OKAY--BACK UP A LITTLE MORE. I THROW THIS BALL--YOU CATCH IT IN THAT GLOVE. I'M SURE YOU'LL BE GREAT AT THIS.
OKAY--HERE GOES.
OOP!
SORRY, OLIVER--THAT ONE MIGHT BE A LITTLE...
...OVER YOUR HEAD.

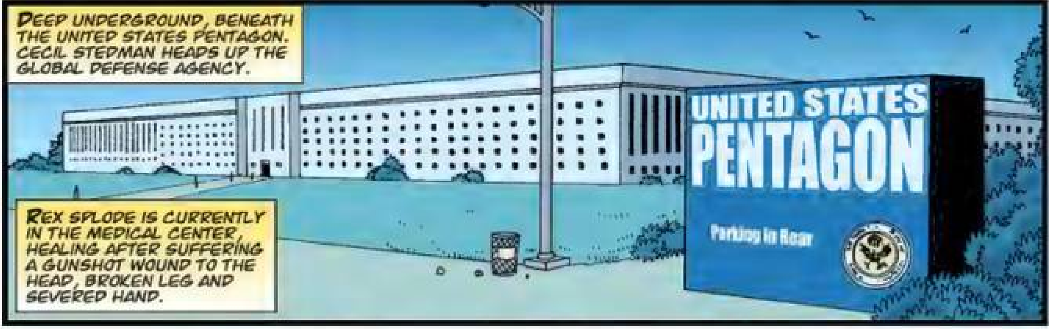

UM...
I HAVEN'T TOLD MOM YET. I WANTED TO **SURPRISE** YOU.
MISSION ACCOMPLISHED.
WOW.

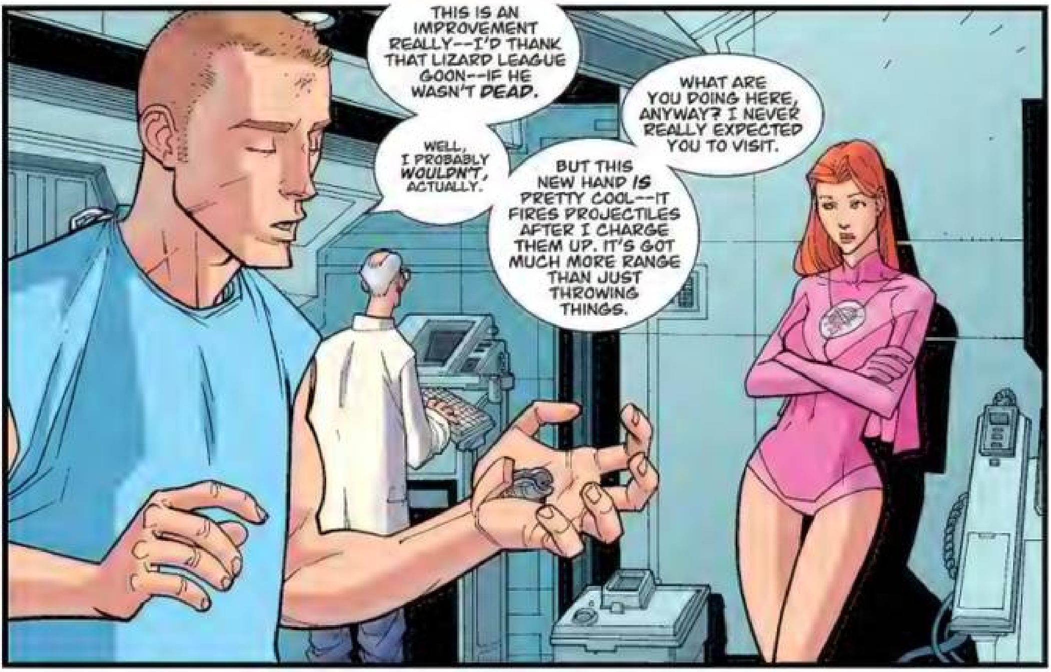
ISSUE FORTY-THREE

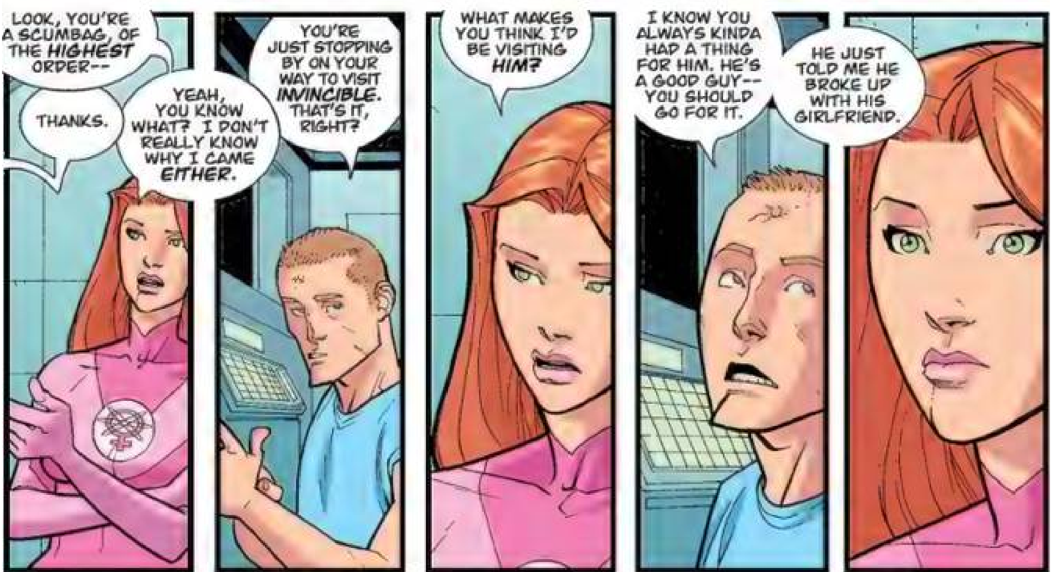

I KNOW IT'S KINDA LATE BUT IF YOU BOYS ARE HUNGRY-- I MADE SANDWICHES.
HEY, MOM.
WELL, UH...
THAT DIDN'T TAKE LONG.
PRETTY COOL, HUH?
INVINCIBLE BOY. I'VE GOT MY OWN SIDEKICK.
NO. YOU DON'T.
COME INSIDE, BOYS.

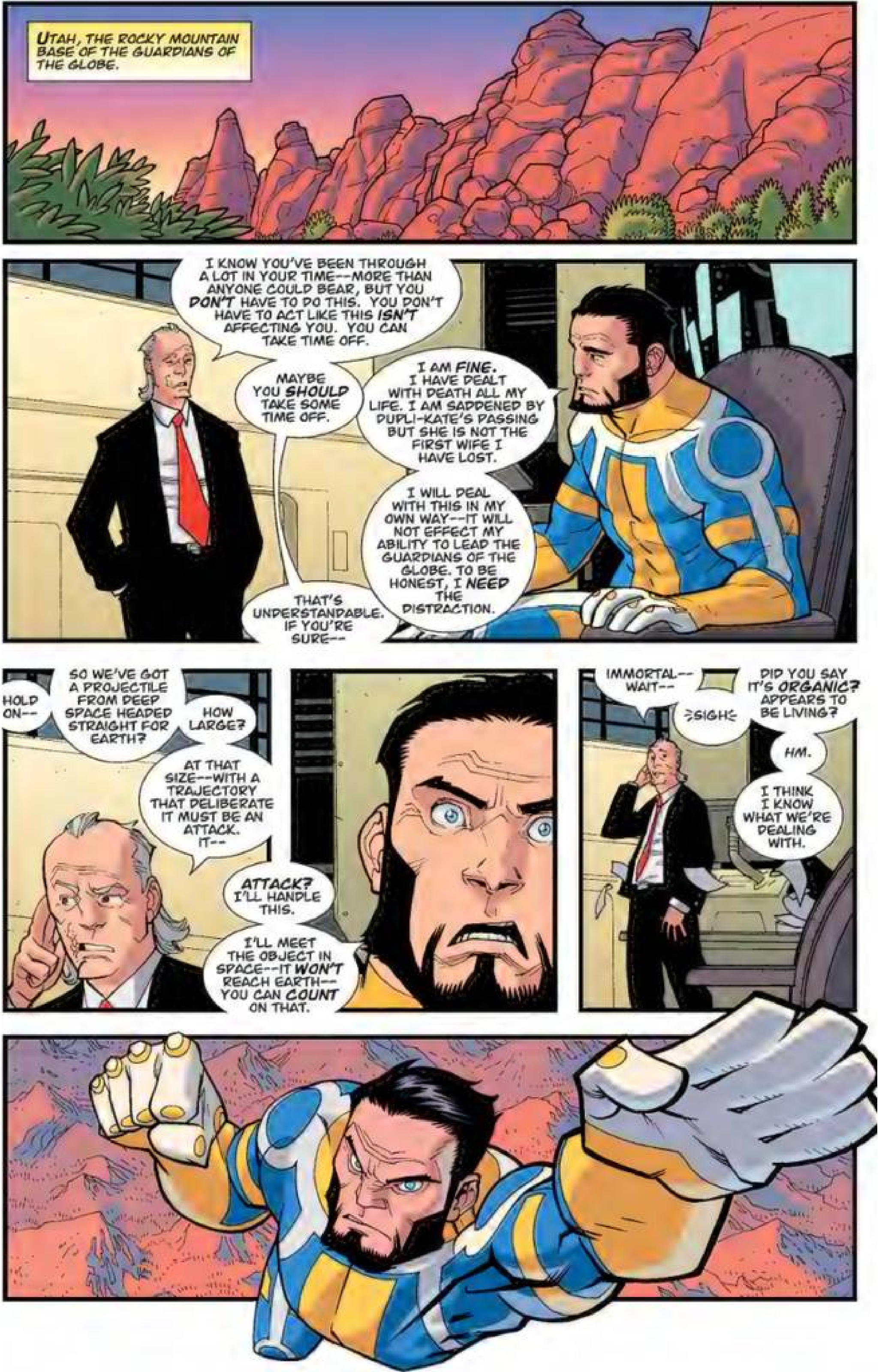

INVINCIBLE BOY?
YOU DON'T LIKE IT?
SIT DOWN.
BOTH OF YOU.
YOU TOO, OLIVER.
STOP THAT.
SORRY, I JUST CAN'T HELP IT. IT'S SO MUCH FUN I DON'T WANT TO STOP.
I REMEMBER THAT FEELING. I NEVER WANTED TO STOP WHEN I FIRST GOT MY POWERS. THIS ONE NIGHT I WAS LYING IN BED AND I JUST HAD TO GET OUT AND--
THIS IS SERIOUS, MARK--AND YOU'RE NOT HELPING.
HUH? WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?
THE BIG DEAL IS THAT OLIVER IS STILL VERY YOUNG--HE'S NOT READY TO HAVE THESE POWERS.
IT'S DANGEROUS.
DANGEROUS?
HOW?
YOU COULD HURT ME ON ACCIDENT--OR HURT YOURSELF. IF YOUR STRENGTH IS ALREADY KICKING IN, TOO--THERE'S ANY NUMBER OF BAD THINGS THAT COULD HAPPEN.
YOU DIDN'T SEEM TO WORRY TOO MUCH ABOUT THAT STUFF WITH ME.
YOU WERE OLDER.
AND YOU HAD...
...YOUR FATHER.

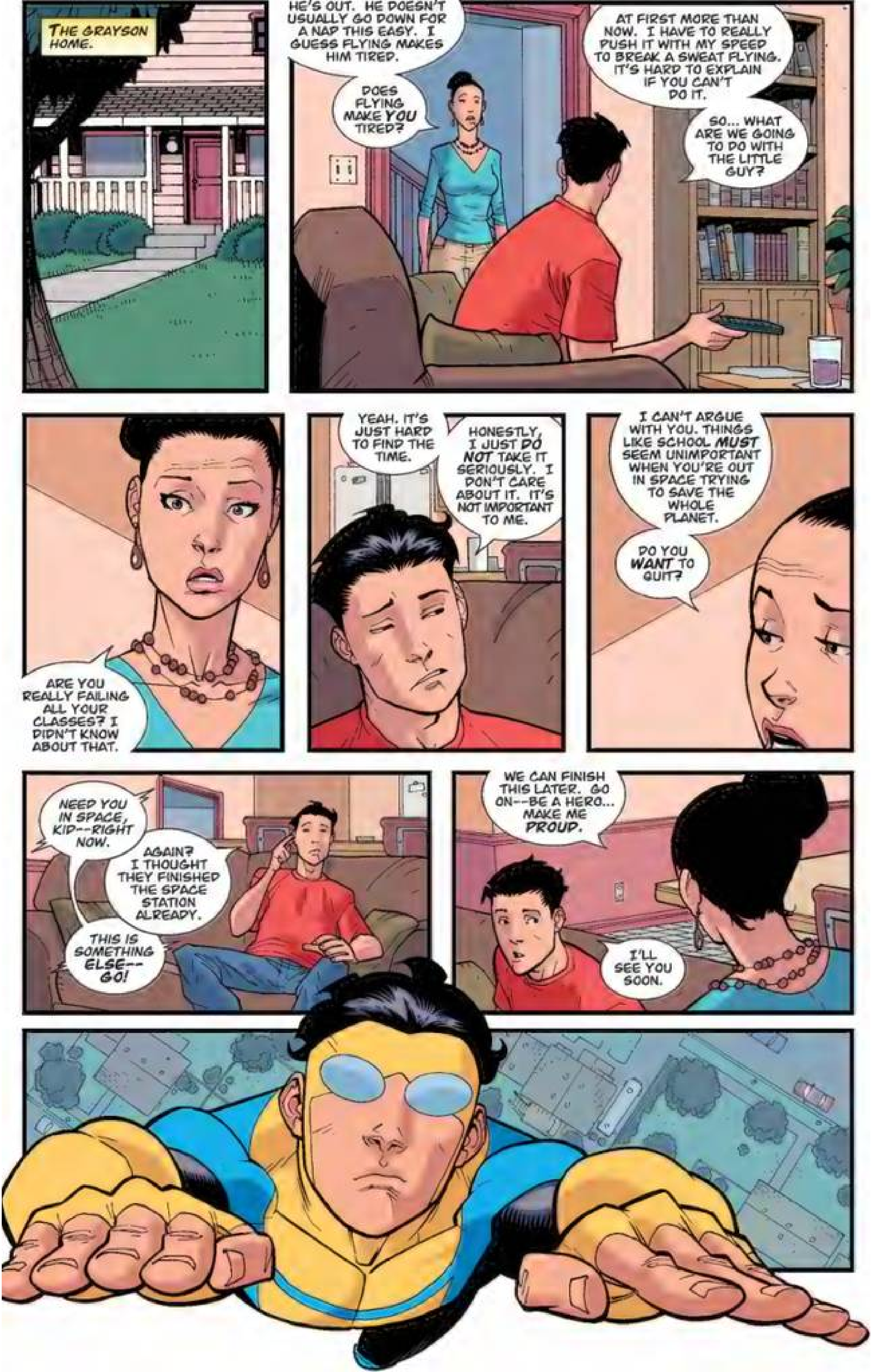

WELL, IF THAT'S ALL IT IS--IF HE JUST NEEDS SOMEONE TO GUIDE HIM AND HELP HIM FIGURE STUFF OUT--I COULD DO THAT.
YOU'VE GOT SCHOOL.
I COULD QUIT SCHOOL.
MARK.
WHAT? WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?
I'M FAILING MOST OF MY CLASSES--I'M JUST NOT DOING WELL AT ALL. I'VE GOT TOO MANY DISTRACTIONS. I NEVER HAVE TIME TO DO MY HOMEWORK. I MISS MORE CLASSES THAN I ATTEND.
AND LET'S FACE IT... I'M TOTALLY WASTING MY TIME THERE. I'M GOING TO COLLEGE TO BUY TIME--NOT TO LEARN SOMETHING.
WITH MY POWERS I COULD DO ANYTHING AND MAKE A LIVING. WORLD'S FASTEST PIZZA DELIVERY BOY--ANYTHING. CECIL IS ALREADY PAYING ME MORE THAN I COULD EVER MAKE WITH A "REAL" JOB.
YOU KNOW I DON'T REALLY NEED SCHOOL. WHAT--AM I GOING TO BE A DENTIST? WHY WOULD I DO THAT?
I'D BE BETTER OFF HERE--TRAINING OLIVER. I COULD MOVE BACK HOME AND EVERYTHING.
I DON'T SEE WHY NOT.
YOU'RE NOT QUITTING SCHOOL.
TELL ME WHY I NEED SCHOOL AND I'LL CONSIDER STAYING.
GO ON.

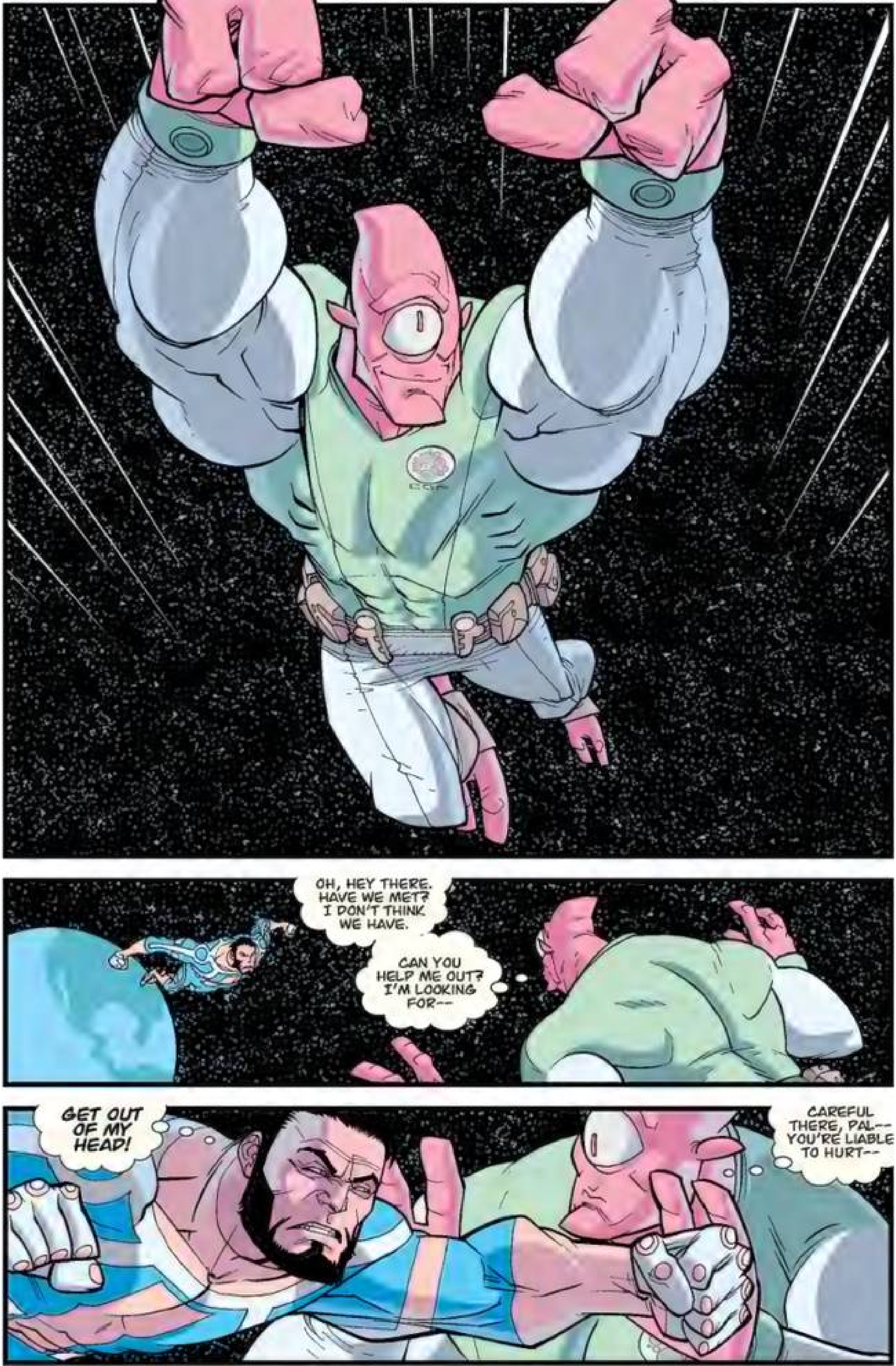

DEEP UNDERGROUND, BENEATH THE UNITED STATES PENTAGON. CECIL STEDMAN HEADS UP THE GLOBAL DEFENSE AGENCY.
UNITED STATES PENTAGON
Parking in Rear
REX SPLODE IS CURRENTLY IN THE MEDICAL CENTER, HEALING AFTER SUFFERING A GUNSHOT WOUND TO THE HEAD, BROKEN LEG AND SEVERED HAND.


THIS IS AN IMPROVEMENT REALLY--I'D THANK THAT LIZARD LEAGUE GOON--IF HE WASN'T DEAD.
WELL, I PROBABLY WOULDN'T, ACTUALLY.
BUT THIS NEW HAND IS PRETTY COOL--IT FIRES PROJECTILES AFTER I CHARGE THEM UP. IT'S GOT MUCH MORE RANGE THAN JUST THROWING THINGS.
WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE, ANYWAY? I NEVER REALLY EXPECTED YOU TO VISIT.

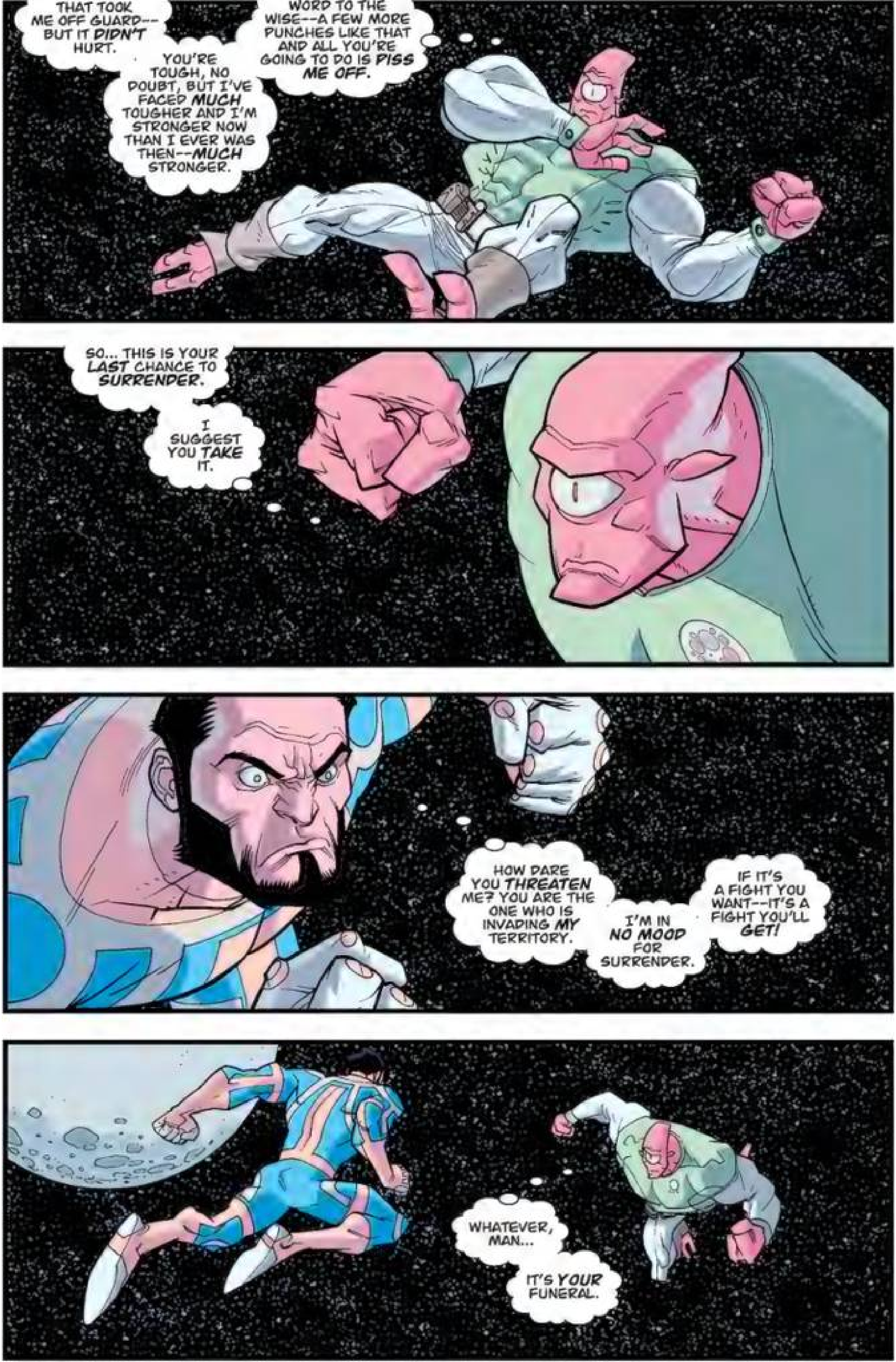

LOOK, YOU'RE A SCUMBAG, OF THE HIGHEST ORDER--
THANKS.
YEAH, YOU KNOW WHAT? I DON'T REALLY KNOW WHY I CAME EITHER.
YOU'RE JUST STOPPING BY ON YOUR WAY TO VISIT INVINCIBLE. THAT'S IT, RIGHT?
WHAT MAKES YOU THINK I'D BE VISITING HIM?
I KNOW YOU ALWAYS KINDA HAD A THING FOR HIM. HE'S A GOOD GUY--YOU SHOULD GO FOR IT.
HE JUST TOLD ME HE BROKE UP WITH HIS GIRLFRIEND.

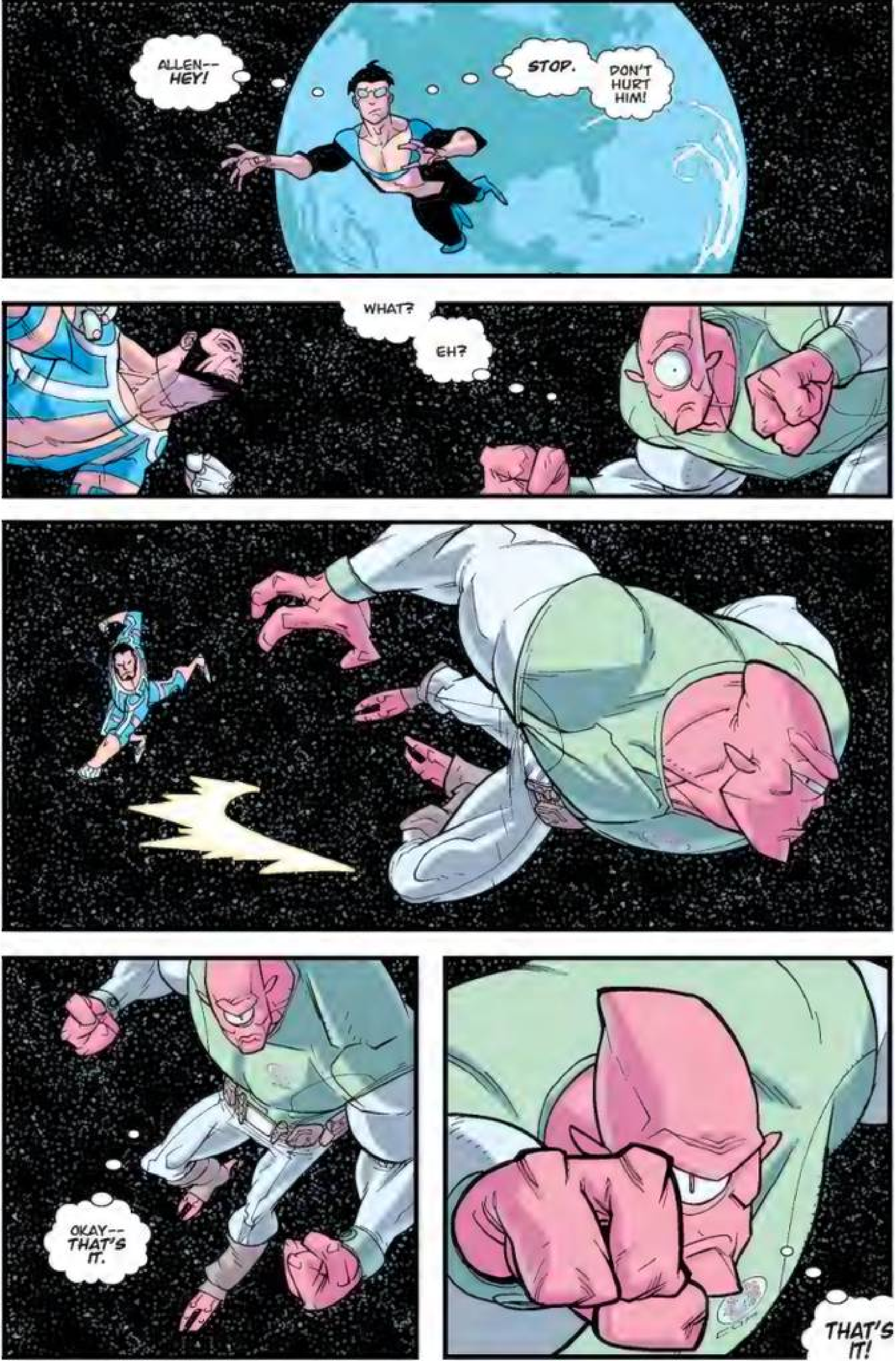

UTAH, THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN BASE OF THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE.
I KNOW YOU'VE BEEN THROUGH A LOT IN YOUR TIME--MORE THAN ANYONE COULD BEAR, BUT YOU DON'T HAVE TO DO THIS. YOU DON'T HAVE TO ACT LIKE THIS ISN'T AFFECTING YOU. YOU CAN TAKE TIME OFF.
I AM FINE. I HAVE DEALT WITH DEATH ALL MY LIFE. I AM SADDENED BY DUPLI-KATE'S PASSING BUT SHE IS NOT THE FIRST WIFE I HAVE LOST.
MAYBE YOU SHOULD TAKE SOME TIME OFF.
I WILL DEAL WITH THIS IN MY OWN WAY--IT WILL NOT EFFECT MY ABILITY TO LEAD THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE. TO BE HONEST, I NEED THE DISTRACTION.
THAT'S UNDERSTANDABLE. IF YOU'RE SURE--
HOLD ON--
SO WE'VE GOT A PROJECTILE FROM DEEP SPACE HEADED STRAIGHT FOR EARTH?
HOW LARGE?
AT THAT SIZE--WITH A TRAJECTORY THAT DELIBERATE IT MUST BE AN ATTACK. IT--
ATTACK? I'LL HANDLE THIS.
I'LL MEET THE OBJECT IN SPACE--IT WON'T REACH EARTH--YOU CAN COUNT ON THAT.
IMMORTAL--WAIT--
≷SIGH≶
DID YOU SAY IT'S ORGANIC? APPEARS TO BE LIVING?
HM.
I THINK I KNOW WHAT WE'RE DEALING WITH.

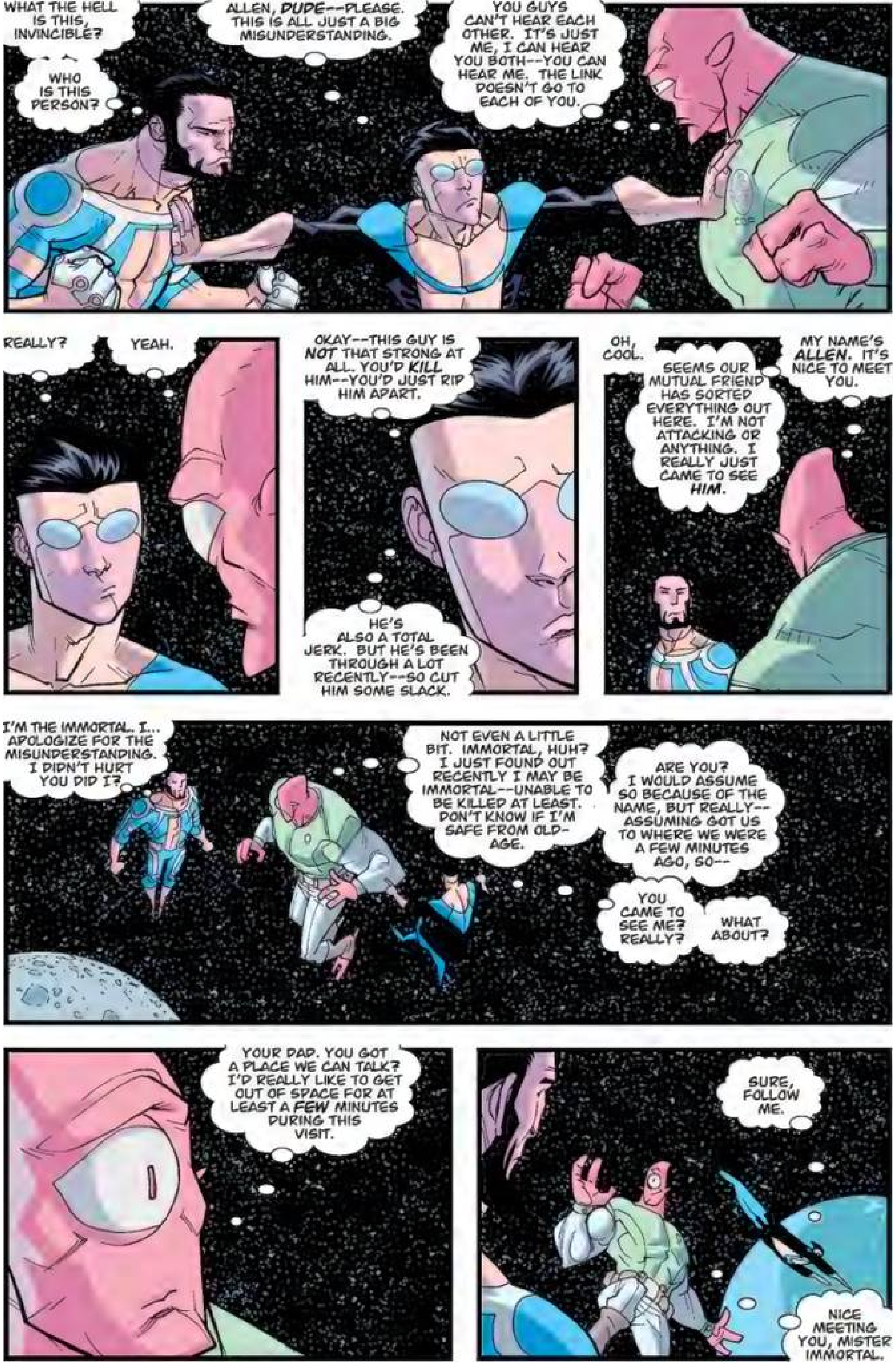

THE GRAYSON HOME.
HE'S OUT. HE DOESN'T USUALLY GO DOWN FOR A NAP THIS EASY. I GUESS FLYING MAKES HIM TIRED.
DOES FLYING MAKE YOU TIRED?
AT FIRST MORE THAN NOW. I HAVE TO REALLY PUSH IT WITH MY SPEED TO BREAK A SWEAT FLYING. IT'S HARD TO EXPLAIN IF YOU CAN'T DO IT.
SO... WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO WITH THE LITTLE GUY?
ARE YOU REALLY FAILING ALL YOUR CLASSES? I DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT THAT.
YEAH. IT'S JUST HARD TO FIND THE TIME.
HONESTLY, I JUST DO NOT TAKE IT SERIOUSLY. I DON'T CARE ABOUT IT. IT'S NOT IMPORTANT TO ME.
I CAN'T ARGUE WITH YOU. THINGS LIKE SCHOOL MUST SEEM UNIMPORTANT WHEN YOU'RE OUT IN SPACE TRYING TO SAVE THE WHOLE PLANET.
DO YOU WANT TO QUIT?
NEED YOU IN SPACE, KID--RIGHT NOW.
AGAIN? I THOUGHT THEY FINISHED THE SPACE STATION ALREADY.
THIS IS SOMETHING ELSE--GO!
WE CAN FINISH THIS LATER. GO ON--BE A HERO... MAKE ME PROUD.
I'LL SEE YOU SOON.

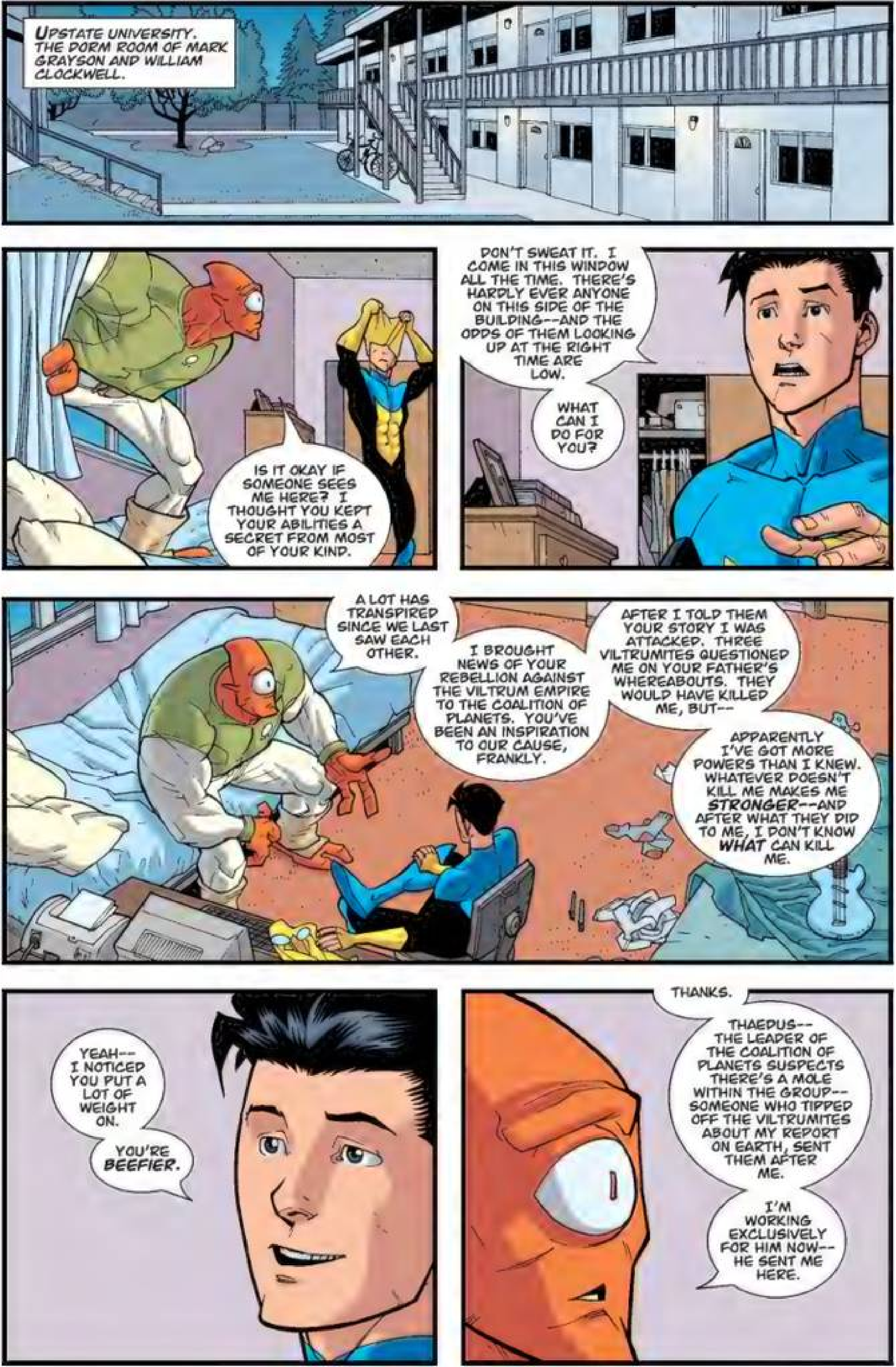

OH, HEY THERE. HAVE WE MET? I DON'T THINK WE HAVE.
CAN YOU HELP ME OUT? I'M LOOKING FOR--
GET OUT OF MY HEAD!
CAREFUL THERE, PAL-- YOU'RE LIABLE TO HURT--

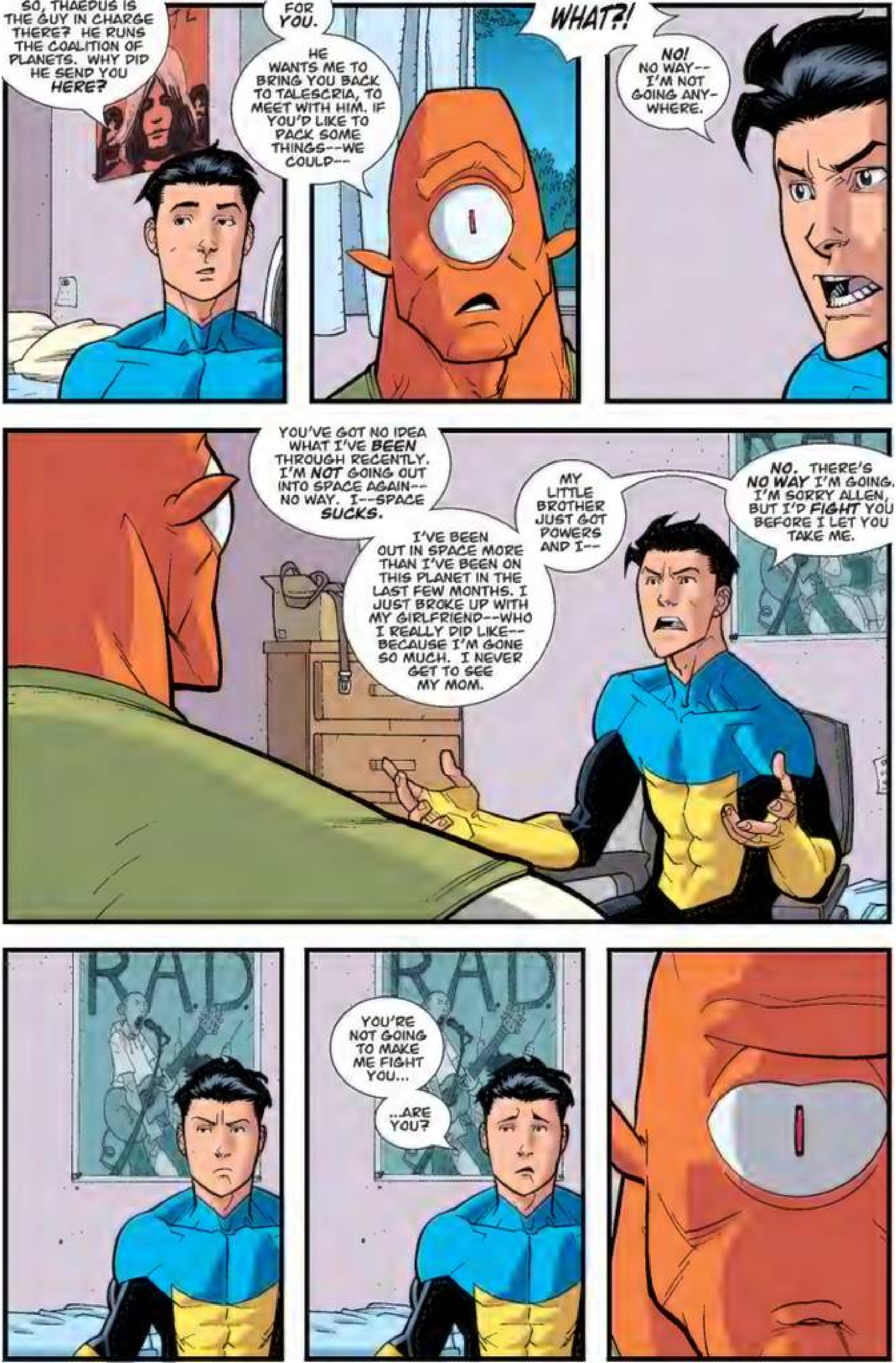
--SOMEONE.

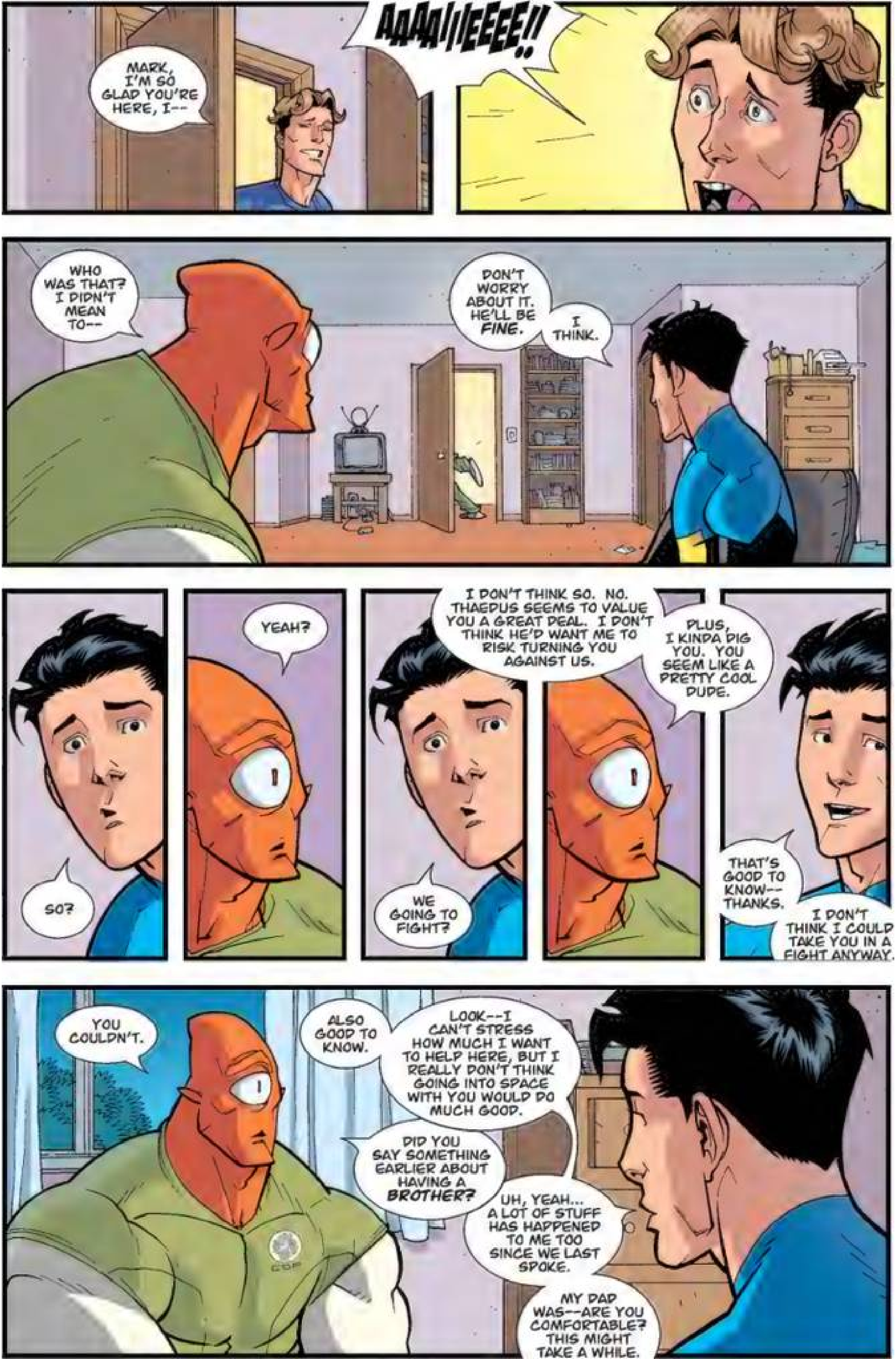

THAT TOOK ME OFF GUARD-- BUT IT DIDN'T HURT.
YOU'RE TOUGH, NO DOUBT, BUT I'VE FACED MUCH TOUGHER AND I'M STRONGER NOW THAN I EVER WAS THEN--MUCH STRONGER.
WORD TO THE WISE--A FEW MORE PUNCHES LIKE THAT AND ALL YOU'RE GOING TO DO IS PISS ME OFF.
SO... THIS IS YOUR LAST CHANCE TO SURRENDER.
I SUGGEST YOU TAKE IT.
HOW DARE YOU THREATEN ME? YOU ARE THE ONE WHO IS INVADING MY TERRITORY.
I'M IN NO MOOD FOR SURRENDER.
IF IT'S A FIGHT YOU WANT--IT'S A FIGHT YOU'LL GET!
WHATEVER, MAN...
IT'S YOUR FUNERAL.

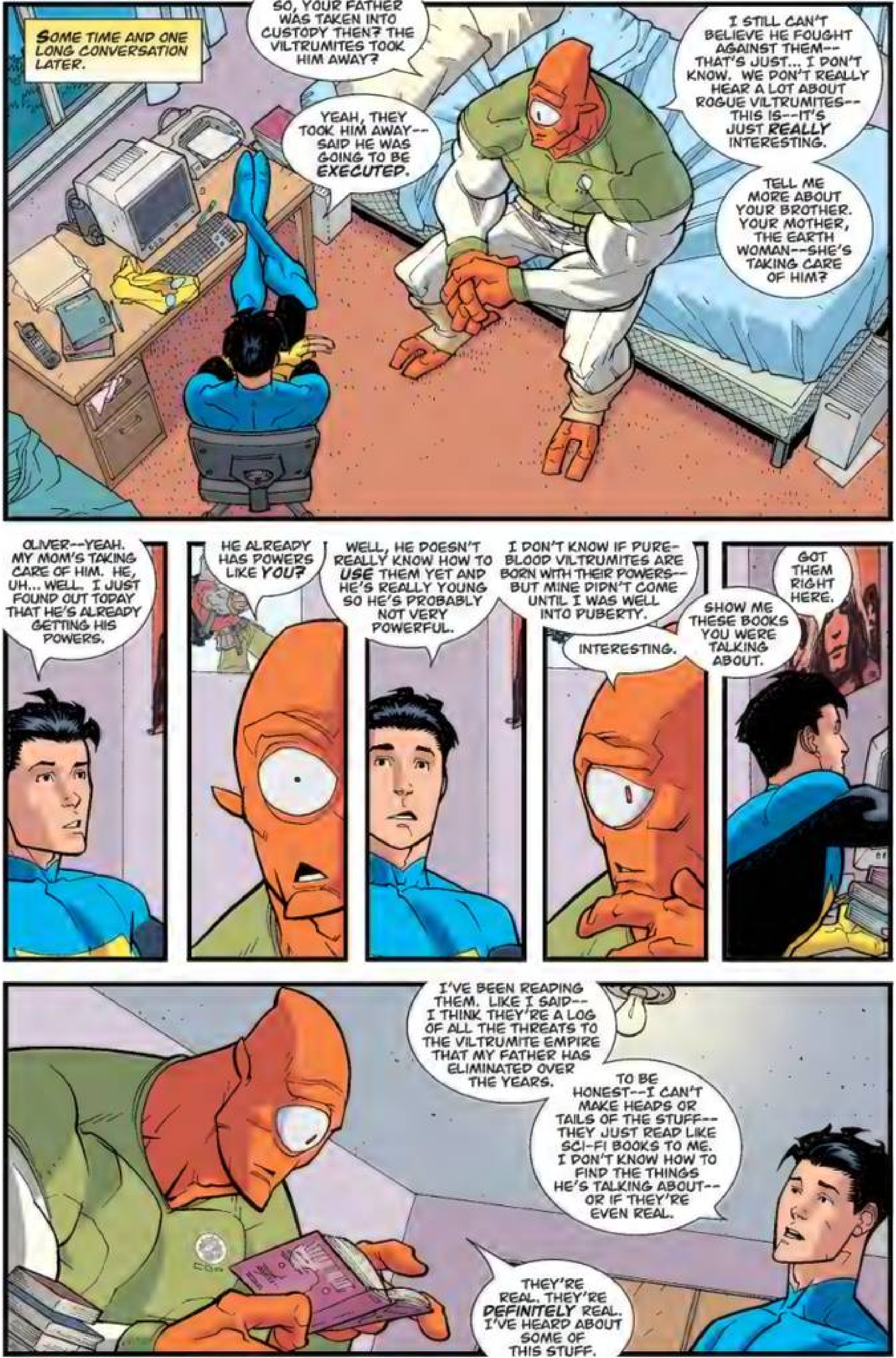

ALLEN-- HEY!
STOP.
DON'T HURT HIM!
WHAT?
EH?
OKAY-- THAT'S IT.
THAT'S IT!

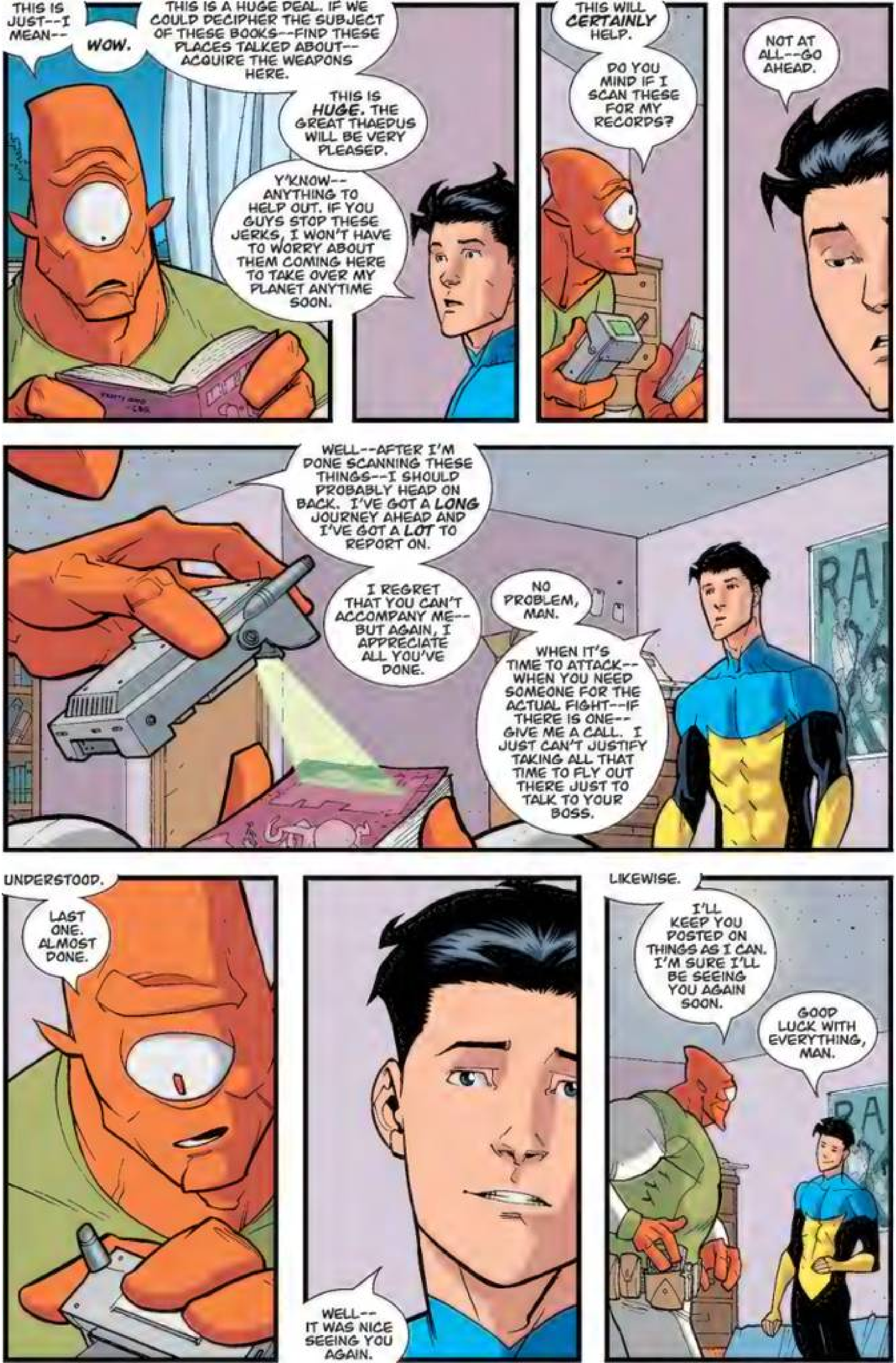

WHAT THE HELL IS THIS, INVINCIBLE?
WHO IS THIS PERSON?
ALLEN, *DUDE*--PLEASE. THIS IS ALL JUST A BIG MISUNDERSTANDING.
YOU GUYS CAN'T HEAR EACH OTHER. IT'S JUST ME, I CAN HEAR YOU BOTH--YOU CAN HEAR ME. THE LINK DOESN'T GO TO EACH OF YOU.
REALLY?
YEAH.
OKAY--THIS GUY IS *NOT* THAT STRONG AT ALL. YOU'D *KILL* HIM--YOU'D JUST RIP HIM APART.
HE'S ALSO A TOTAL JERK. BUT HE'S BEEN THROUGH A LOT RECENTLY--SO CUT HIM SOME SLACK.
OH, COOL.
SEEMS OUR MUTUAL FRIEND HAS SORTED EVERYTHING OUT HERE. I'M NOT ATTACKING OR ANYTHING. I REALLY JUST CAME TO SEE **HIM**.
MY NAME'S **ALLEN**. IT'S NICE TO MEET YOU.
I'M THE IMMORTAL. I... APOLOGIZE FOR THE MISUNDERSTANDING. I DIDN'T HURT YOU DID I?
NOT EVEN A LITTLE BIT. IMMORTAL, HUH? I JUST FOUND OUT RECENTLY I MAY BE IMMORTAL--UNABLE TO BE KILLED AT LEAST. DON'T KNOW IF I'M SAFE FROM OLD-AGE.
ARE YOU? I WOULD ASSUME SO BECAUSE OF THE NAME, BUT REALLY--ASSUMING GOT US TO WHERE WE WERE A FEW MINUTES AGO, SO--
YOU CAME TO SEE ME? REALLY?
WHAT ABOUT?
YOUR DAD. YOU GOT A PLACE WE CAN TALK? I'D REALLY LIKE TO GET OUT OF SPACE FOR AT LEAST A *FEW* MINUTES DURING THIS VISIT.
SURE, FOLLOW ME.
NICE MEETING YOU, MISTER IMMORTAL.

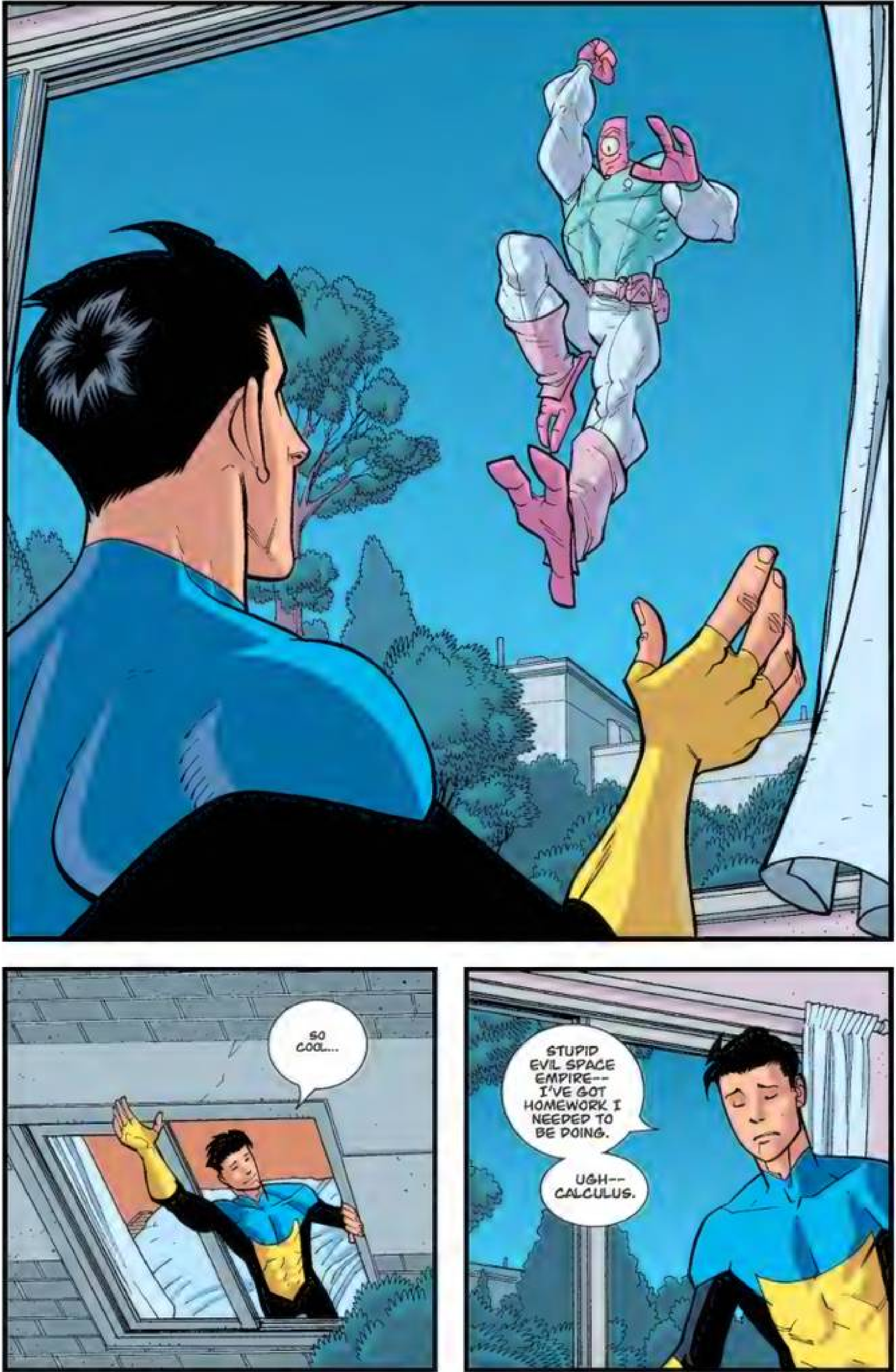

UPSTATE UNIVERSITY. THE DORM ROOM OF MARK GRAYSON AND WILLIAM CLOCKWELL.
IS IT OKAY IF SOMEONE SEES ME HERE? I THOUGHT YOU KEPT YOUR ABILITIES A SECRET FROM MOST OF YOUR KIND.
DON'T SWEAT IT. I COME IN THIS WINDOW ALL THE TIME. THERE'S HARDLY EVER ANYONE ON THIS SIDE OF THE BUILDING--AND THE ODDS OF THEM LOOKING UP AT THE RIGHT TIME ARE LOW.
WHAT CAN I DO FOR YOU?
A LOT HAS TRANSPIRED SINCE WE LAST SAW EACH OTHER.
I BROUGHT NEWS OF YOUR REBELLION AGAINST THE VILTRUM EMPIRE TO THE COALITION OF PLANETS. YOU'VE BEEN AN INSPIRATION TO OUR CAUSE, FRANKLY.
AFTER I TOLD THEM YOUR STORY I WAS ATTACKED. THREE VILTRUMITES QUESTIONED ME ON YOUR FATHER'S WHEREABOUTS. THEY WOULD HAVE KILLED ME, BUT--
APPARENTLY I'VE GOT MORE POWERS THAN I KNEW. WHATEVER DOESN'T KILL ME MAKES ME **STRONGER**--AND AFTER WHAT THEY DID TO ME, I DON'T KNOW **WHAT** CAN KILL ME.
YEAH-- I NOTICED YOU PUT A LOT OF WEIGHT ON.
YOU'RE **BEEFIER**.
THANKS.
THAEDUS-- THE LEADER OF THE COALITION OF PLANETS SUSPECTS THERE'S A MOLE WITHIN THE GROUP-- SOMEONE WHO TIPPED OFF THE VILTRUMITES ABOUT MY REPORT ON EARTH, SENT THEM AFTER ME.
I'M WORKING EXCLUSIVELY FOR HIM NOW-- HE SENT ME HERE.

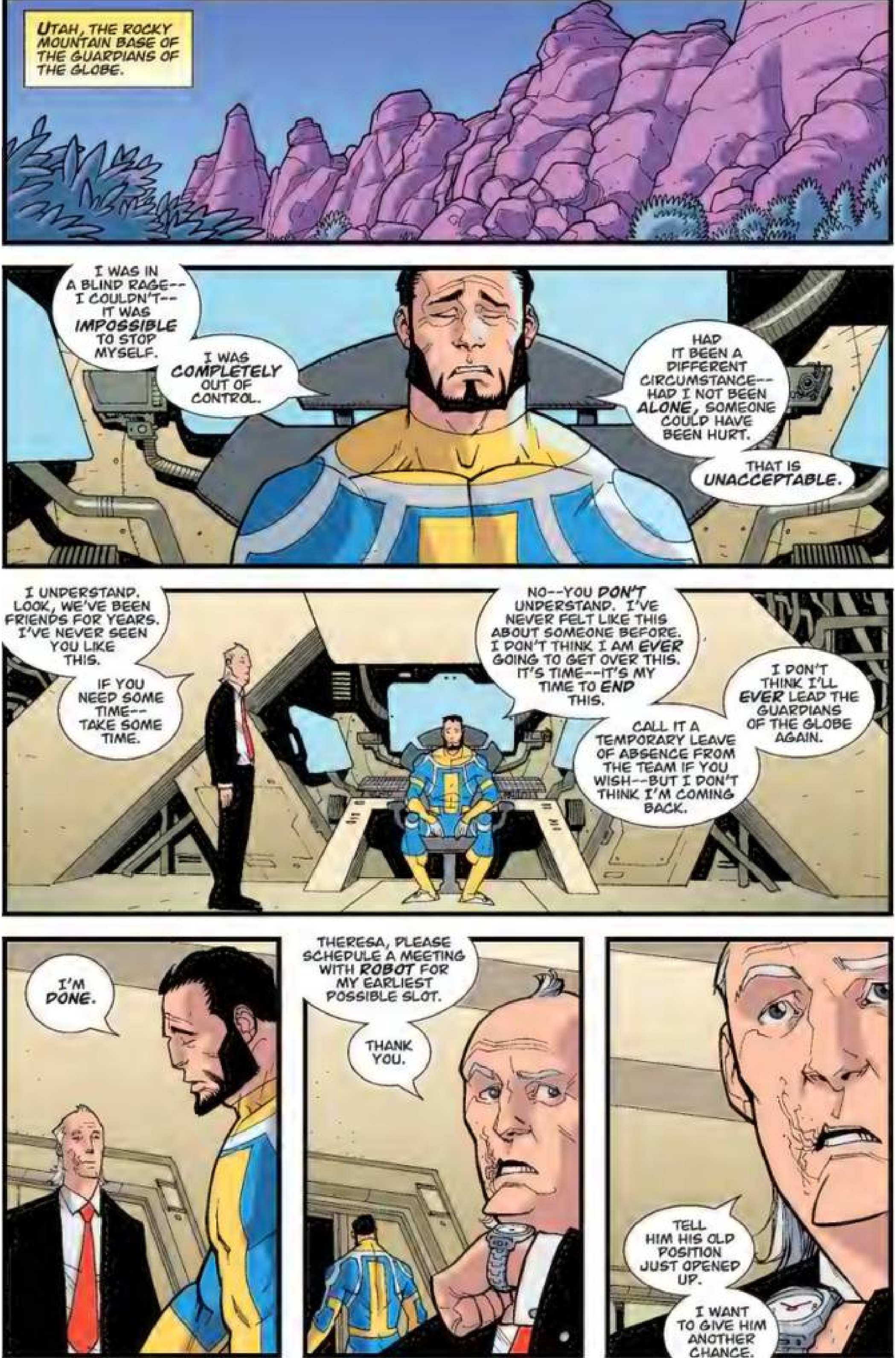

SO, THAEDUS IS THE GUY IN CHARGE THERE? HE RUNS THE COALITION OF PLANETS. WHY DID HE SEND YOU HERE?
FOR YOU.
HE WANTS ME TO BRING YOU BACK TO TALESCRIA, TO MEET WITH HIM. IF YOU'D LIKE TO PACK SOME THINGS--WE COULD--
WHAT?!
NO! NO WAY-- I'M NOT GOING ANYWHERE.
YOU'VE GOT NO IDEA WHAT I'VE BEEN THROUGH RECENTLY. I'M NOT GOING OUT INTO SPACE AGAIN-- NO WAY. I--SPACE SUCKS.
I'VE BEEN OUT IN SPACE MORE THAN I'VE BEEN ON THIS PLANET IN THE LAST FEW MONTHS. I JUST BROKE UP WITH MY GIRLFRIEND--WHO I REALLY DID LIKE--BECAUSE I'M GONE SO MUCH. I NEVER GET TO SEE MY MOM.
MY LITTLE BROTHER JUST GOT POWERS AND I--
NO. THERE'S NO WAY I'M GOING. I'M SORRY ALLEN, BUT I'D FIGHT YOU BEFORE I LET YOU TAKE ME.
R.A.D.
R.A.D.
YOU'RE NOT GOING TO MAKE ME FIGHT YOU...
...ARE YOU?

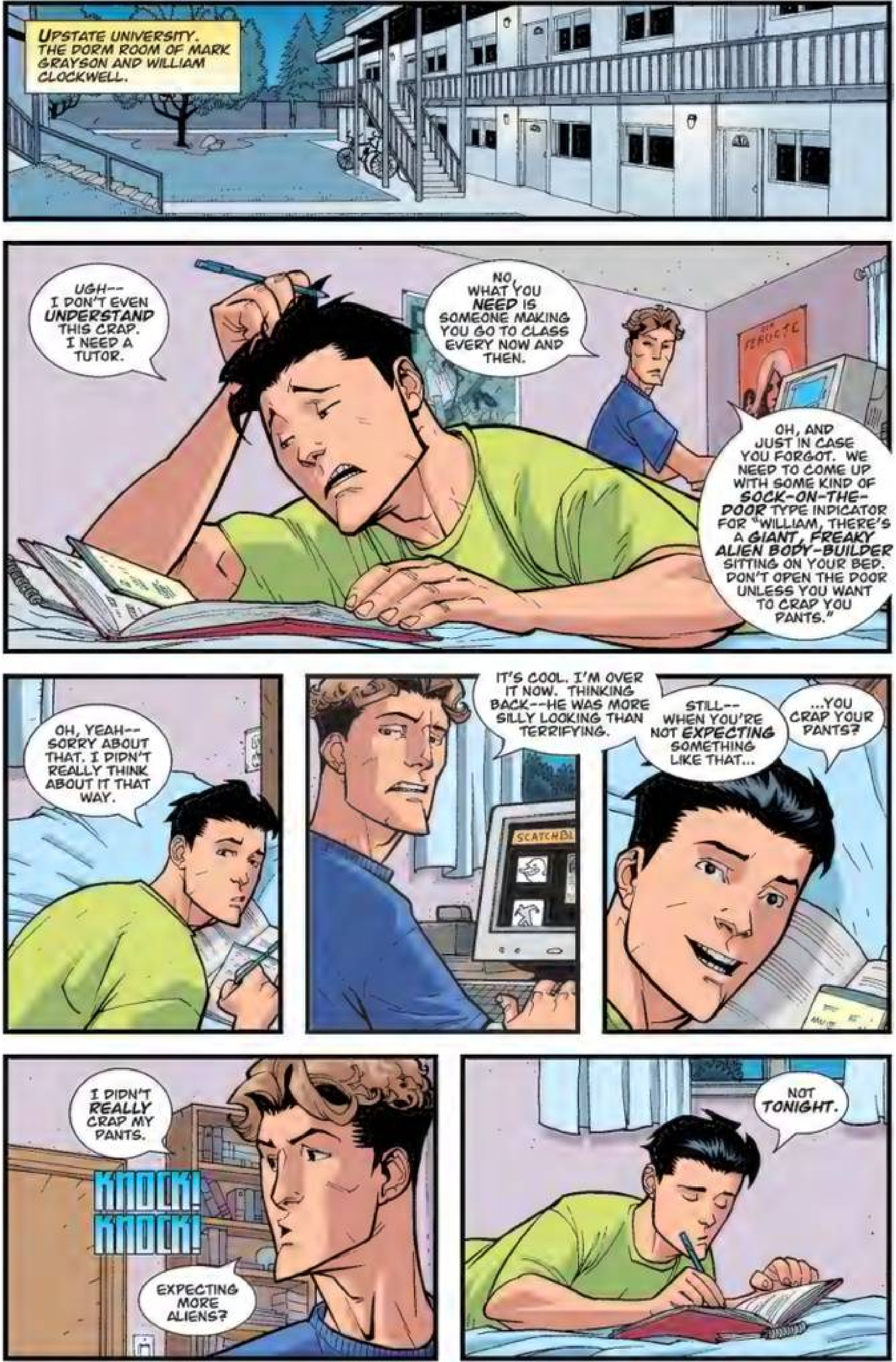

MARK, I'M SO GLAD YOU'RE HERE, I--
AAAAIIIEEEE!!
WHO WAS THAT? I DIDN'T MEAN TO--
DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT. HE'LL BE **FINE**.
I THINK.
SO?
YEAH?
WE GOING TO FIGHT?
I DON'T THINK SO. NO. THAEDUS SEEMS TO VALUE YOU A GREAT DEAL. I DON'T THINK HE'D WANT ME TO RISK TURNING YOU AGAINST US.
PLUS, I KINDA DIG YOU. YOU SEEM LIKE A PRETTY COOL DUDE.
THAT'S GOOD TO KNOW-- THANKS.
I DON'T THINK I COULD TAKE YOU IN A FIGHT ANYWAY.
YOU COULDN'T.
ALSO GOOD TO KNOW.
LOOK--I CAN'T STRESS HOW MUCH I WANT TO HELP HERE, BUT I REALLY DON'T THINK GOING INTO SPACE WITH YOU WOULD DO MUCH GOOD.
DID YOU SAY SOMETHING EARLIER ABOUT HAVING A **BROTHER?**
UH, YEAH... A LOT OF STUFF HAS HAPPENED TO ME TOO SINCE WE LAST SPOKE.
MY DAD WAS--ARE YOU COMFORTABLE? THIS MIGHT TAKE A WHILE.

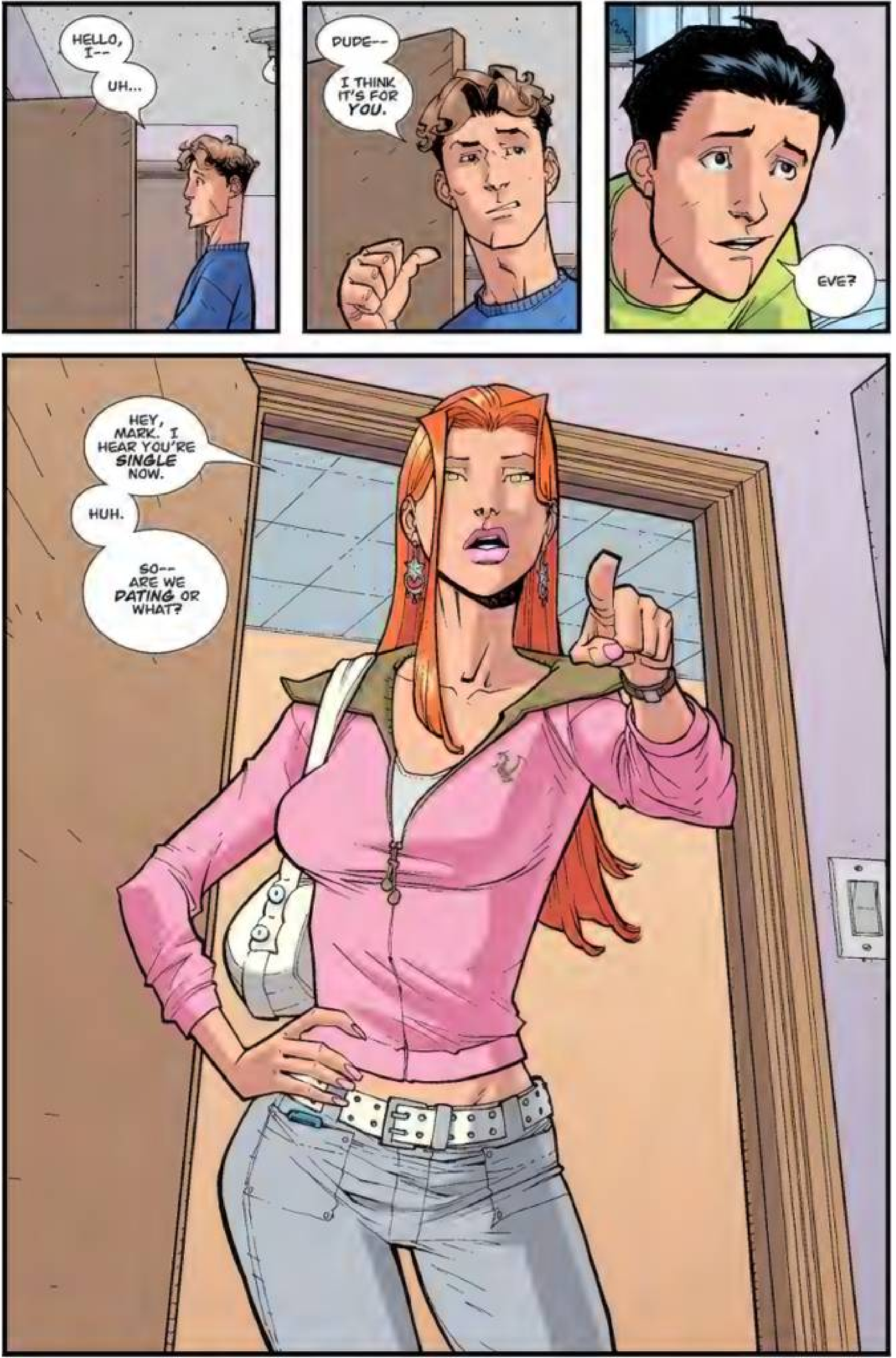

SOME TIME AND ONE LONG CONVERSATION LATER.
SO, YOUR FATHER WAS TAKEN INTO CUSTODY THEN? THE VILTRUMITES TOOK HIM AWAY?
YEAH, THEY TOOK HIM AWAY-- SAID HE WAS GOING TO BE **EXECUTED**.
I STILL CAN'T BELIEVE HE FOUGHT AGAINST THEM-- THAT'S JUST... I DON'T KNOW. WE DON'T REALLY HEAR A LOT ABOUT ROGUE VILTRUMITES-- THIS IS--IT'S JUST **REALLY** INTERESTING.
TELL ME MORE ABOUT YOUR BROTHER. YOUR MOTHER, THE EARTH WOMAN--SHE'S TAKING CARE OF HIM?
OLIVER--YEAH. MY MOM'S TAKING CARE OF HIM. HE, UH... WELL. I JUST FOUND OUT TODAY THAT HE'S ALREADY GETTING HIS POWERS.
HE ALREADY HAS POWERS LIKE ***YOU?***
WELL, HE DOESN'T REALLY KNOW HOW TO ***USE*** THEM YET AND HE'S REALLY YOUNG SO HE'S PROBABLY NOT VERY POWERFUL.
I DON'T KNOW IF PURE-BLOOD VILTRUMITES ARE BORN WITH THEIR POWERS-- BUT MINE DIDN'T COME UNTIL I WAS WELL INTO PUBERTY.
INTERESTING.
SHOW ME THESE BOOKS YOU WERE TALKING ABOUT.
GOT THEM RIGHT HERE.
I'VE BEEN READING THEM. LIKE I SAID-- I THINK THEY'RE A LOG OF ALL THE THREATS TO THE VILTRUMITE EMPIRE THAT MY FATHER HAS ELIMINATED OVER THE YEARS.
TO BE HONEST--I CAN'T MAKE HEADS OR TAILS OF THE STUFF-- THEY JUST READ LIKE SCI-FI BOOKS TO ME. I DON'T KNOW HOW TO FIND THE THINGS HE'S TALKING ABOUT-- OR IF THEY'RE EVEN REAL.
THEY'RE REAL. THEY'RE ***DEFINITELY*** REAL. I'VE HEARD ABOUT SOME OF THIS STUFF.

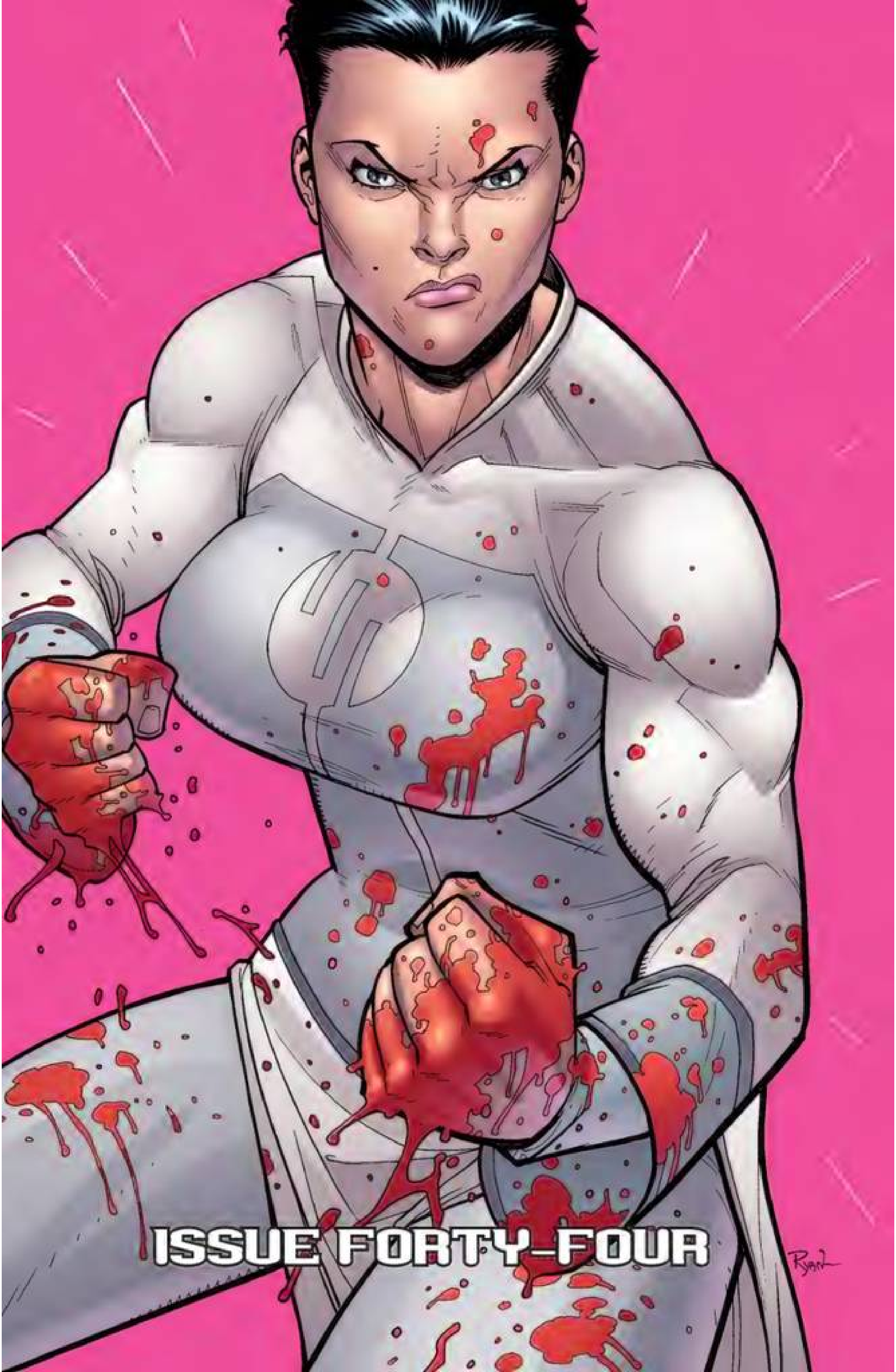

THIS IS JUST--I MEAN--
WOW.
THIS IS A HUGE DEAL. IF WE COULD DECIPHER THE SUBJECT OF THESE BOOKS--FIND THESE PLACES TALKED ABOUT--ACQUIRE THE WEAPONS HERE.
THIS IS HUGE. THE GREAT THAEDUS WILL BE VERY PLEASED.
Y'KNOW--ANYTHING TO HELP OUT. IF YOU GUYS STOP THESE JERKS, I WON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT THEM COMING HERE TO TAKE OVER MY PLANET ANYTIME SOON.
THIS WILL CERTAINLY HELP.
DO YOU MIND IF I SCAN THESE FOR MY RECORDS?
NOT AT ALL--GO AHEAD.
WELL--AFTER I'M DONE SCANNING THESE THINGS--I SHOULD PROBABLY HEAD ON BACK. I'VE GOT A LONG JOURNEY AHEAD AND I'VE GOT A LOT TO REPORT ON.
I REGRET THAT YOU CAN'T ACCOMPANY ME--BUT AGAIN, I APPRECIATE ALL YOU'VE DONE.
NO PROBLEM, MAN.
WHEN IT'S TIME TO ATTACK--WHEN YOU NEED SOMEONE FOR THE ACTUAL FIGHT--IF THERE IS ONE--GIVE ME A CALL. I JUST CAN'T JUSTIFY TAKING ALL THAT TIME TO FLY OUT THERE JUST TO TALK TO YOUR BOSS.
UNDERSTOOD.
LAST ONE. ALMOST DONE.
WELL--IT WAS NICE SEEING YOU AGAIN.
LIKEWISE.
I'LL KEEP YOU POSTED ON THINGS AS I CAN. I'M SURE I'LL BE SEEING YOU AGAIN SOON.
GOOD LUCK WITH EVERYTHING, MAN.

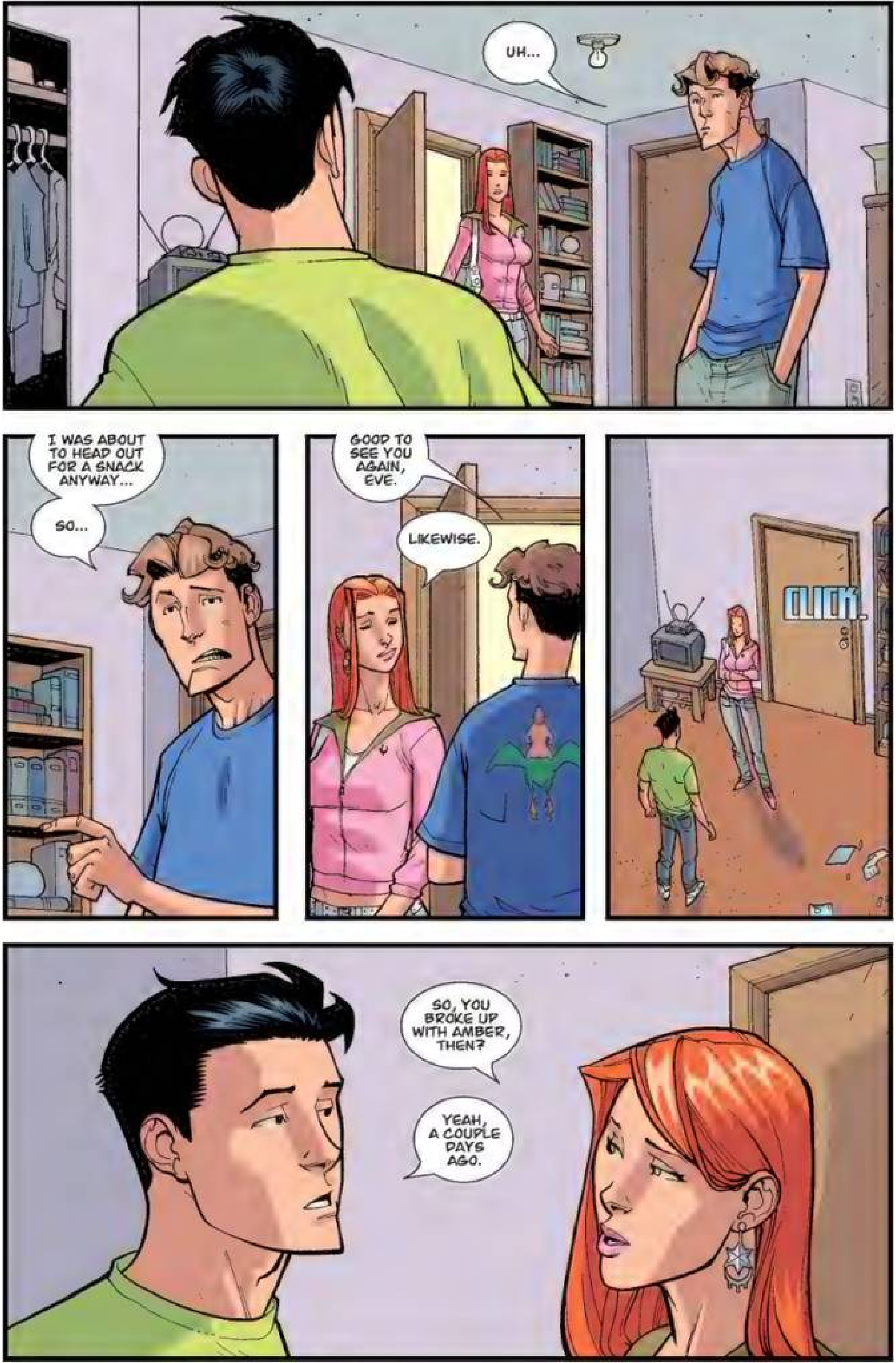

SO COOL...
STUPID EVIL SPACE EMPIRE-- I'VE GOT HOMEWORK I NEEDED TO BE DOING.
UGH-- CALCULUS.

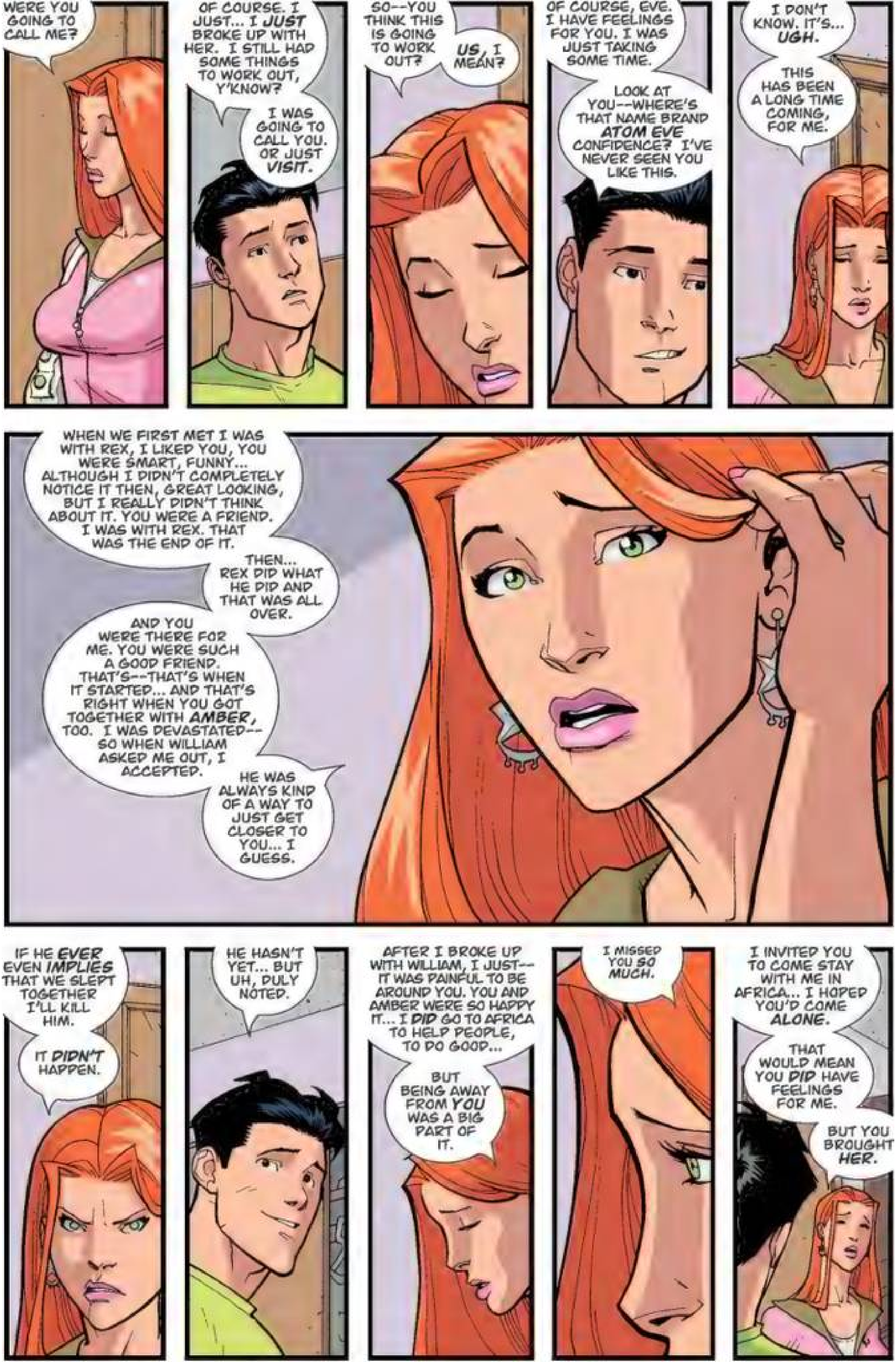

UTAH, THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN BASE OF THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE.
I WAS IN A BLIND RAGE-- I COULDN'T-- IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE TO STOP MYSELF.
I WAS COMPLETELY OUT OF CONTROL.
HAD IT BEEN A DIFFERENT CIRCUMSTANCE-- HAD I NOT BEEN ALONE, SOMEONE COULD HAVE BEEN HURT.
THAT IS UNACCEPTABLE.
I UNDERSTAND. LOOK, WE'VE BEEN FRIENDS FOR YEARS. I'VE NEVER SEEN YOU LIKE THIS.
IF YOU NEED SOME TIME-- TAKE SOME TIME.
NO--YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND. I'VE NEVER FELT LIKE THIS ABOUT SOMEONE BEFORE. I DON'T THINK I AM EVER GOING TO GET OVER THIS. IT'S TIME--IT'S MY TIME TO END THIS.
I DON'T THINK I'LL EVER LEAD THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE AGAIN.
CALL IT A TEMPORARY LEAVE OF ABSENCE FROM THE TEAM IF YOU WISH--BUT I DON'T THINK I'M COMING BACK.
I'M DONE.
THERESA, PLEASE SCHEDULE A MEETING WITH ROBOT FOR MY EARLIEST POSSIBLE SLOT.
THANK YOU.
TELL HIM HIS OLD POSITION JUST OPENED UP.
I WANT TO GIVE HIM ANOTHER CHANCE.

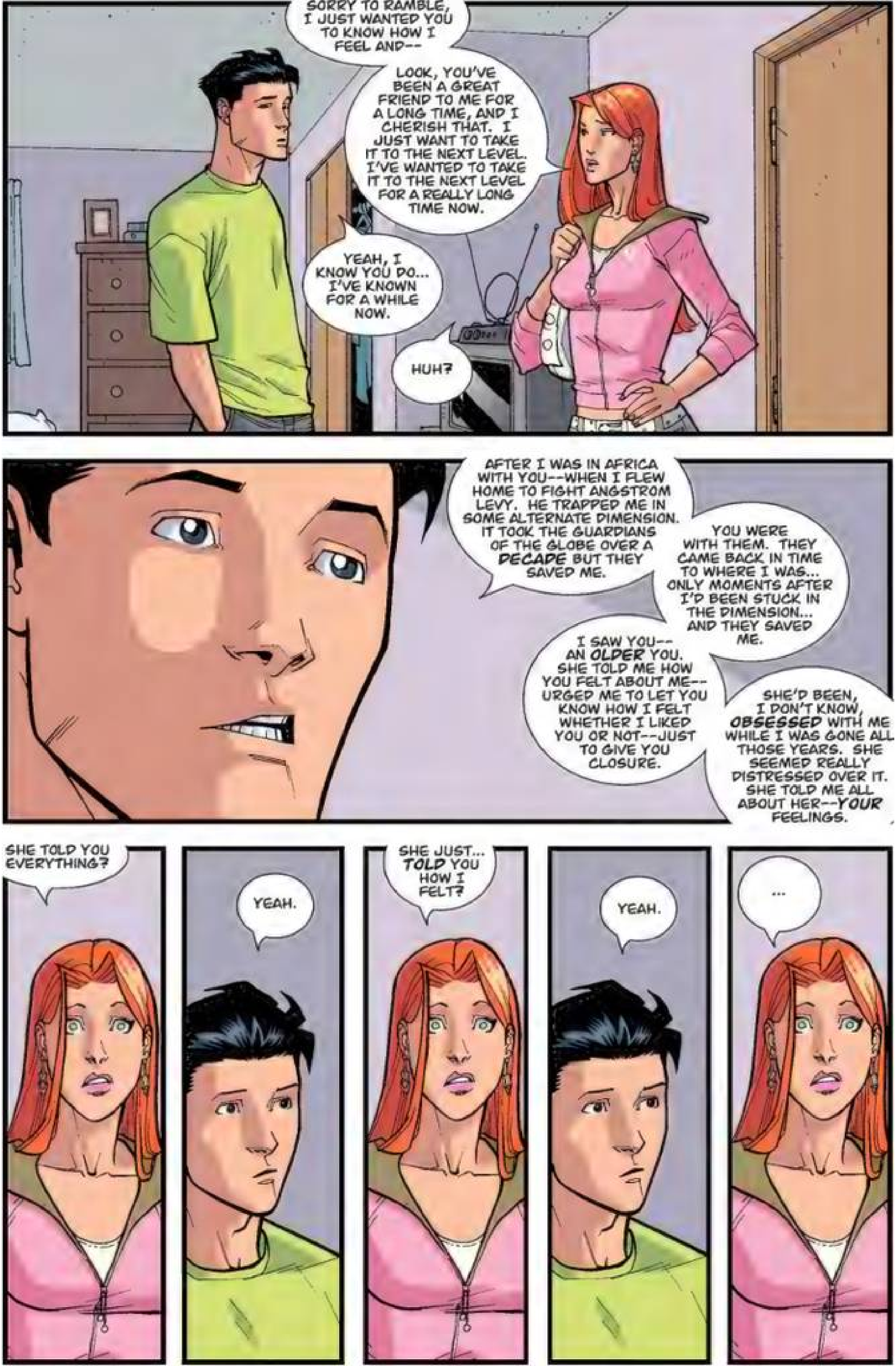

UPSTATE UNIVERSITY. THE DORM ROOM OF MARK GRAYSON AND WILLIAM CLOCKWELL.
UGH-- I DON'T EVEN UNDERSTAND THIS CRAP. I NEED A TUTOR.
NO, WHAT YOU NEED IS SOMEONE MAKING YOU GO TO CLASS EVERY NOW AND THEN.
OH, AND JUST IN CASE YOU FORGOT. WE NEED TO COME UP WITH SOME KIND OF SOCK-ON-THE-DOOR TYPE INDICATOR FOR "WILLIAM, THERE'S A GIANT, FREAKY ALIEN BODY-BUILDER SITTING ON YOUR BED. DON'T OPEN THE DOOR UNLESS YOU WANT TO CRAP YOU PANTS."
OH, YEAH-- SORRY ABOUT THAT. I DIDN'T REALLY THINK ABOUT IT THAT WAY.
IT'S COOL. I'M OVER IT NOW. THINKING BACK--HE WAS MORE SILLY LOOKING THAN TERRIFYING.
STILL-- WHEN YOU'RE NOT EXPECTING SOMETHING LIKE THAT...
SCATCHBL
...YOU CRAP YOUR PANTS?
I DIDN'T REALLY CRAP MY PANTS.
KNOCK! KNOCK!
EXPECTING MORE ALIENS?
NOT TONIGHT.

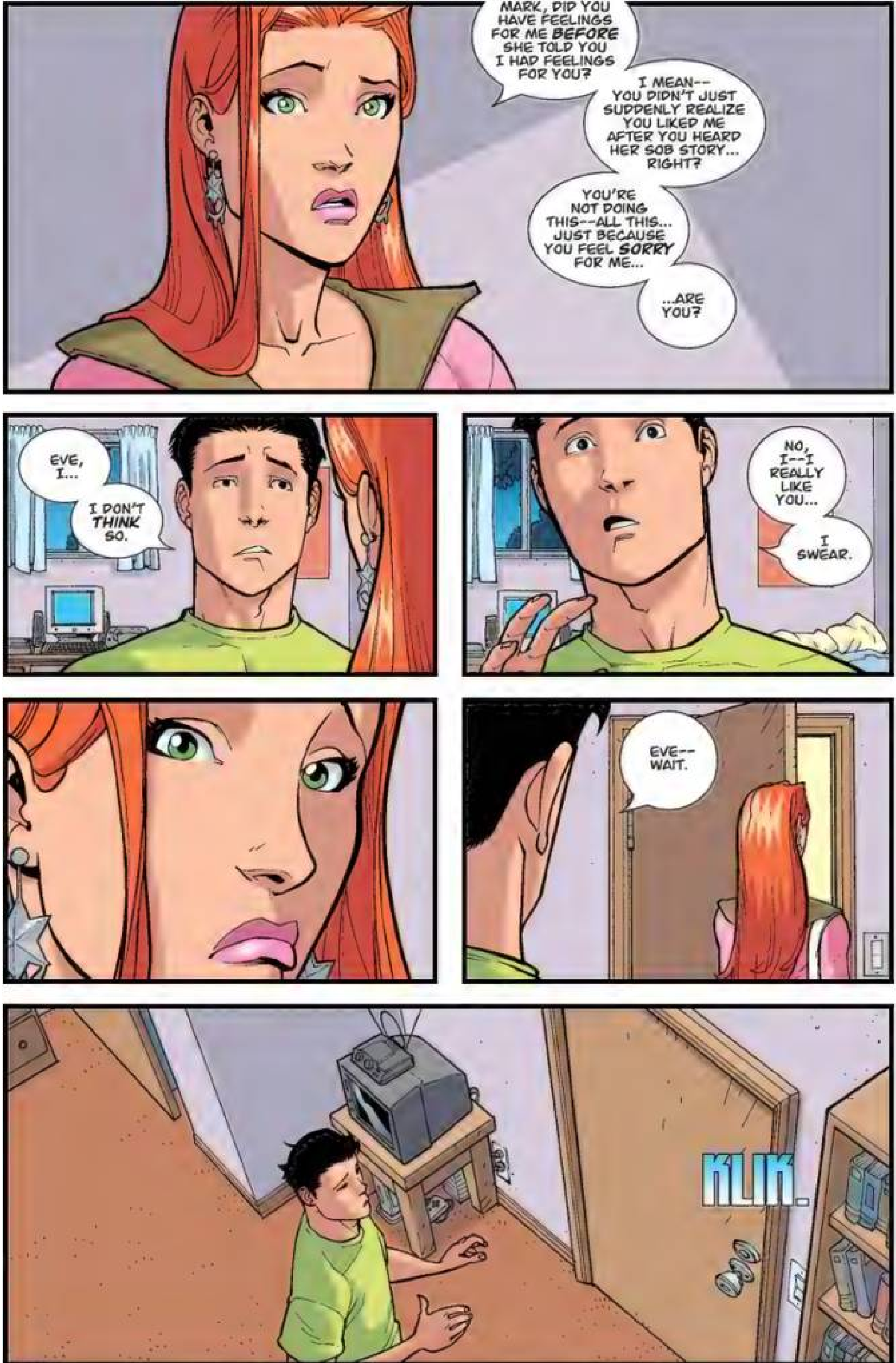

HELLO, I--
UH...
DUDE--
I THINK IT'S FOR YOU.
EVE?
HEY, MARK. I HEAR YOU'RE SINGLE NOW.
HUH.
SO-- ARE WE DATING OR WHAT?

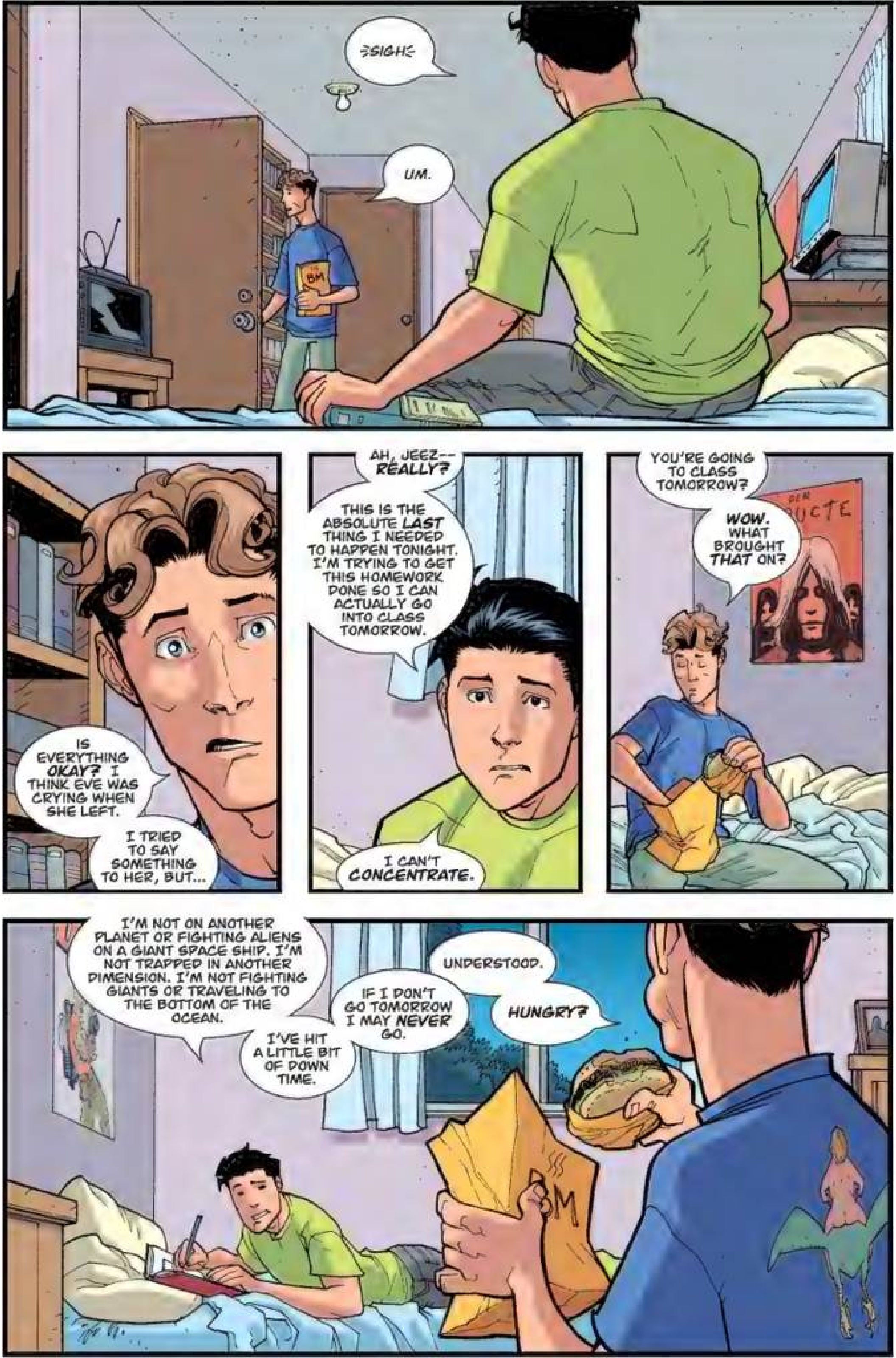

ISSUE FORTY-FOUR
Ryan

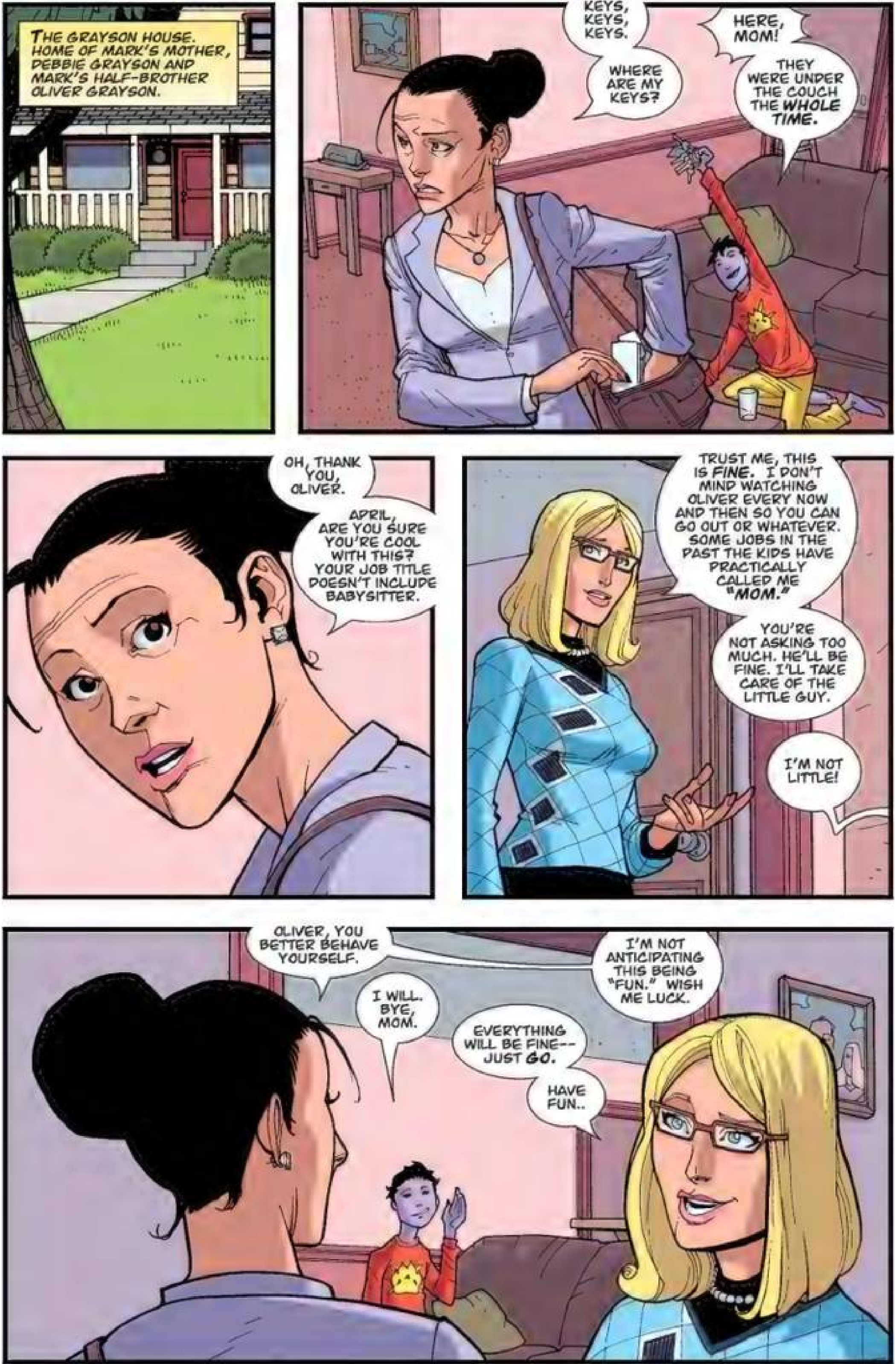

UH...
I WAS ABOUT TO HEAD OUT FOR A SNACK ANYWAY...
SO...
GOOD TO SEE YOU AGAIN, EVE.
LIKEWISE.
CLICK.
SO, YOU BROKE UP WITH AMBER, THEN?
YEAH, A COUPLE DAYS AGO.

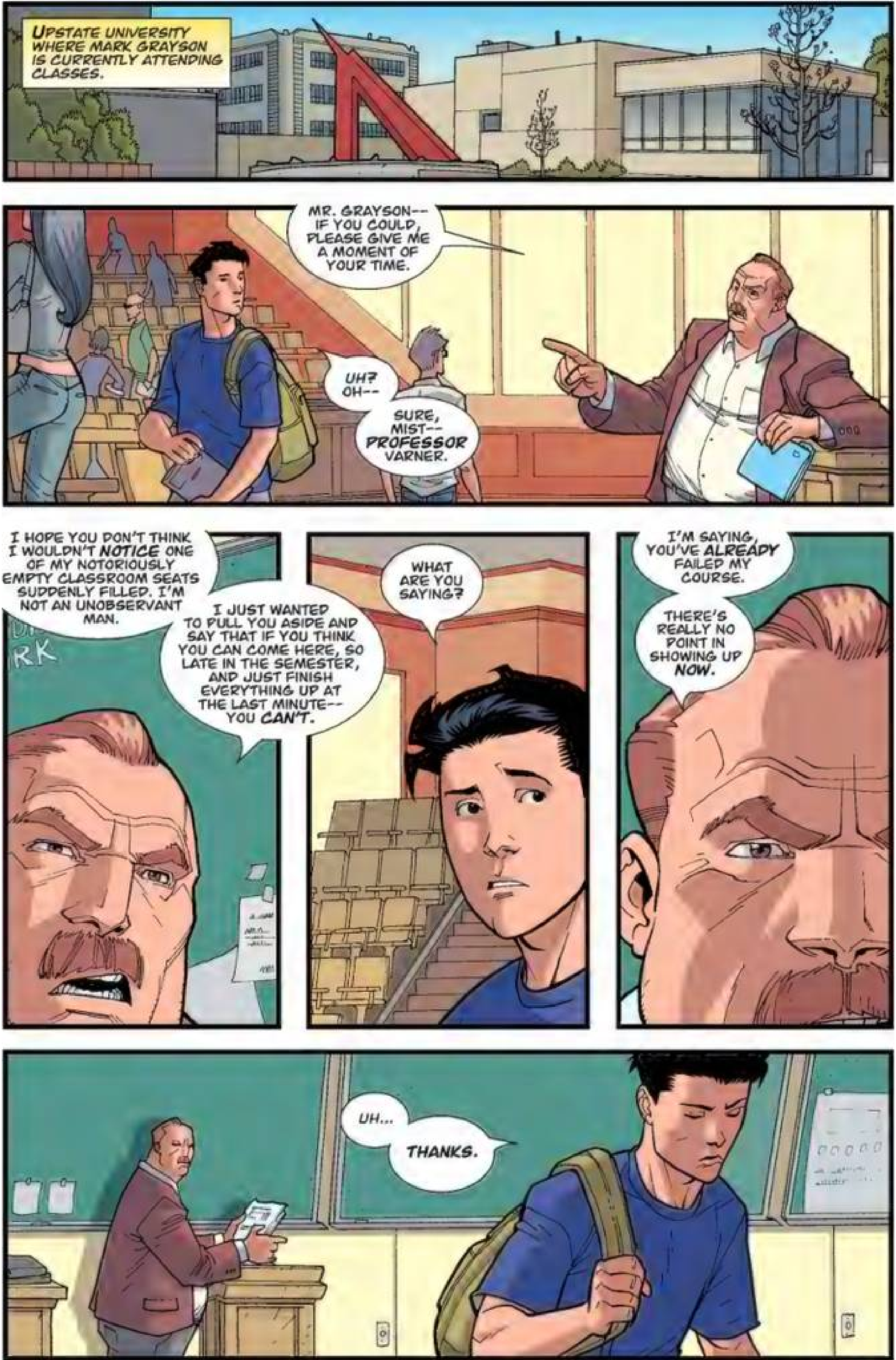

WERE YOU GOING TO CALL ME?
OF COURSE. I JUST... I *JUST* BROKE UP WITH HER. I STILL HAD SOME THINGS TO WORK OUT, Y'KNOW?
I WAS GOING TO CALL YOU. OR JUST *VISIT*.
SO--YOU THINK THIS IS GOING TO WORK OUT?
US, I MEAN?
OF COURSE, EVE. I HAVE FEELINGS FOR YOU. I WAS JUST TAKING SOME TIME.
LOOK AT YOU--WHERE'S THAT NAME BRAND *ATOM EVE* CONFIDENCE? I'VE NEVER SEEN YOU LIKE THIS.
I DON'T KNOW. IT'S... *UGH*.
THIS HAS BEEN A LONG TIME COMING, FOR ME.
WHEN WE FIRST MET I WAS WITH REX, I LIKED YOU, YOU WERE SMART, FUNNY... ALTHOUGH I DIDN'T COMPLETELY NOTICE IT THEN, GREAT LOOKING, BUT I REALLY DIDN'T THINK ABOUT IT. YOU WERE A FRIEND. I WAS WITH REX. THAT WAS THE END OF IT.
THEN... REX DID WHAT HE DID AND THAT WAS ALL OVER.
AND YOU WERE THERE FOR ME. YOU WERE SUCH A GOOD FRIEND. THAT'S--THAT'S WHEN IT STARTED... AND THAT'S RIGHT WHEN YOU GOT TOGETHER WITH *AMBER*, TOO. I WAS DEVASTATED-- SO WHEN WILLIAM ASKED ME OUT, I ACCEPTED.
HE WAS ALWAYS KIND OF A WAY TO JUST GET CLOSER TO YOU... I GUESS.
IF HE *EVER* EVEN *IMPLIES* THAT WE SLEPT TOGETHER I'LL KILL HIM.
IT *DIDN'T* HAPPEN.
HE HASN'T YET... BUT UH, DULY NOTED.
AFTER I BROKE UP WITH WILLIAM, I JUST-- IT WAS PAINFUL TO BE AROUND YOU. YOU AND AMBER WERE SO HAPPY IT... I *DID* GO TO AFRICA TO HELP PEOPLE, TO DO GOOD...
BUT BEING AWAY FROM *YOU* WAS A BIG PART OF IT.
I MISSED YOU *SO* MUCH.
I INVITED YOU TO COME STAY WITH ME IN AFRICA... I HOPED YOU'D COME *ALONE*.
THAT WOULD MEAN YOU *DID* HAVE FEELINGS FOR ME.
BUT YOU BROUGHT *HER*.

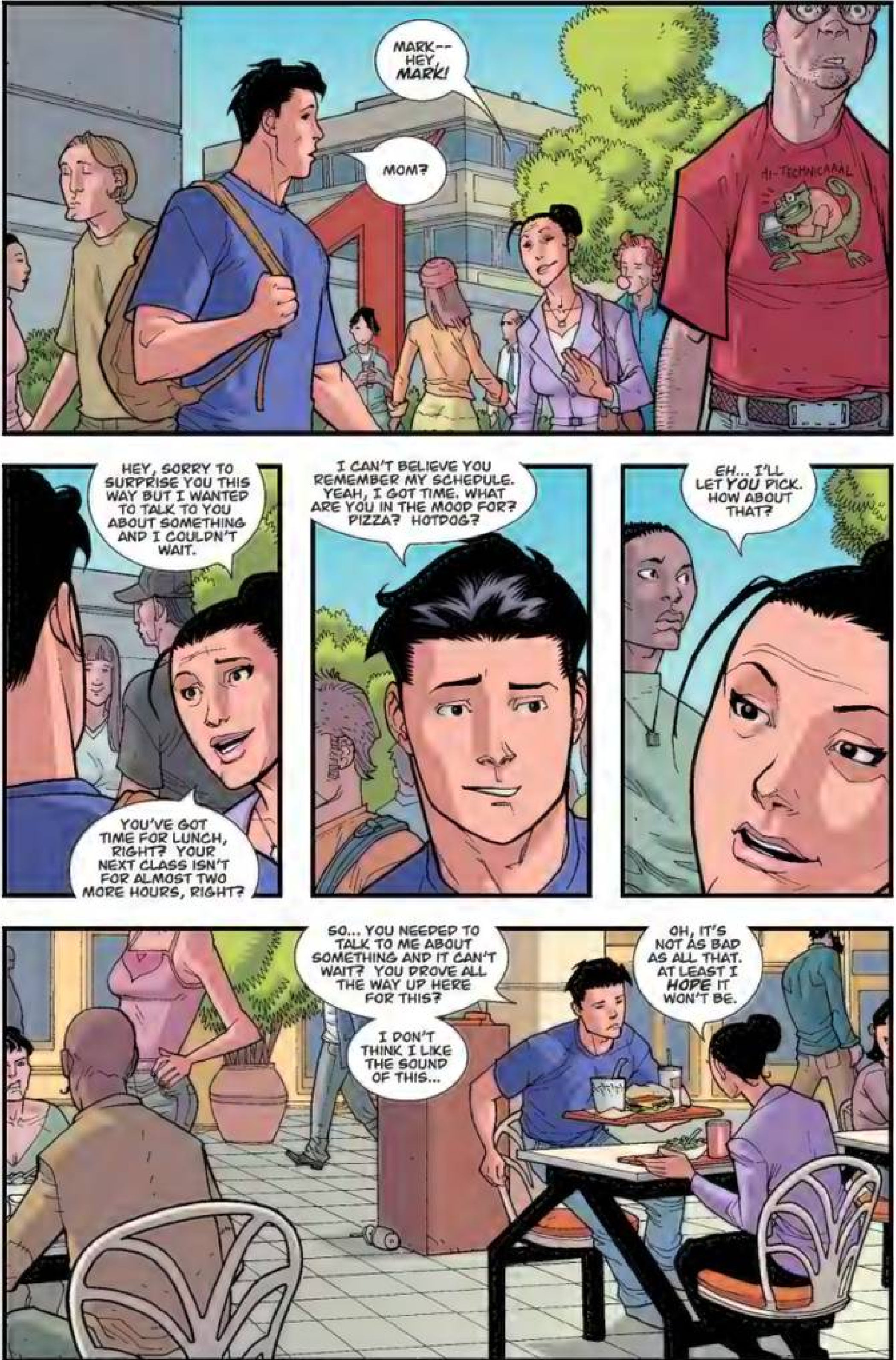

SORRY TO RAMBLE, I JUST WANTED YOU TO KNOW HOW I FEEL AND--
LOOK, YOU'VE BEEN A GREAT FRIEND TO ME FOR A LONG TIME, AND I CHERISH THAT. I JUST WANT TO TAKE IT TO THE NEXT LEVEL. I'VE WANTED TO TAKE IT TO THE NEXT LEVEL FOR A REALLY LONG TIME NOW.
YEAH, I KNOW YOU DO... I'VE KNOWN FOR A WHILE NOW.
HUH?
AFTER I WAS IN AFRICA WITH YOU--WHEN I FLEW HOME TO FIGHT ANGSTROM LEVY. HE TRAPPED ME IN SOME ALTERNATE DIMENSION. IT TOOK THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE OVER A ***DECADE*** BUT THEY SAVED ME.
YOU WERE WITH THEM. THEY CAME BACK IN TIME TO WHERE I WAS... ONLY MOMENTS AFTER I'D BEEN STUCK IN THE DIMENSION... AND THEY SAVED ME.
I SAW YOU-- AN ***OLDER*** YOU. SHE TOLD ME HOW YOU FELT ABOUT ME-- URGED ME TO LET YOU KNOW HOW I FELT WHETHER I LIKED YOU OR NOT--JUST TO GIVE YOU CLOSURE.
SHE'D BEEN, I DON'T KNOW, ***OBSESSED*** WITH ME WHILE I WAS GONE ALL THOSE YEARS. SHE SEEMED REALLY DISTRESSED OVER IT. SHE TOLD ME ALL ABOUT HER--***YOUR*** FEELINGS.
SHE TOLD YOU EVERYTHING?
YEAH.
SHE JUST... ***TOLD*** YOU HOW I FELT?
YEAH.
...
]

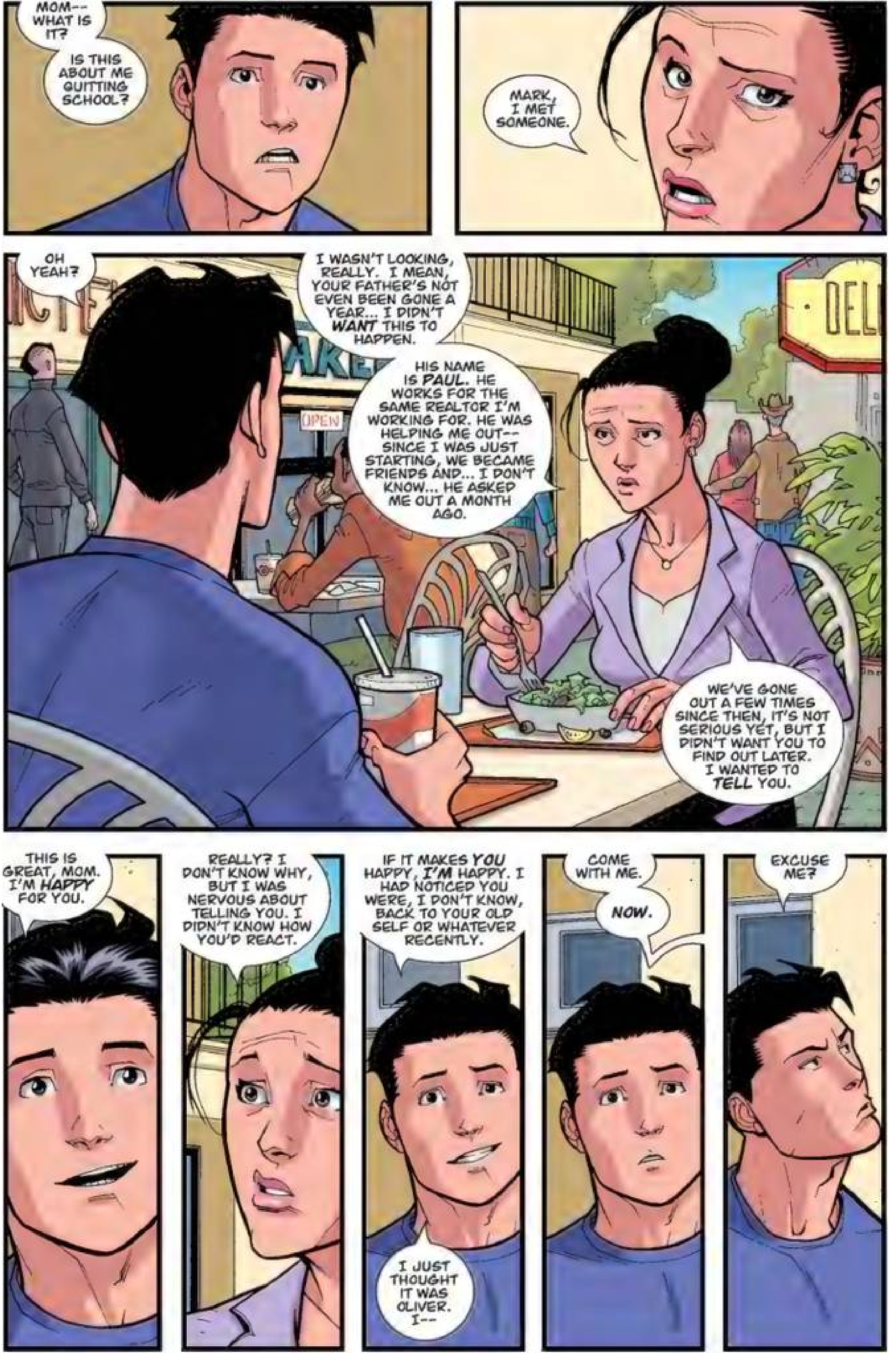

MARK, DID YOU HAVE FEELINGS FOR ME BEFORE SHE TOLD YOU I HAD FEELINGS FOR YOU?
I MEAN-- YOU DIDN'T JUST SUDDENLY REALIZE YOU LIKED ME AFTER YOU HEARD HER SOB STORY... RIGHT?
YOU'RE NOT DOING THIS--ALL THIS... JUST BECAUSE YOU FEEL SORRY FOR ME...
...ARE YOU?
EVE, I...
I DON'T THINK SO.
NO, I--I REALLY LIKE YOU...
I SWEAR.
EVE-- WAIT.
KLIK.

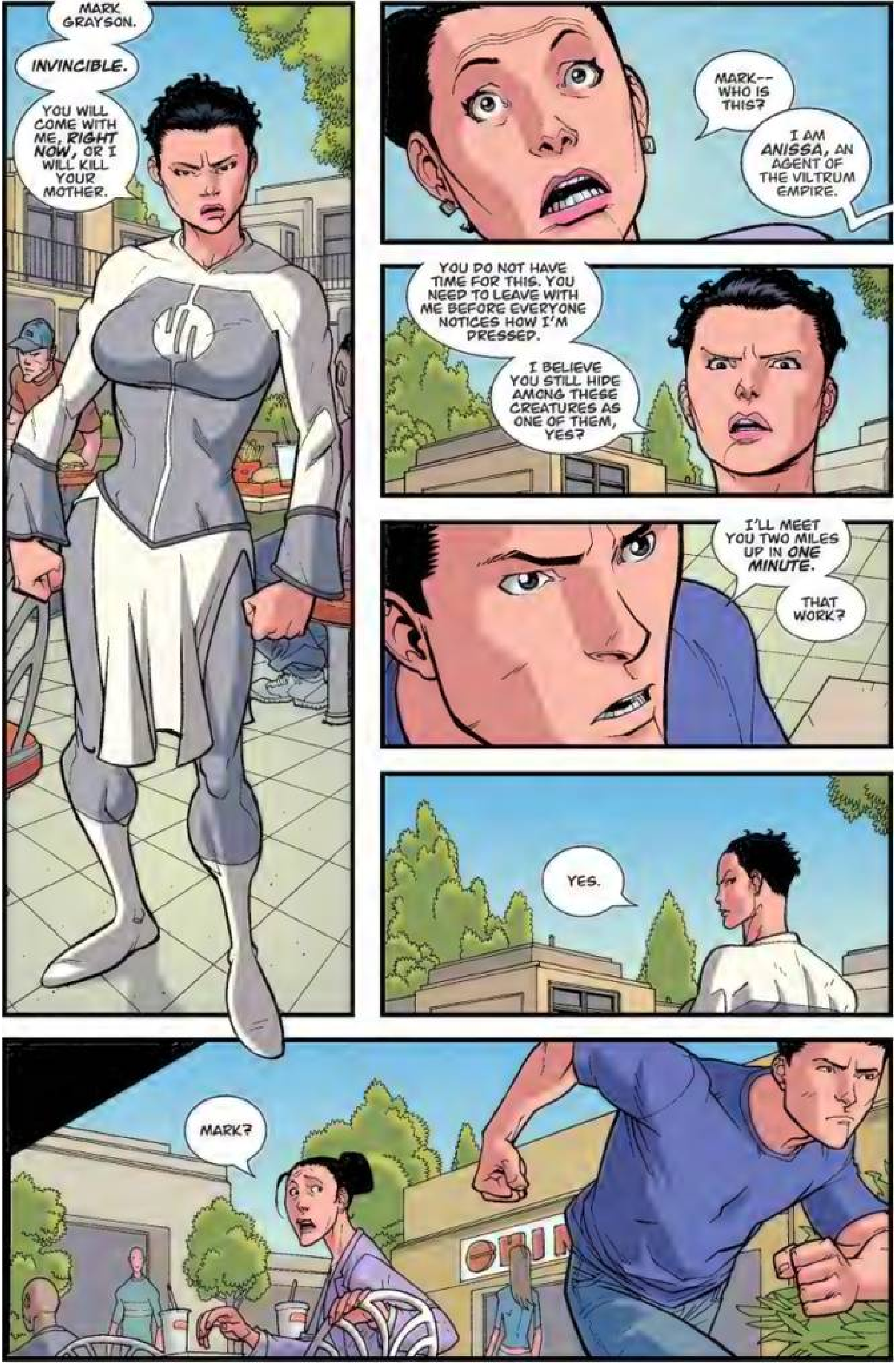

=SIGH=
UM.
BM
IS EVERYTHING *OKAY?* I THINK EVE WAS CRYING WHEN SHE LEFT.
I TRIED TO SAY SOMETHING TO HER, BUT...
AH, JEEZ-- ***REALLY?***
THIS IS THE ABSOLUTE ***LAST*** THING I NEEDED TO HAPPEN TONIGHT. I'M TRYING TO GET THIS HOMEWORK DONE SO I CAN ACTUALLY GO INTO CLASS TOMORROW.
I CAN'T ***CONCENTRATE.***
YOU'RE GOING TO CLASS TOMORROW?
WOW. WHAT BROUGHT ***THAT*** ON?
I'M NOT ON ANOTHER PLANET OR FIGHTING ALIENS ON A GIANT SPACE SHIP. I'M NOT TRAPPED IN ANOTHER DIMENSION. I'M NOT FIGHTING GIANTS OR TRAVELING TO THE BOTTOM OF THE OCEAN.
I'VE HIT A LITTLE BIT OF DOWN TIME.
IF I DON'T GO TOMORROW I MAY ***NEVER*** GO.
UNDERSTOOD.
HUNGRY?
BM

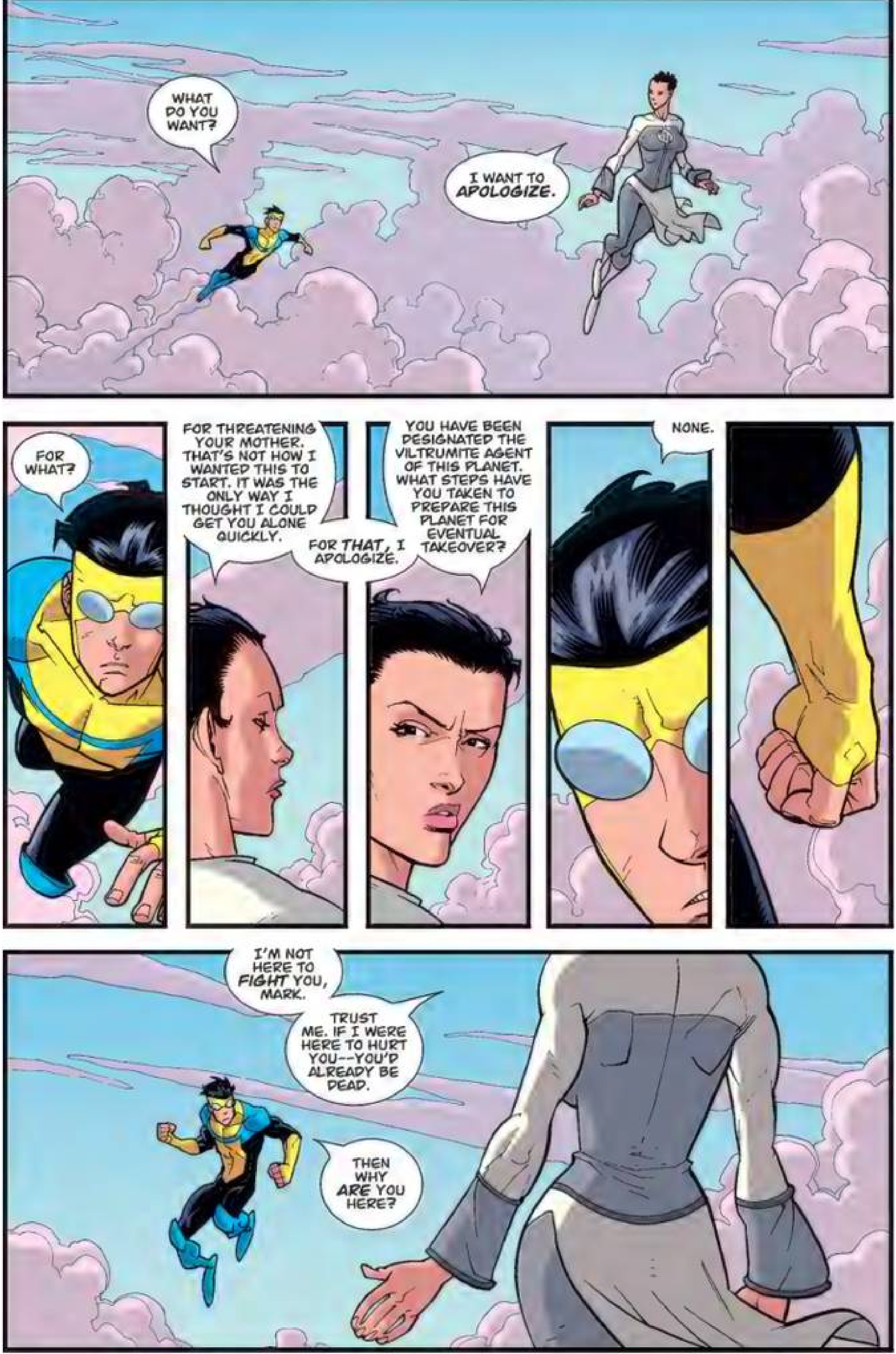

THE GRAYSON HOUSE. HOME OF MARK'S MOTHER, DEBBIE GRAYSON AND MARK'S HALF-BROTHER OLIVER GRAYSON.
KEYS, KEYS, KEYS.
WHERE ARE MY KEYS?
HERE, MOM!
THEY WERE UNDER THE COUCH THE WHOLE TIME.
OH, THANK YOU, OLIVER.
APRIL, ARE YOU SURE YOU'RE COOL WITH THIS? YOUR JOB TITLE DOESN'T INCLUDE BABYSITTER.
TRUST ME, THIS IS FINE. I DON'T MIND WATCHING OLIVER EVERY NOW AND THEN SO YOU CAN GO OUT OR WHATEVER. SOME JOBS IN THE PAST THE KIDS HAVE PRACTICALLY CALLED ME "MOM."
YOU'RE NOT ASKING TOO MUCH. HE'LL BE FINE. I'LL TAKE CARE OF THE LITTLE GUY.
I'M NOT LITTLE!
OLIVER, YOU BETTER BEHAVE YOURSELF.
I'M NOT ANTICIPATING THIS BEING "FUN." WISH ME LUCK.
I WILL. BYE, MOM.
EVERYTHING WILL BE FINE-- JUST GO.
HAVE FUN..

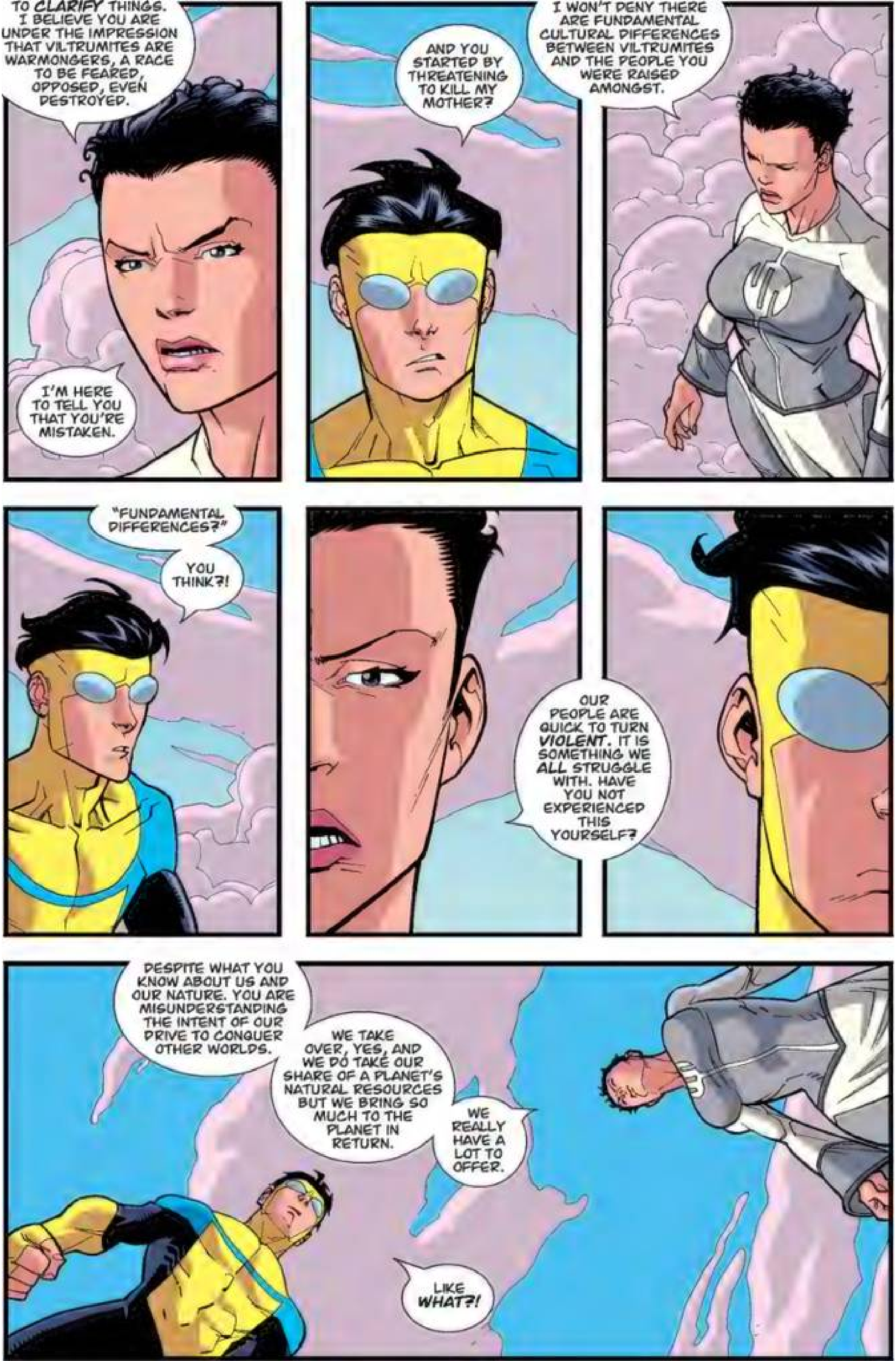

UPSTATE UNIVERSITY WHERE MARK GRAYSON IS CURRENTLY ATTENDING CLASSES.
MR. GRAYSON-- IF YOU COULD, PLEASE GIVE ME A MOMENT OF YOUR TIME.
UH? OH--
SURE, MIST-- PROFESSOR VARNER.
I HOPE YOU DON'T THINK I WOULDN'T NOTICE ONE OF MY NOTORIOUSLY EMPTY CLASSROOM SEATS SUDDENLY FILLED. I'M NOT AN UNOBSERVANT MAN.
I JUST WANTED TO PULL YOU ASIDE AND SAY THAT IF YOU THINK YOU CAN COME HERE, SO LATE IN THE SEMESTER, AND JUST FINISH EVERYTHING UP AT THE LAST MINUTE-- YOU CAN'T.
WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?
I'M SAYING, YOU'VE ALREADY FAILED MY COURSE.
THERE'S REALLY NO POINT IN SHOWING UP NOW.
UH...
THANKS.

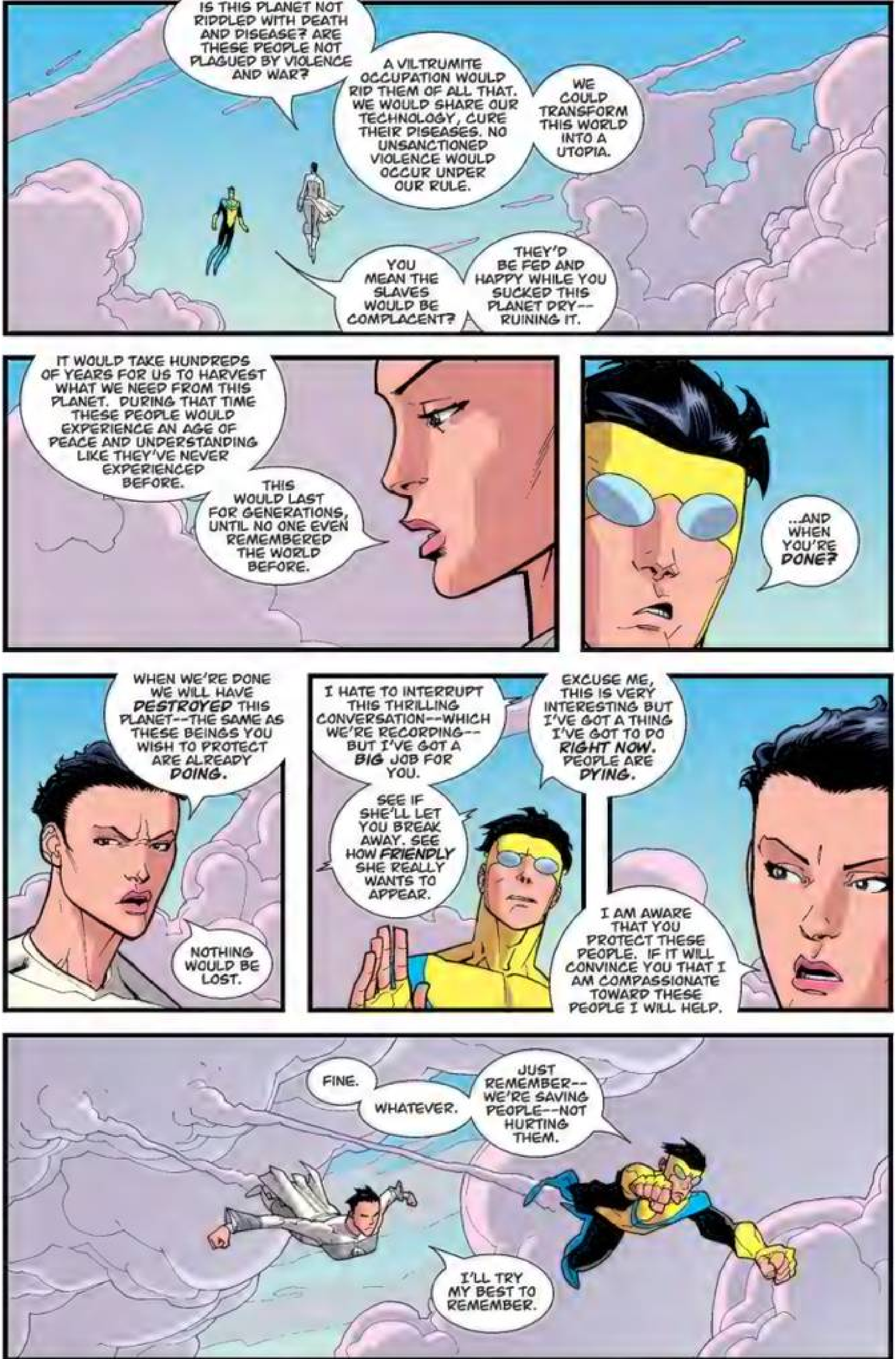

MARK-- HEY, **MARK!**
MOM?
HI-TECHNICAAAL
HEY, SORRY TO SURPRISE YOU THIS WAY BUT I WANTED TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT SOMETHING AND I COULDN'T WAIT.
YOU'VE GOT TIME FOR LUNCH, RIGHT? YOUR NEXT CLASS ISN'T FOR ALMOST TWO MORE HOURS, RIGHT?
I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU REMEMBER MY SCHEDULE. YEAH, I GOT TIME. WHAT ARE YOU IN THE MOOD FOR? PIZZA? HOTDOG?
EH... I'LL LET **YOU** PICK. HOW ABOUT THAT?
SO... YOU NEEDED TO TALK TO ME ABOUT SOMETHING AND IT CAN'T WAIT? YOU DROVE ALL THE WAY UP HERE FOR THIS?
I DON'T THINK I LIKE THE SOUND OF THIS...
OH, IT'S NOT AS BAD AS ALL THAT. AT LEAST I **HOPE** IT WON'T BE.

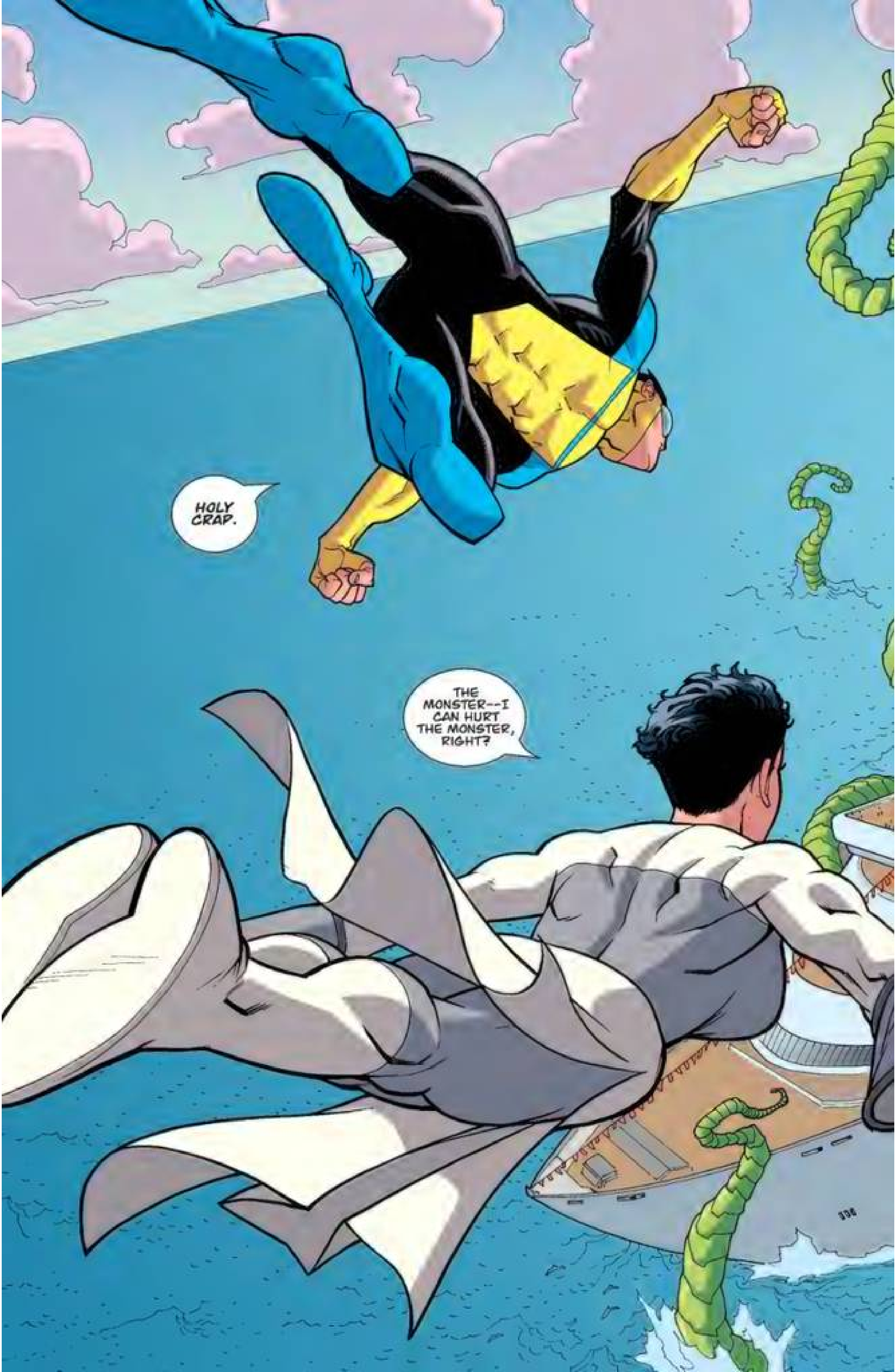

MOM-- WHAT IS IT?
IS THIS ABOUT ME QUITTING SCHOOL?
MARK, I MET SOMEONE.
OH YEAH?
I WASN'T LOOKING, REALLY. I MEAN, YOUR FATHER'S NOT EVEN BEEN GONE A YEAR... I DIDN'T WANT THIS TO HAPPEN.
HIS NAME IS PAUL. HE WORKS FOR THE SAME REALTOR I'M WORKING FOR. HE WAS HELPING ME OUT-- SINCE I WAS JUST STARTING, WE BECAME FRIENDS AND... I DON'T KNOW... HE ASKED ME OUT A MONTH AGO.
WE'VE GONE OUT A FEW TIMES SINCE THEN, IT'S NOT SERIOUS YET, BUT I DIDN'T WANT YOU TO FIND OUT LATER. I WANTED TO TELL YOU.
THIS IS GREAT, MOM. I'M HAPPY FOR YOU.
REALLY? I DON'T KNOW WHY, BUT I WAS NERVOUS ABOUT TELLING YOU. I DIDN'T KNOW HOW YOU'D REACT.
IF IT MAKES YOU HAPPY, I'M HAPPY. I HAD NOTICED YOU WERE, I DON'T KNOW, BACK TO YOUR OLD SELF OR WHATEVER RECENTLY.
I JUST THOUGHT IT WAS OLIVER. I--
COME WITH ME.
NOW.
EXCUSE ME?

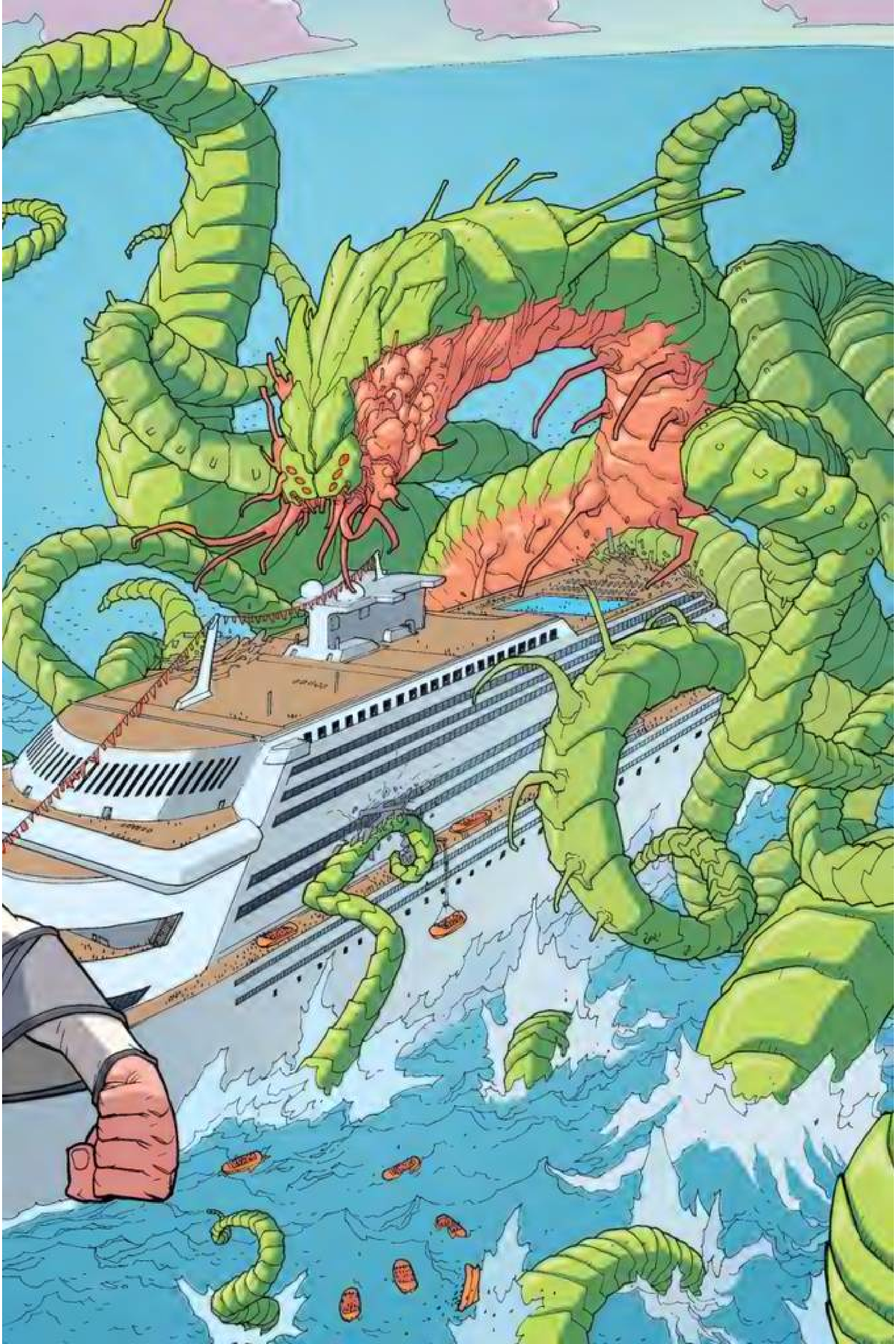

MARK GRAYSON.
INVINCIBLE.
YOU WILL COME WITH ME, **RIGHT NOW**, OR I WILL KILL YOUR MOTHER.
MARK-- WHO IS THIS?
I AM **ANISSA**, AN AGENT OF THE VILTRUM EMPIRE.
YOU DO NOT HAVE TIME FOR THIS. YOU NEED TO LEAVE WITH ME BEFORE EVERYONE NOTICES HOW I'M DRESSED.
I BELIEVE YOU STILL HIDE AMONG THESE CREATURES AS ONE OF THEM, YES?
I'LL MEET YOU TWO MILES UP IN **ONE MINUTE**.
THAT WORK?
YES.
MARK?
CHI

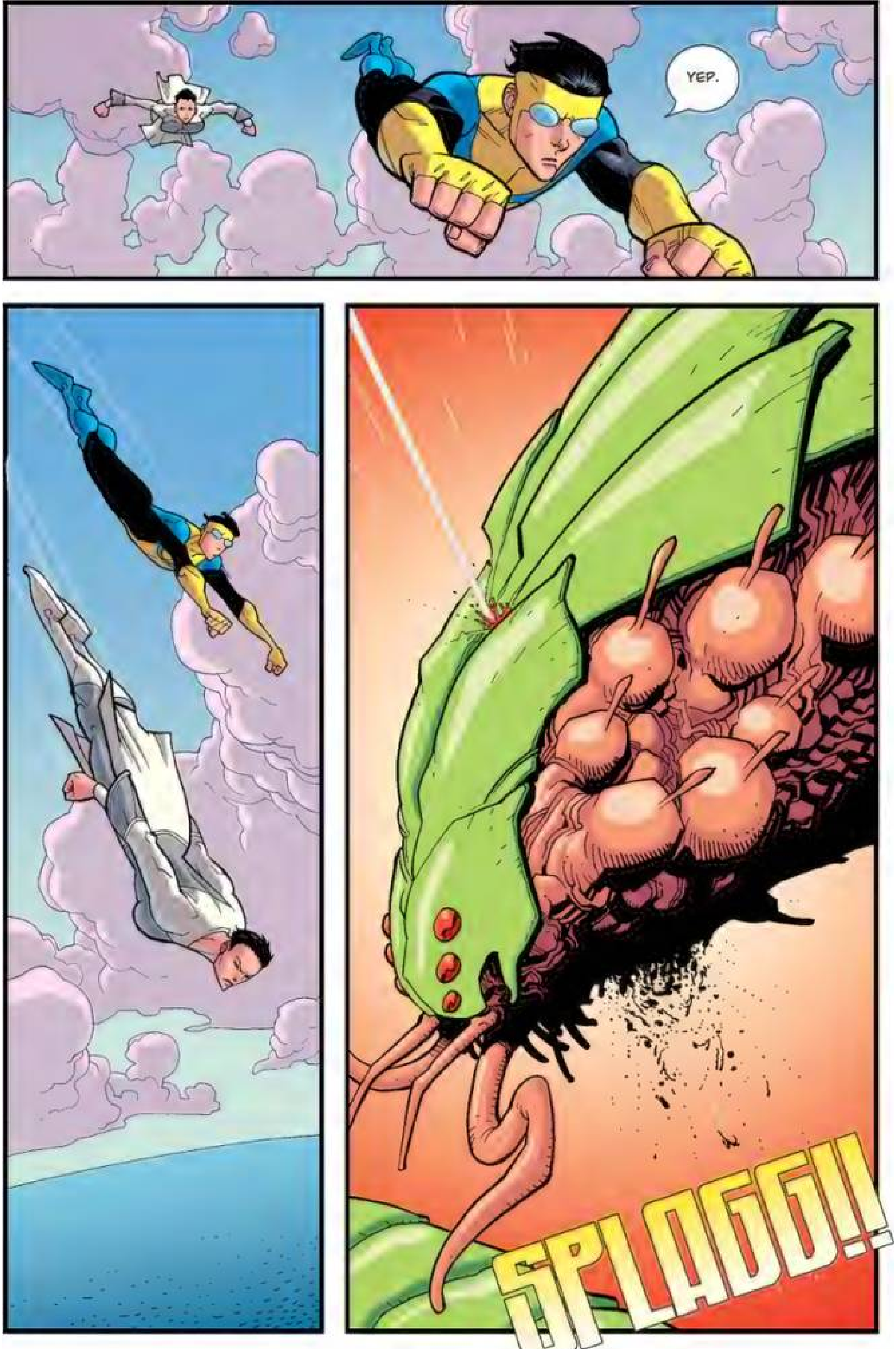

WHAT DO YOU WANT?
I WANT TO *APOLOGIZE*.
FOR WHAT?
FOR THREATENING YOUR MOTHER. THAT'S NOT HOW I WANTED THIS TO START. IT WAS THE ONLY WAY I THOUGHT I COULD GET YOU ALONE QUICKLY.
FOR *THAT*, I APOLOGIZE.
YOU HAVE BEEN DESIGNATED THE VILTRUMITE AGENT OF THIS PLANET. WHAT STEPS HAVE YOU TAKEN TO PREPARE THIS PLANET FOR EVENTUAL TAKEOVER?
NONE.
I'M NOT HERE TO *FIGHT* YOU, MARK.
TRUST ME. IF I WERE HERE TO HURT YOU--YOU'D ALREADY BE DEAD.
THEN WHY *ARE* YOU HERE?

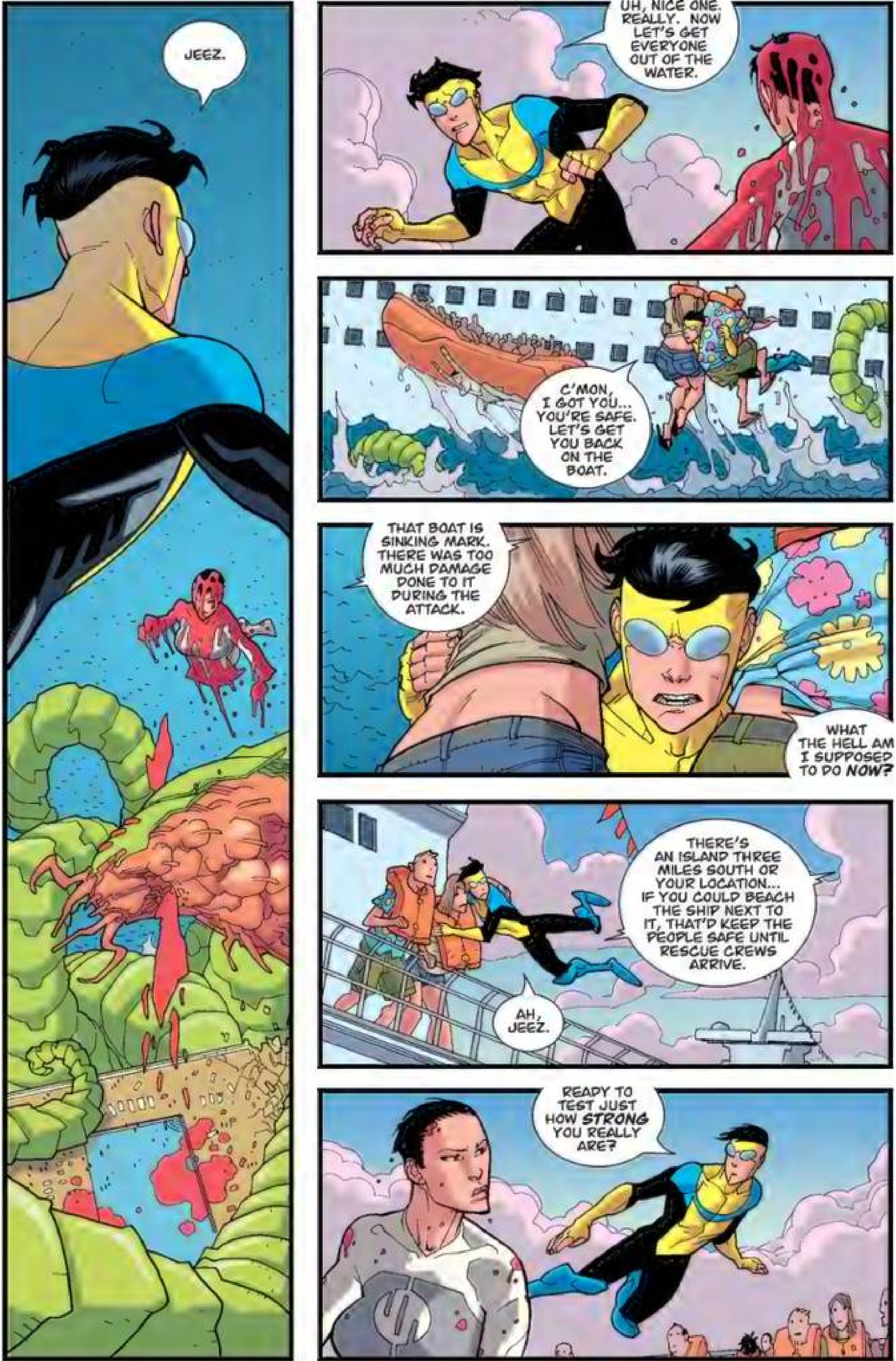

TO CLARIFY THINGS. I BELIEVE YOU ARE UNDER THE IMPRESSION THAT VILTRUMITES ARE WARMONGERS, A RACE TO BE FEARED, OPPOSED, EVEN DESTROYED.
I'M HERE TO TELL YOU THAT YOU'RE MISTAKEN.
AND YOU STARTED BY THREATENING TO KILL MY MOTHER?
I WON'T DENY THERE ARE FUNDAMENTAL CULTURAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN VILTRUMITES AND THE PEOPLE YOU WERE RAISED AMONGST.
"FUNDAMENTAL DIFFERENCES?"
YOU THINK?!
OUR PEOPLE ARE QUICK TO TURN VIOLENT. IT IS SOMETHING WE ALL STRUGGLE WITH. HAVE YOU NOT EXPERIENCED THIS YOURSELF?
DESPITE WHAT YOU KNOW ABOUT US AND OUR NATURE. YOU ARE MISUNDERSTANDING THE INTENT OF OUR DRIVE TO CONQUER OTHER WORLDS.
WE TAKE OVER, YES, AND WE DO TAKE OUR SHARE OF A PLANET'S NATURAL RESOURCES BUT WE BRING SO MUCH TO THE PLANET IN RETURN.
WE REALLY HAVE A LOT TO OFFER.
LIKE WHAT?!

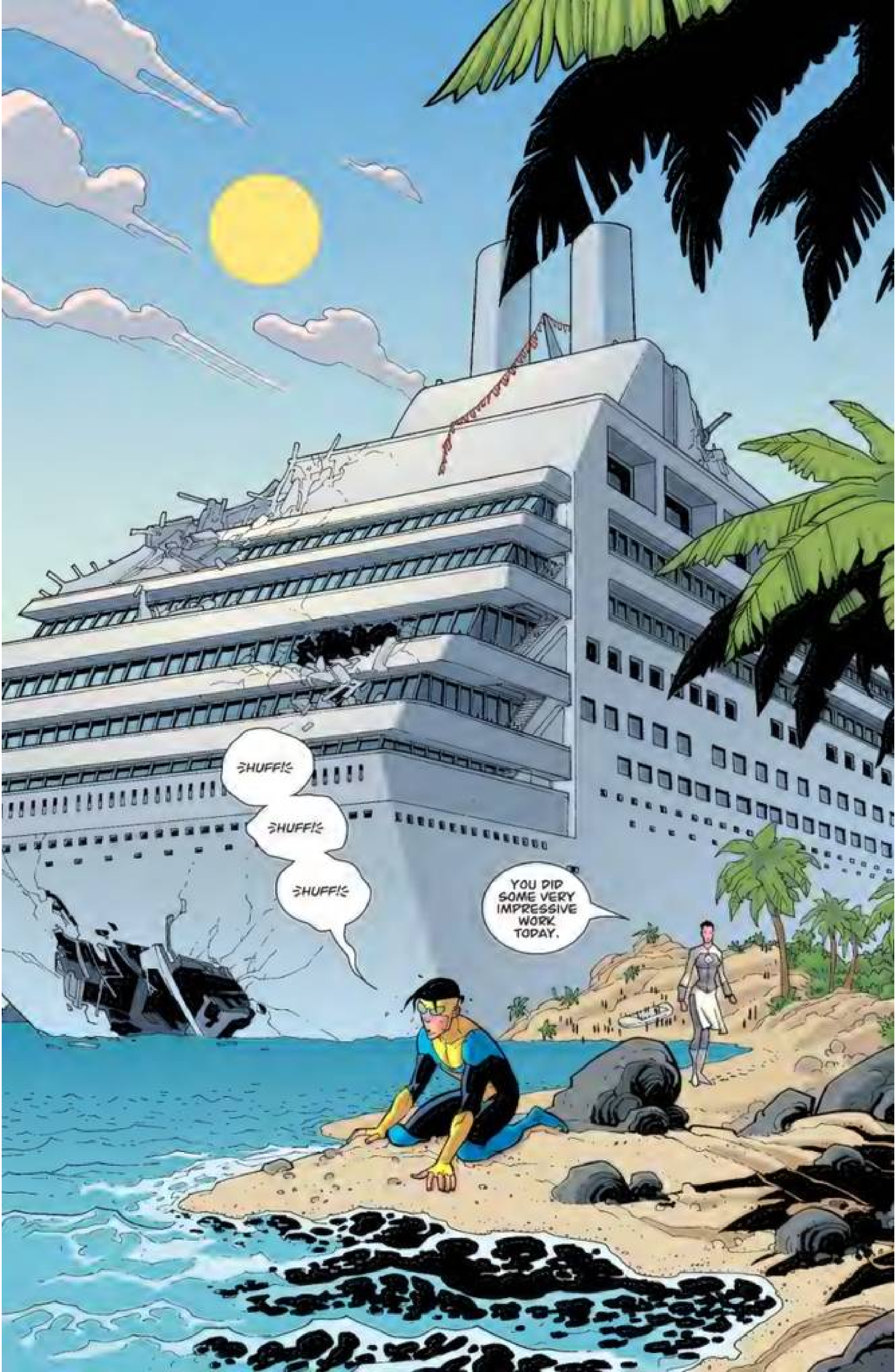

IS THIS PLANET NOT RIDDLED WITH DEATH AND DISEASE? ARE THESE PEOPLE NOT PLAGUED BY VIOLENCE AND WAR?
A VILTRUMITE OCCUPATION WOULD RID THEM OF ALL THAT. WE WOULD SHARE OUR TECHNOLOGY, CURE THEIR DISEASES. NO UNSANCTIONED VIOLENCE WOULD OCCUR UNDER OUR RULE.
WE COULD TRANSFORM THIS WORLD INTO A UTOPIA.
YOU MEAN THE SLAVES WOULD BE COMPLACENT?
THEY'D BE FED AND HAPPY WHILE YOU SUCKED THIS PLANET DRY-- RUINING IT.
IT WOULD TAKE HUNDREDS OF YEARS FOR US TO HARVEST WHAT WE NEED FROM THIS PLANET. DURING THAT TIME THESE PEOPLE WOULD EXPERIENCE AN AGE OF PEACE AND UNDERSTANDING LIKE THEY'VE NEVER EXPERIENCED BEFORE.
THIS WOULD LAST FOR GENERATIONS, UNTIL NO ONE EVEN REMEMBERED THE WORLD BEFORE.
...AND WHEN YOU'RE *DONE?*
WHEN WE'RE DONE WE WILL HAVE *DESTROYED* THIS PLANET--THE SAME AS THESE BEINGS YOU WISH TO PROTECT ARE ALREADY *DOING.*
NOTHING WOULD BE LOST.
I HATE TO INTERRUPT THIS THRILLING CONVERSATION--WHICH WE'RE RECORDING-- BUT I'VE GOT A *BIG* JOB FOR YOU.
SEE IF SHE'LL LET YOU BREAK AWAY. SEE HOW *FRIENDLY* SHE REALLY WANTS TO APPEAR.
EXCUSE ME, THIS IS VERY INTERESTING BUT I'VE GOT A THING I'VE GOT TO DO *RIGHT NOW.* PEOPLE ARE *DYING.*
I AM AWARE THAT YOU PROTECT THESE PEOPLE. IF IT WILL CONVINCE YOU THAT I AM COMPASSIONATE TOWARD THESE PEOPLE I WILL HELP.
FINE.
WHATEVER.
JUST REMEMBER-- WE'RE SAVING PEOPLE--NOT HURTING THEM.
I'LL TRY MY BEST TO REMEMBER.

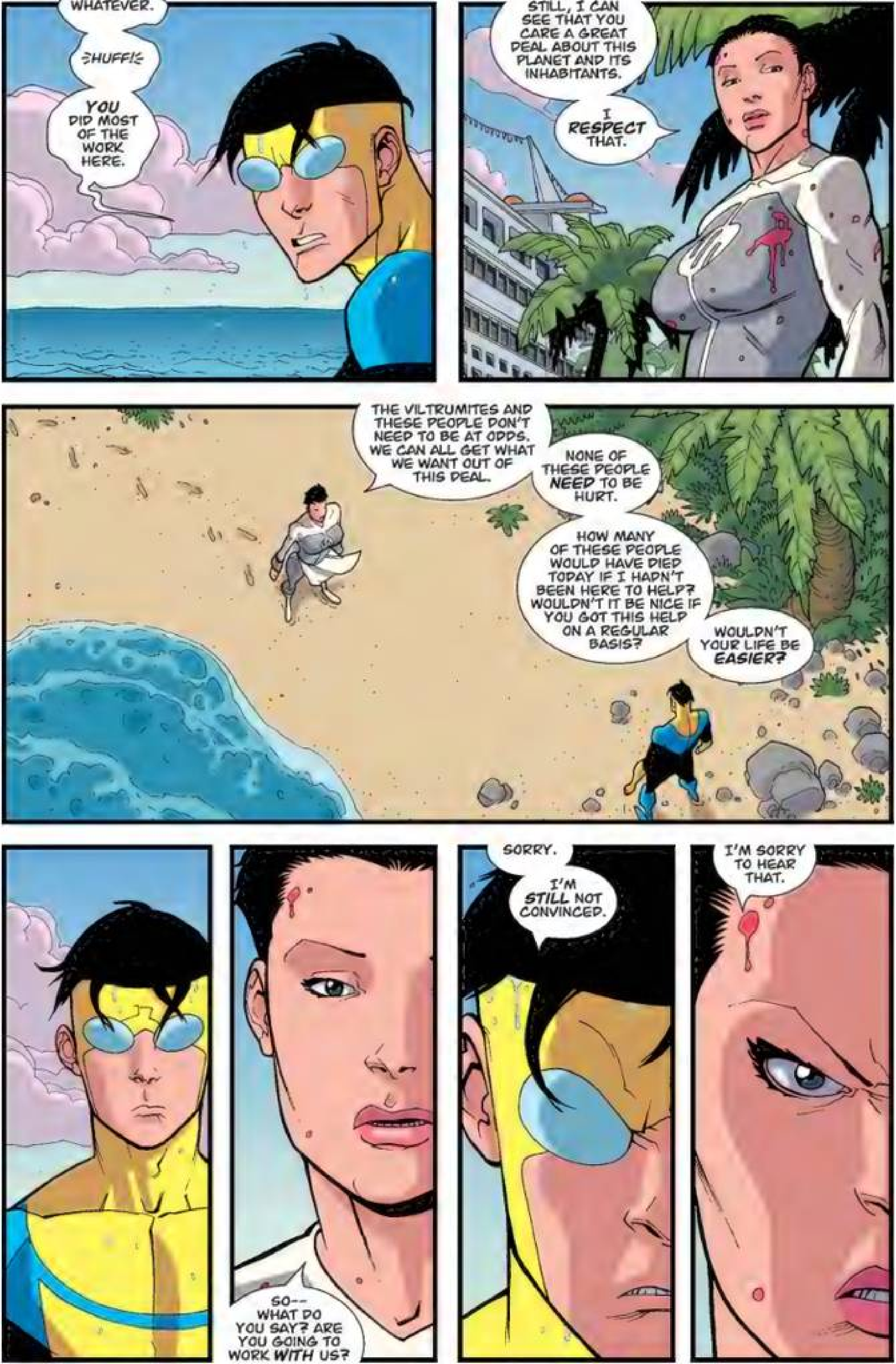

HOLY CRAP.
THE MONSTER--I CAN HURT THE MONSTER, RIGHT?

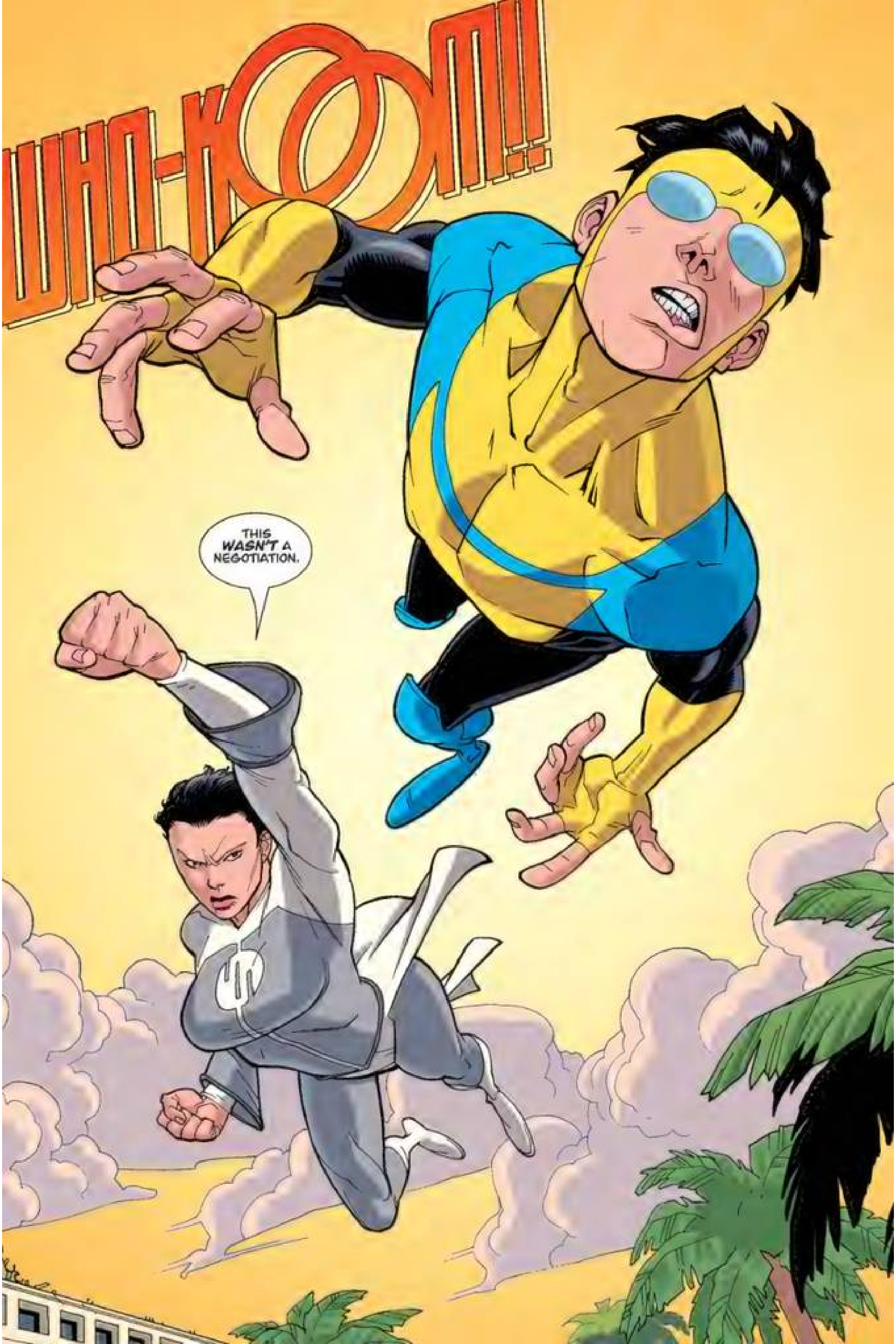



YEP.
SPLAGG!!

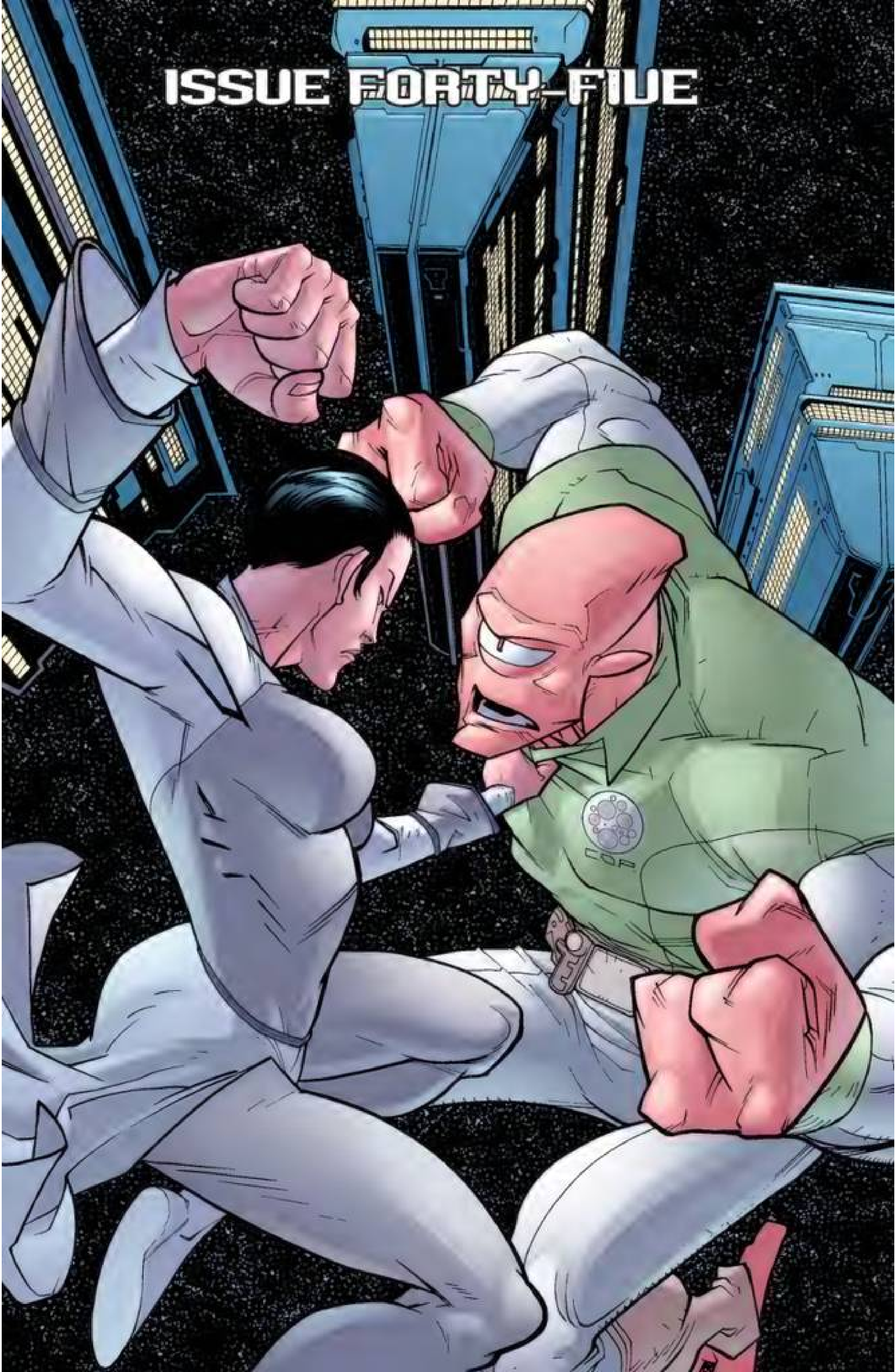

JEEZ.
UH, NICE ONE. REALLY. NOW LET'S GET EVERYONE OUT OF THE WATER.
C'MON, I GOT YOU... YOU'RE SAFE. LET'S GET YOU BACK ON THE BOAT.
THAT BOAT IS SINKING MARK. THERE WAS TOO MUCH DAMAGE DONE TO IT DURING THE ATTACK.
WHAT THE HELL AM I SUPPOSED TO DO *NOW?*
THERE'S AN ISLAND THREE MILES SOUTH OR YOUR LOCATION... IF YOU COULD BEACH THE SHIP NEXT TO IT, THAT'D KEEP THE PEOPLE SAFE UNTIL RESCUE CREWS ARRIVE.
AH, JEEZ.
READY TO TEST JUST HOW *STRONG* YOU REALLY ARE?

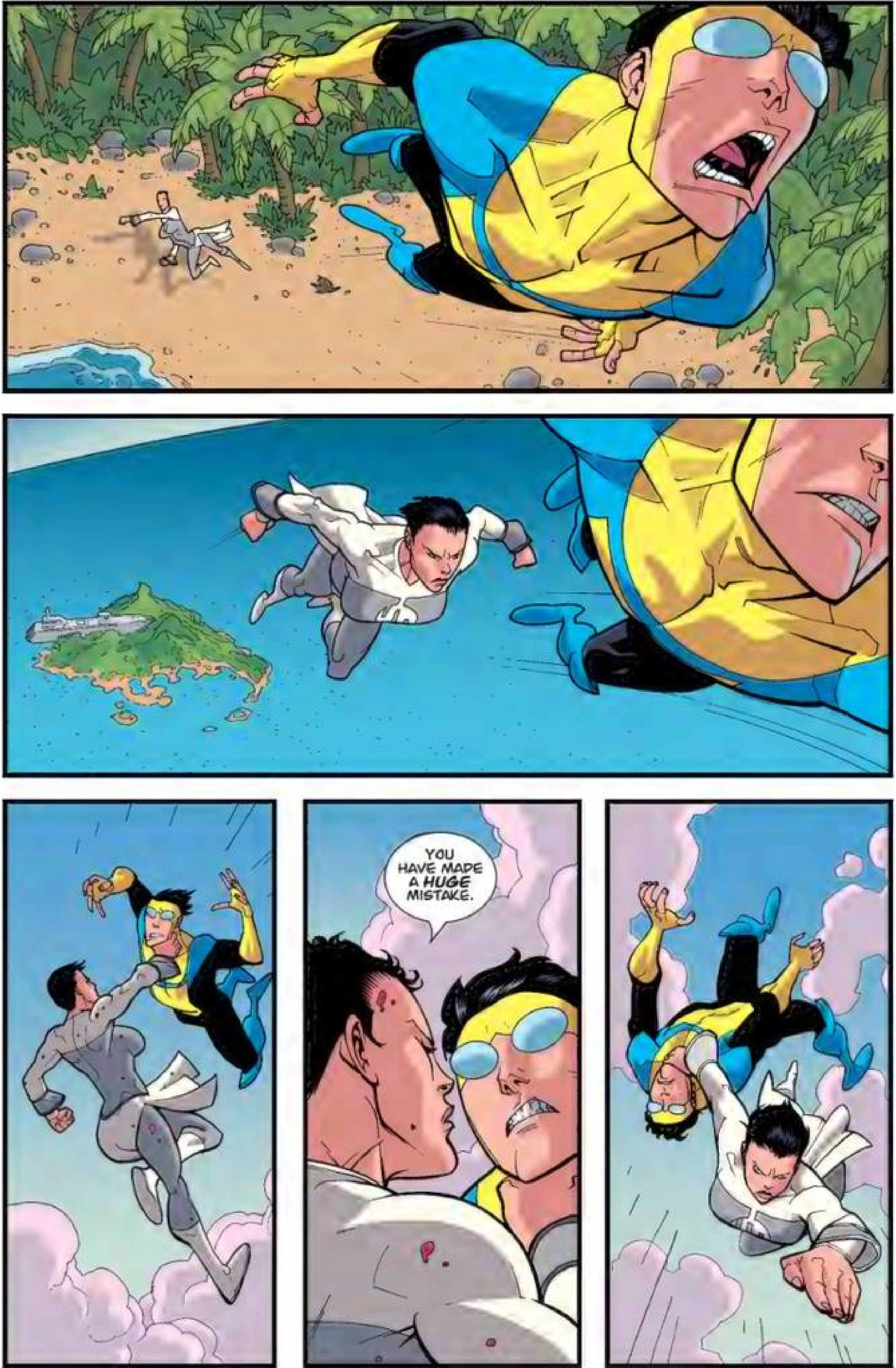

SHUFF!
SHUFF!
SHUFF!
YOU DID SOME VERY IMPRESSIVE WORK TODAY.

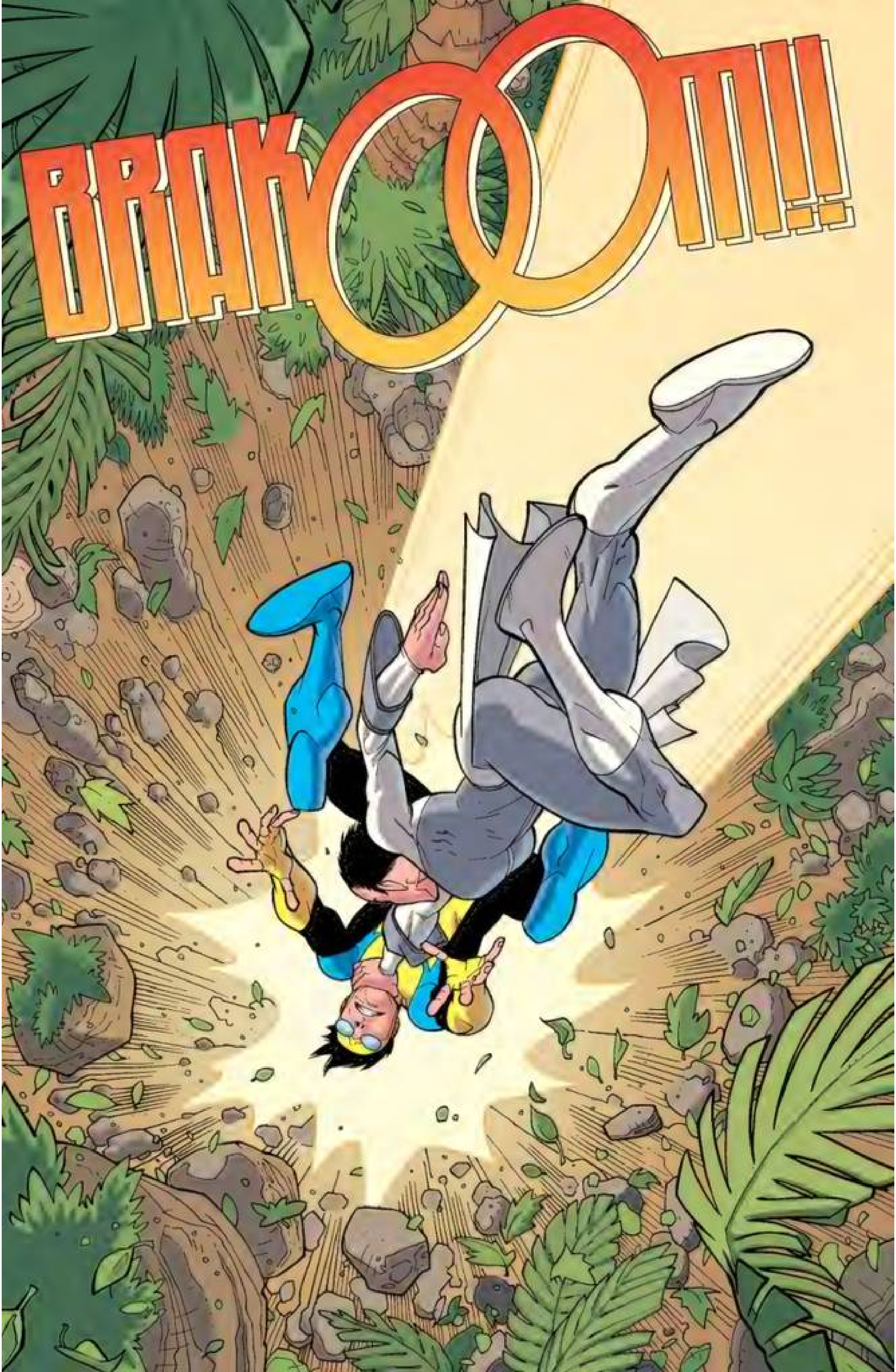

WHATEVER.
SHUFF!
YOU DID MOST OF THE WORK HERE.
STILL, I CAN SEE THAT YOU CARE A GREAT DEAL ABOUT THIS PLANET AND ITS INHABITANTS.
I RESPECT THAT.
THE VILTRUMITES AND THESE PEOPLE DON'T NEED TO BE AT ODDS. WE CAN ALL GET WHAT WE WANT OUT OF THIS DEAL.
NONE OF THESE PEOPLE NEED TO BE HURT.
HOW MANY OF THESE PEOPLE WOULD HAVE DIED TODAY IF I HADN'T BEEN HERE TO HELP? WOULDN'T IT BE NICE IF YOU GOT THIS HELP ON A REGULAR BASIS?
WOULDN'T YOUR LIFE BE EASIER?
SO-- WHAT DO YOU SAY? ARE YOU GOING TO WORK WITH US?
SORRY.
I'M STILL NOT CONVINCED.
I'M SORRY TO HEAR THAT.

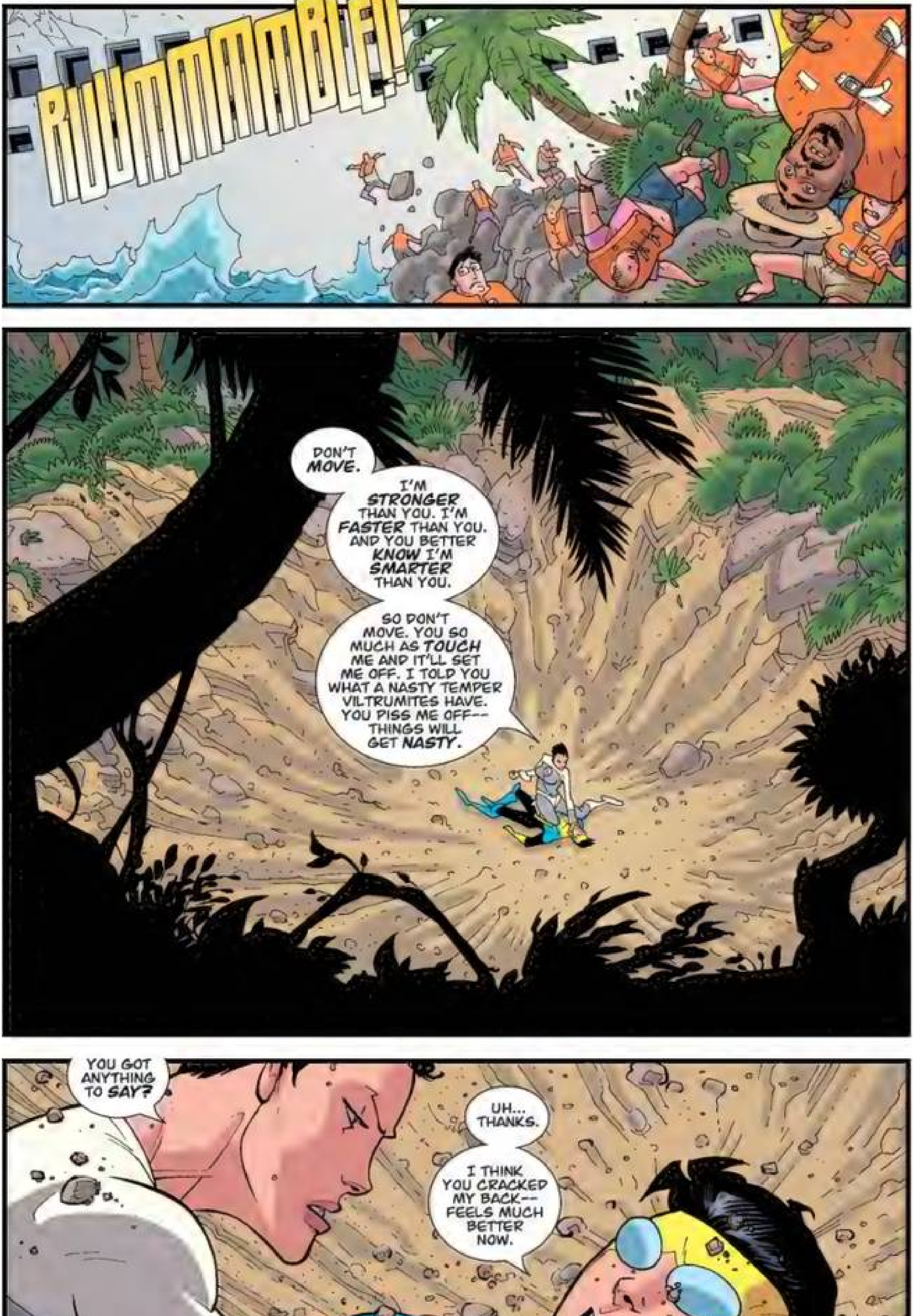

WHO-KOOM!!
THIS *WASN'T* A NEGOTIATION.

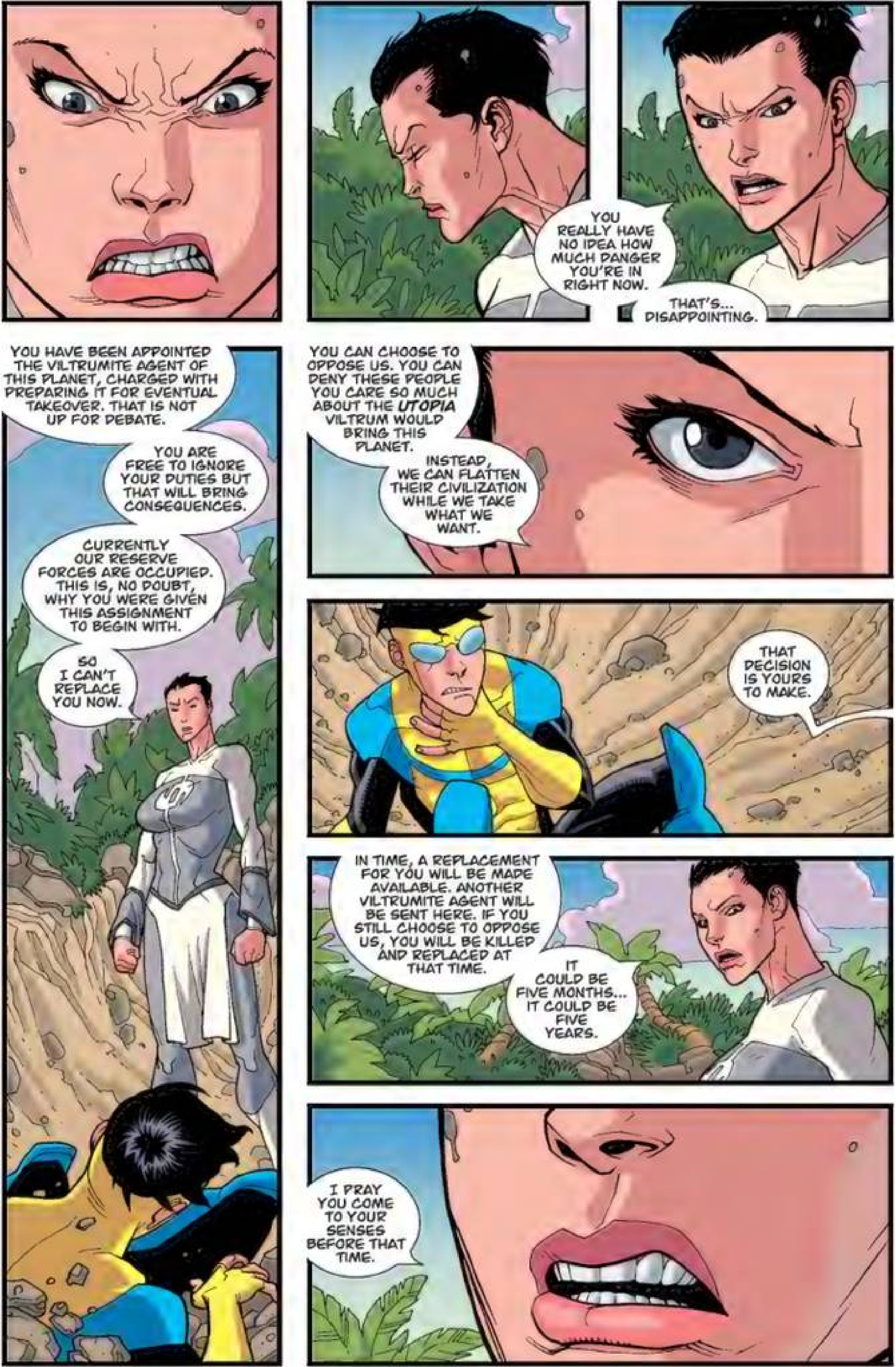
ISSUE FORTY-FIVE

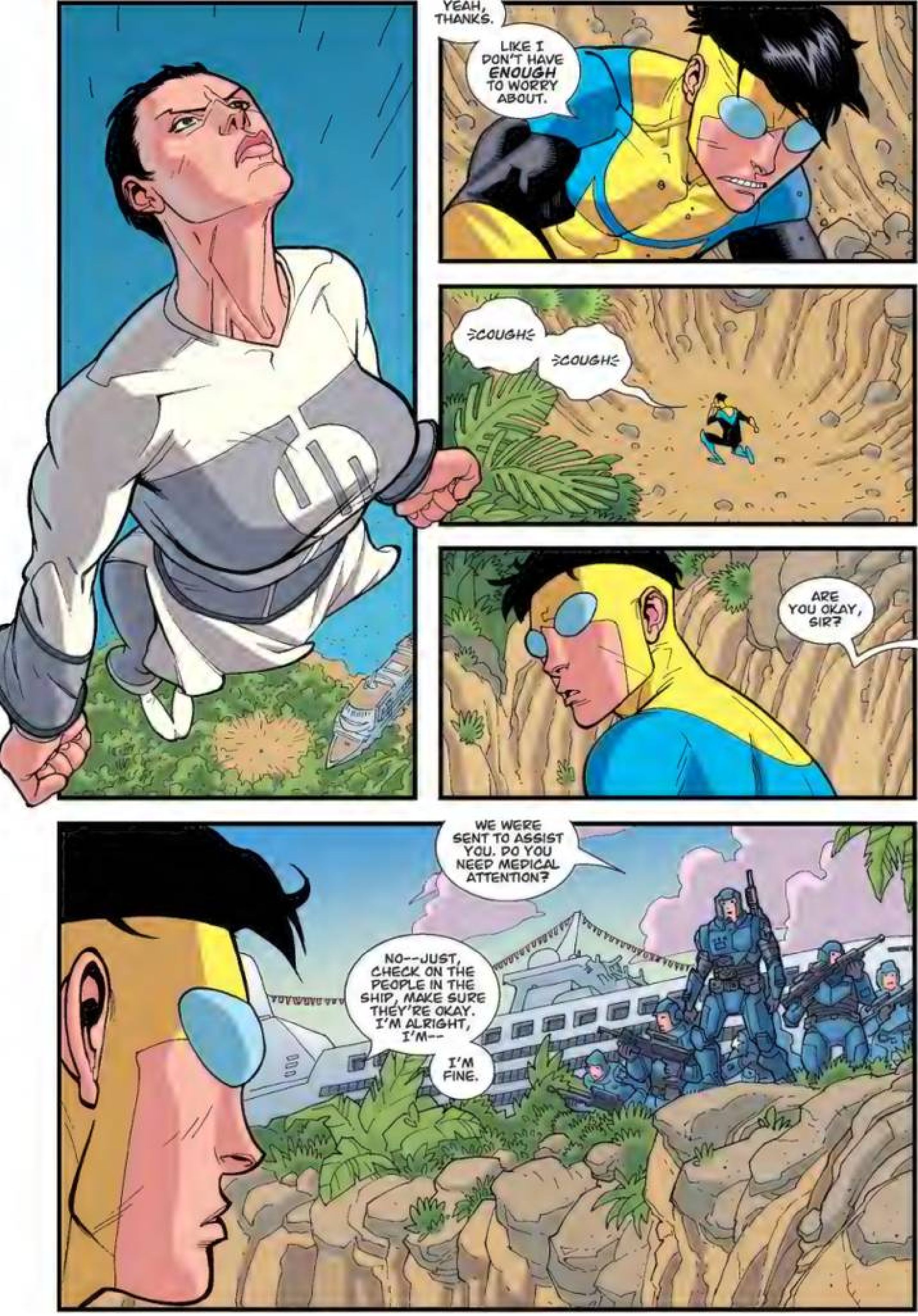


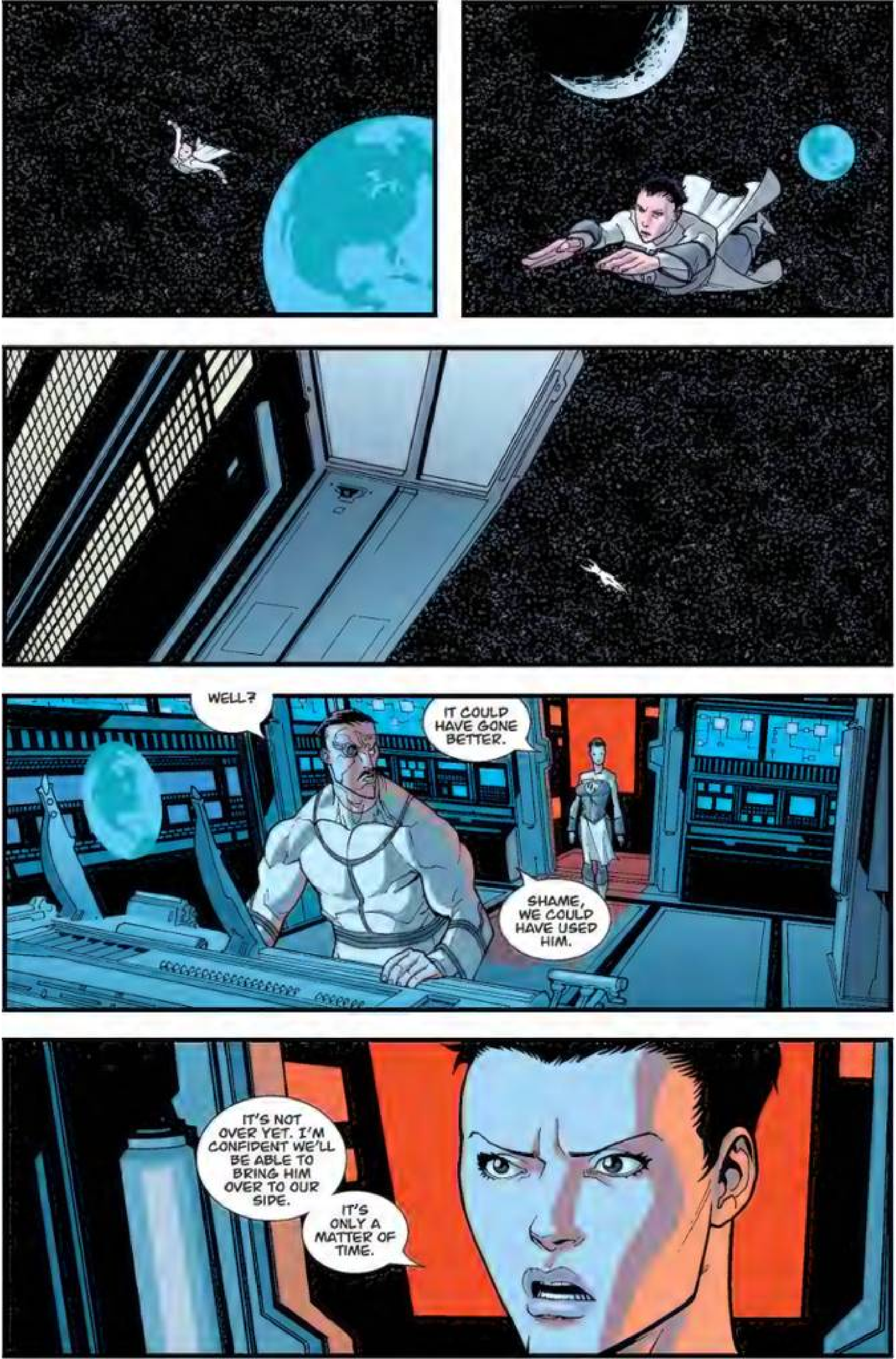

YOU HAVE MADE A HUGE MISTAKE.

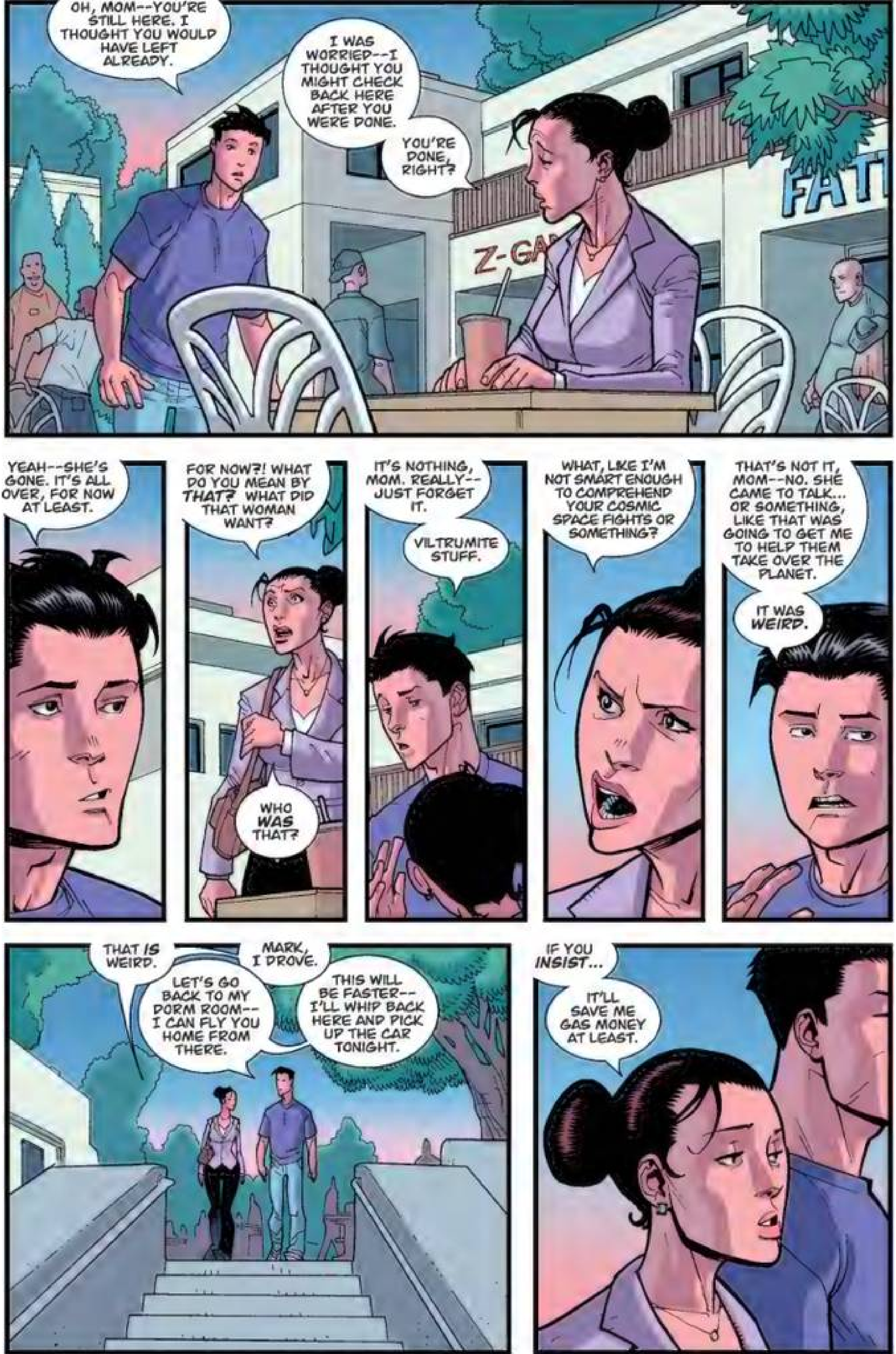

BRAKOOM!!!

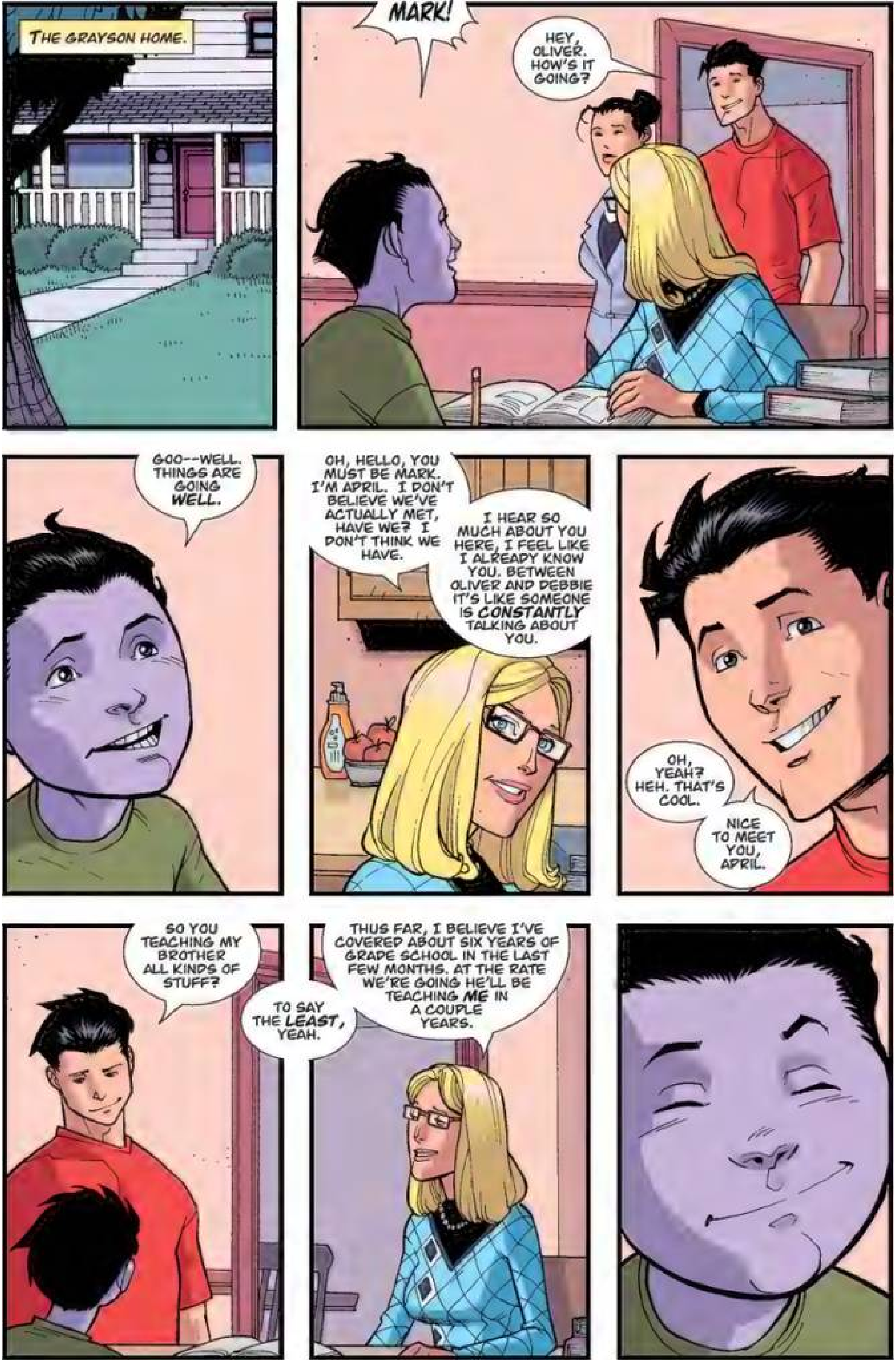

RUMMMMBLE!!
DON'T MOVE.
I'M STRONGER THAN YOU. I'M FASTER THAN YOU. AND YOU BETTER KNOW I'M SMARTER THAN YOU.
SO DON'T MOVE. YOU SO MUCH AS TOUCH ME AND IT'LL SET ME OFF. I TOLD YOU WHAT A NASTY TEMPER VILTRUMITES HAVE. YOU PISS ME OFF-- THINGS WILL GET NASTY.
YOU GOT ANYTHING TO SAY?
UH... THANKS.
I THINK YOU CRACKED MY BACK-- FEELS MUCH BETTER NOW.

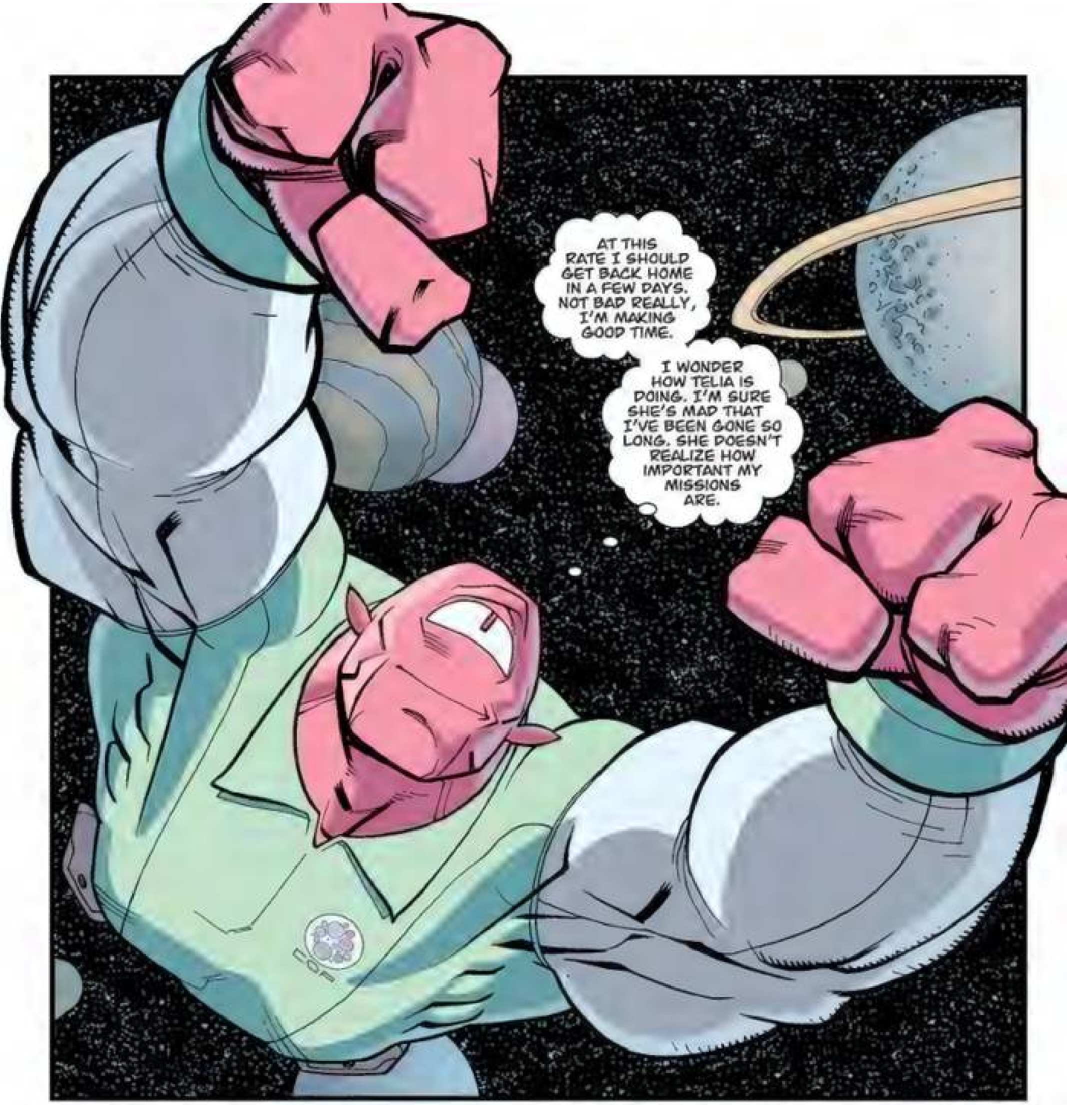

YOU REALLY HAVE NO IDEA HOW MUCH DANGER YOU'RE IN RIGHT NOW.
THAT'S... DISAPPOINTING.
YOU HAVE BEEN APPOINTED THE VILTRUMITE AGENT OF THIS PLANET, CHARGED WITH PREPARING IT FOR EVENTUAL TAKEOVER. THAT IS NOT UP FOR DEBATE.
YOU ARE FREE TO IGNORE YOUR DUTIES BUT THAT WILL BRING CONSEQUENCES.
CURRENTLY OUR RESERVE FORCES ARE OCCUPIED. THIS IS, NO DOUBT, WHY YOU WERE GIVEN THIS ASSIGNMENT TO BEGIN WITH.
SO I CAN'T REPLACE YOU NOW.
YOU CAN CHOOSE TO OPPOSE US. YOU CAN DENY THESE PEOPLE YOU CARE SO MUCH ABOUT THE *UTOPIA* VILTRUM WOULD BRING THIS PLANET.
INSTEAD, WE CAN FLATTEN THEIR CIVILIZATION WHILE WE TAKE WHAT WE WANT.
THAT DECISION IS YOURS TO MAKE.
IN TIME, A REPLACEMENT FOR YOU WILL BE MADE AVAILABLE. ANOTHER VILTRUMITE AGENT WILL BE SENT HERE. IF YOU STILL CHOOSE TO OPPOSE US, YOU WILL BE KILLED AND REPLACED AT THAT TIME.
IT COULD BE FIVE MONTHS... IT COULD BE FIVE YEARS.
I PRAY YOU COME TO YOUR SENSES BEFORE THAT TIME.

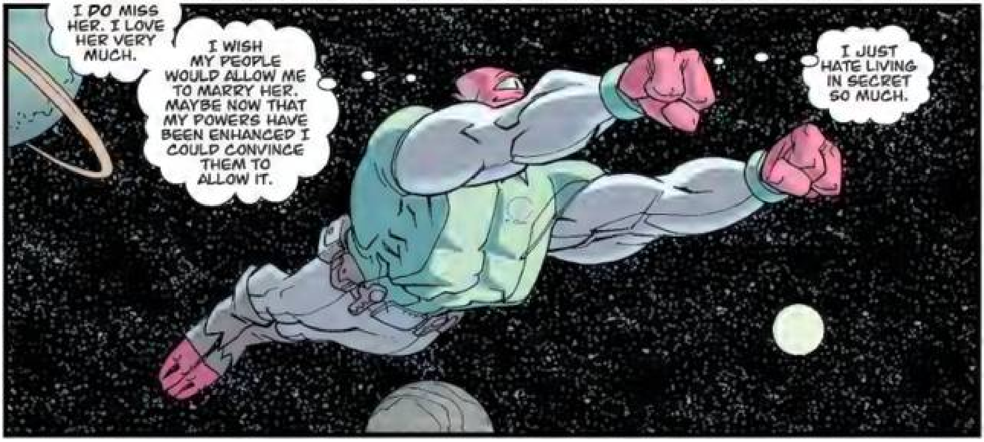

YEAH, THANKS.
LIKE I DON'T HAVE **ENOUGH** TO WORRY ABOUT.
>COUGH<
>COUGH<
ARE YOU OKAY, SIR?
WE WERE SENT TO ASSIST YOU. DO YOU NEED MEDICAL ATTENTION?
NO--JUST, CHECK ON THE PEOPLE IN THE SHIP, MAKE SURE THEY'RE OKAY. I'M ALRIGHT, I'M--
I'M FINE.

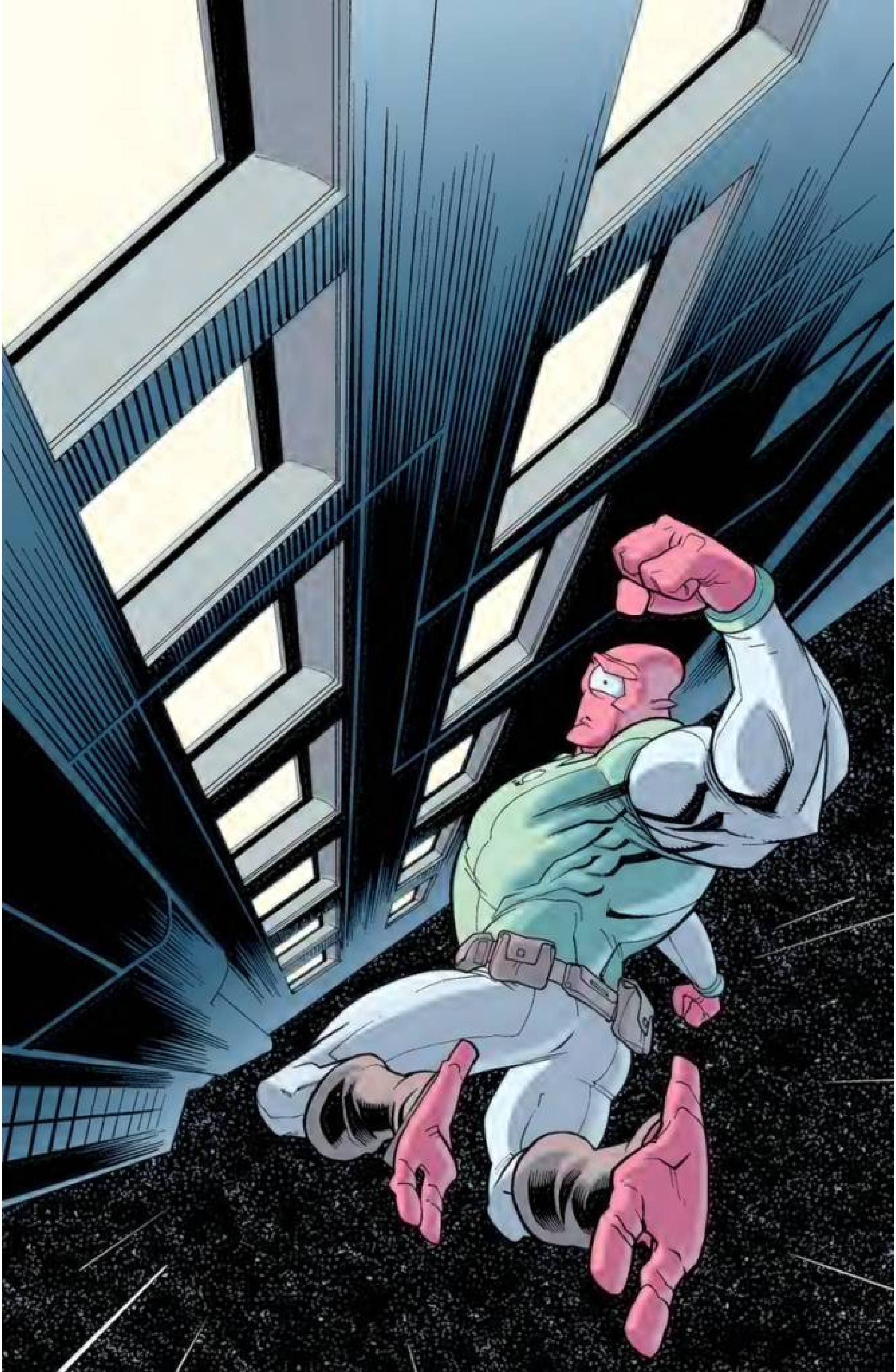

WELL?
IT COULD HAVE GONE BETTER.
SHAME, WE COULD HAVE USED HIM.
IT'S NOT OVER YET. I'M CONFIDENT WE'LL BE ABLE TO BRING HIM OVER TO OUR SIDE.
IT'S ONLY A MATTER OF TIME.

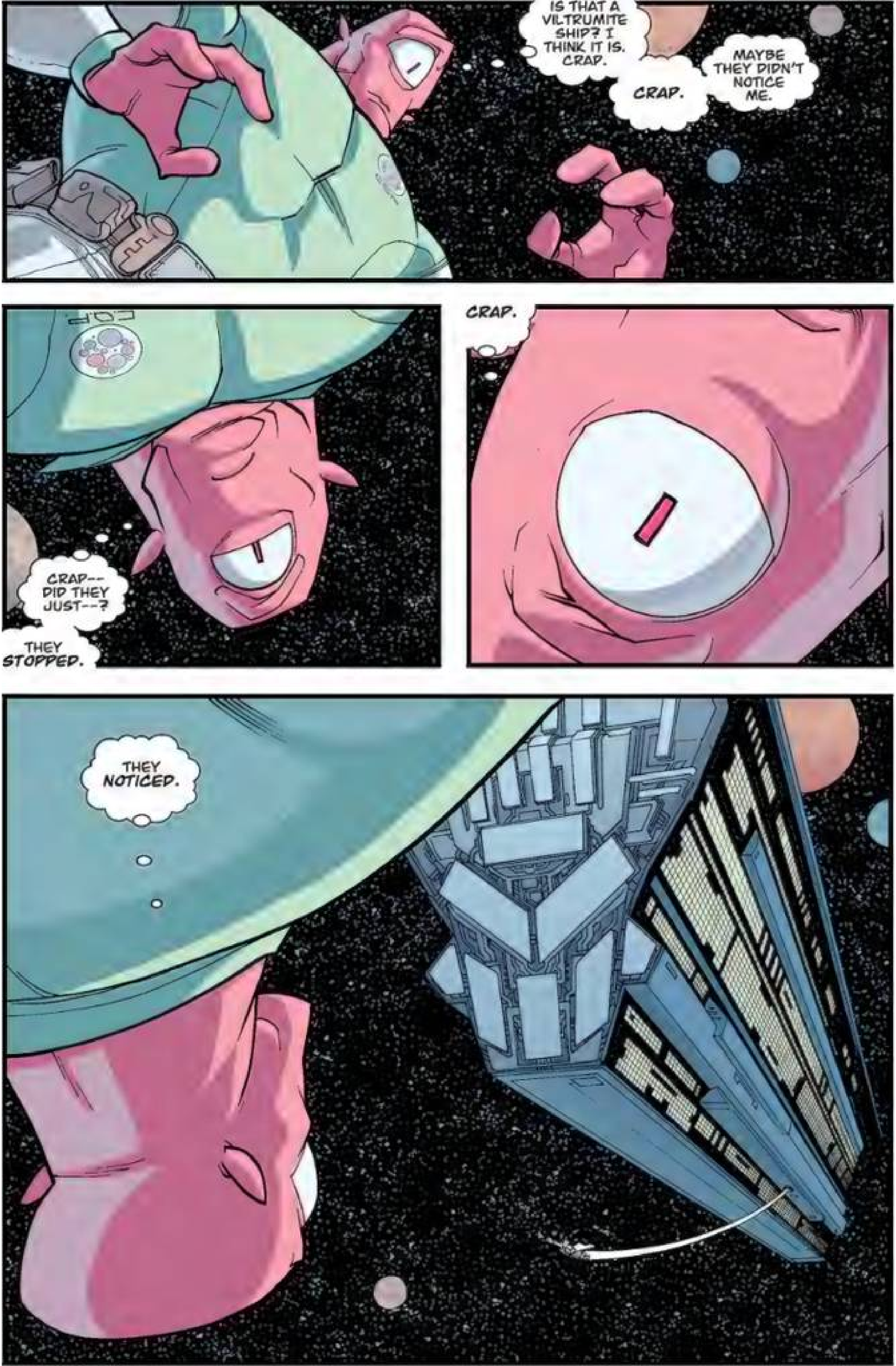

OH, MOM--YOU'RE STILL HERE. I THOUGHT YOU WOULD HAVE LEFT ALREADY.
I WAS WORRIED--I THOUGHT YOU MIGHT CHECK BACK HERE AFTER YOU WERE DONE.
YOU'RE DONE, RIGHT?
Z-GA
FATT
YEAH--SHE'S GONE. IT'S ALL OVER, FOR NOW AT LEAST.
FOR NOW?! WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY *THAT?* WHAT DID THAT WOMAN WANT?
WHO *WAS* THAT?
IT'S NOTHING, MOM. REALLY--JUST FORGET IT.
VILTRUMITE STUFF.
WHAT, LIKE I'M NOT SMART ENOUGH TO COMPREHEND YOUR COSMIC SPACE FIGHTS OR SOMETHING?
THAT'S NOT IT, MOM--NO. SHE CAME TO TALK... OR SOMETHING, LIKE THAT WAS GOING TO GET ME TO HELP THEM TAKE OVER THE PLANET.
IT WAS *WEIRD.*
THAT *IS* WEIRD.
LET'S GO BACK TO MY DORM ROOM--I CAN FLY YOU HOME FROM THERE.
MARK, I DROVE.
THIS WILL BE FASTER--I'LL WHIP BACK HERE AND PICK UP THE CAR TONIGHT.
IF YOU *INSIST...*
IT'LL SAVE ME GAS MONEY AT LEAST.

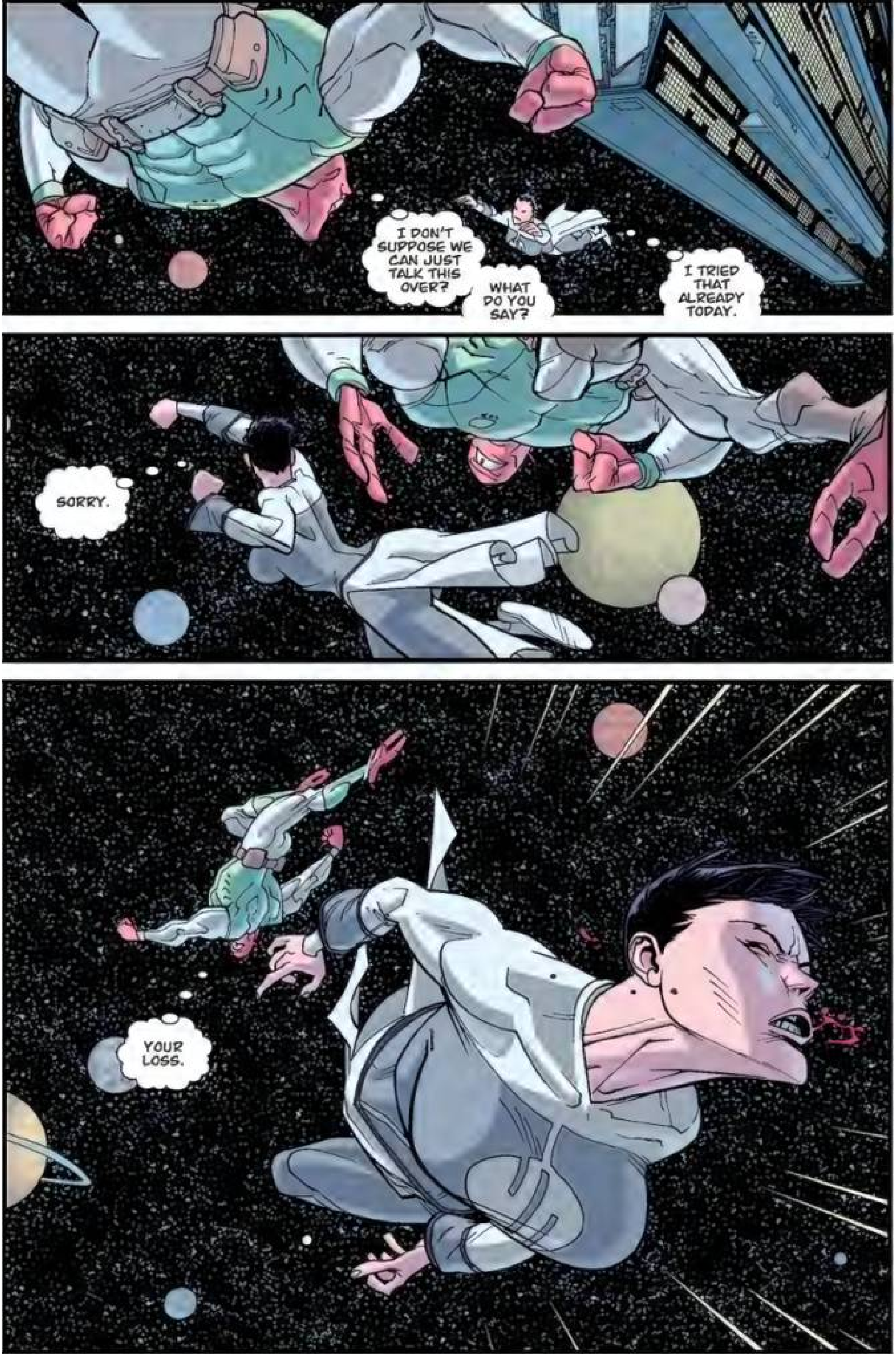

THE GRAYSON HOME.
MARK!
HEY, OLIVER. HOW'S IT GOING?
GOO--WELL. THINGS ARE GOING WELL.
OH, HELLO, YOU MUST BE MARK. I'M APRIL. I DON'T BELIEVE WE'VE ACTUALLY MET, HAVE WE? I DON'T THINK WE HAVE.
I HEAR SO MUCH ABOUT YOU HERE, I FEEL LIKE I ALREADY KNOW YOU. BETWEEN OLIVER AND DEBBIE IT'S LIKE SOMEONE IS CONSTANTLY TALKING ABOUT YOU.
OH, YEAH? HEH. THAT'S COOL.
NICE TO MEET YOU, APRIL.
SO YOU TEACHING MY BROTHER ALL KINDS OF STUFF?
TO SAY THE LEAST, YEAH.
THUS FAR, I BELIEVE I'VE COVERED ABOUT SIX YEARS OF GRADE SCHOOL IN THE LAST FEW MONTHS. AT THE RATE WE'RE GOING HE'LL BE TEACHING ME IN A COUPLE YEARS.

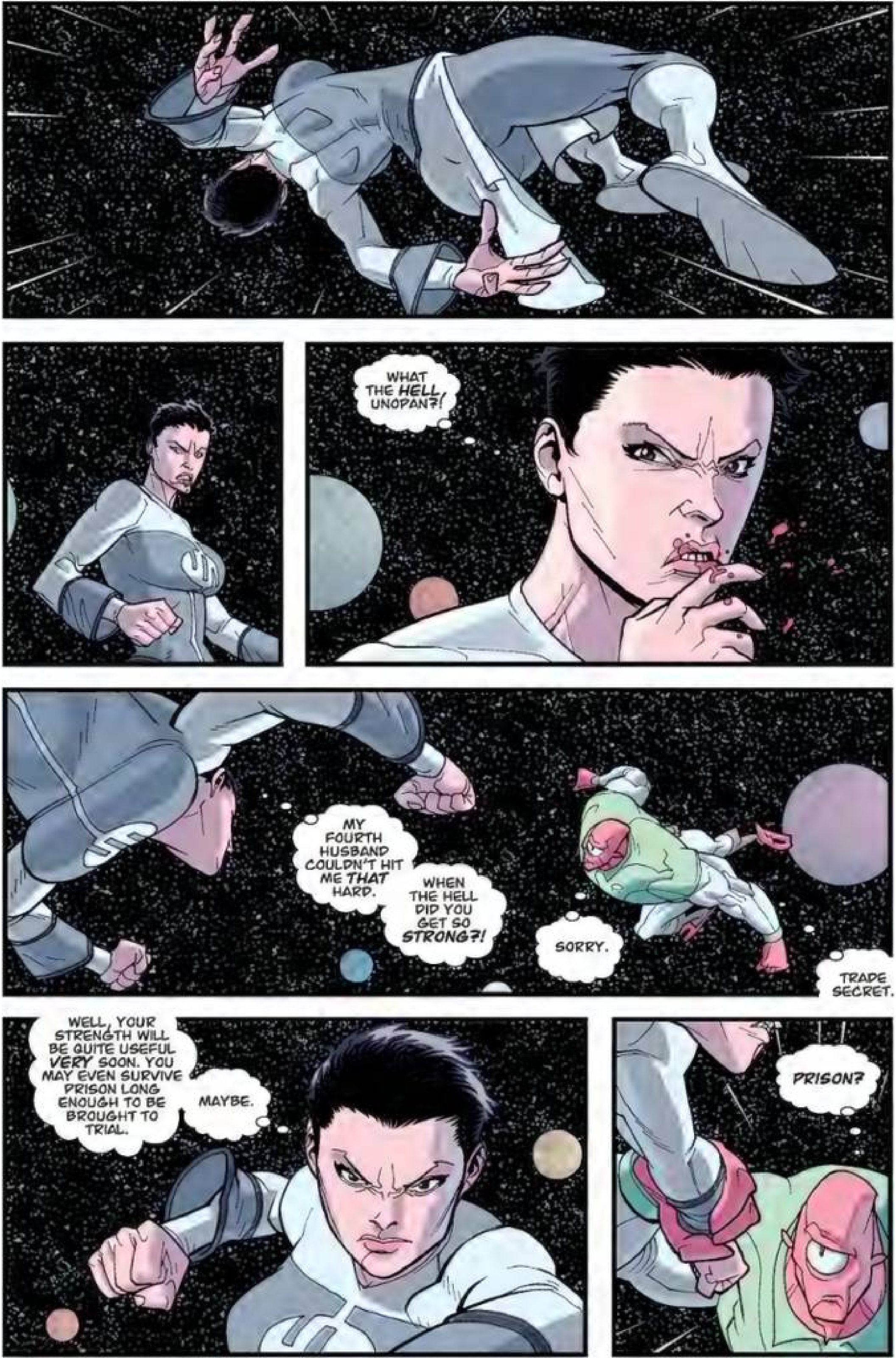

AT THIS RATE I SHOULD GET BACK HOME IN A FEW DAYS. NOT BAD REALLY, I'M MAKING GOOD TIME.
I WONDER HOW TELIA IS DOING. I'M SURE SHE'S MAD THAT I'VE BEEN GONE SO LONG. SHE DOESN'T REALIZE HOW IMPORTANT MY MISSIONS ARE.

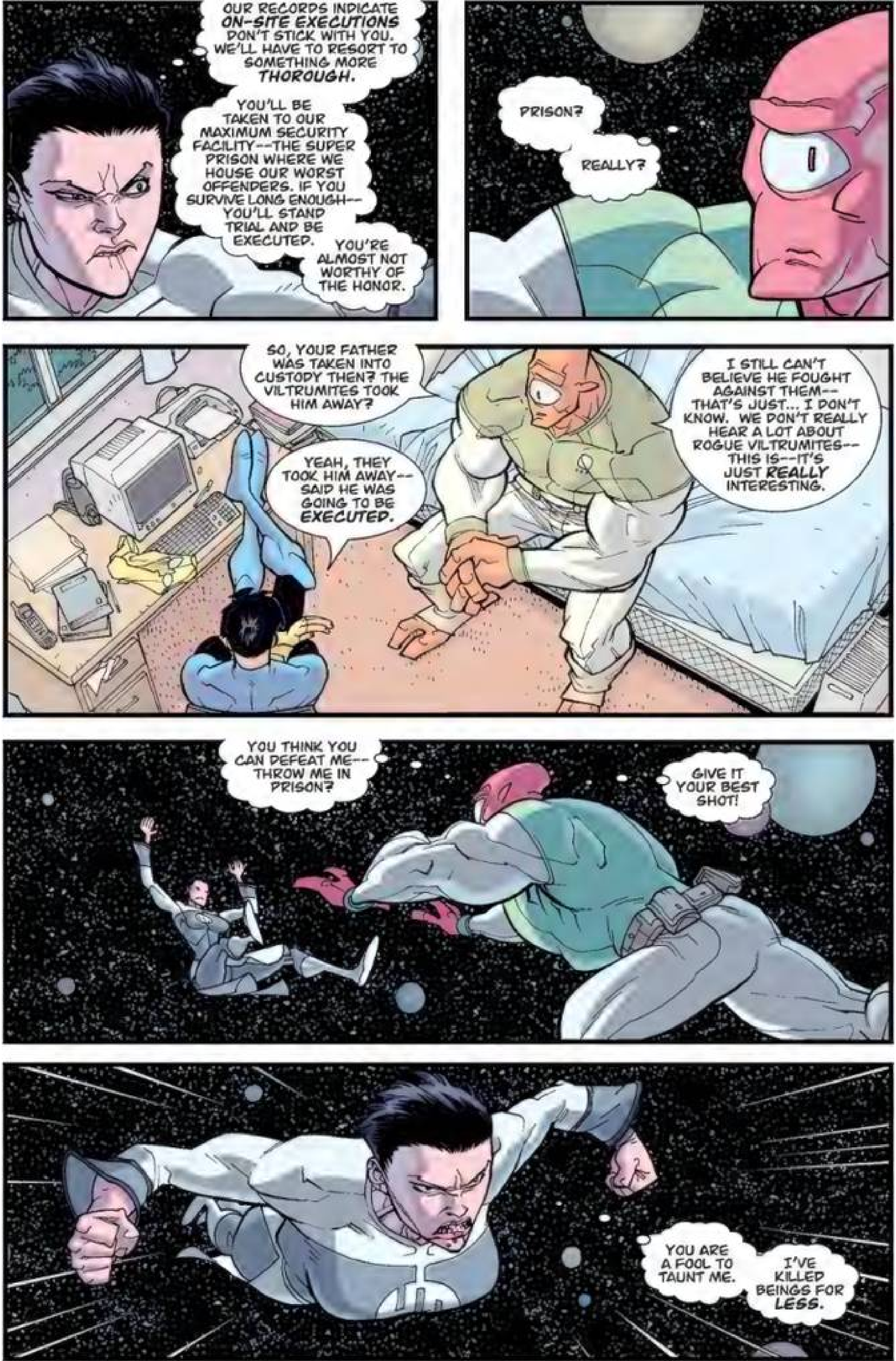

I DO MISS HER. I LOVE HER VERY MUCH.
I WISH MY PEOPLE WOULD ALLOW ME TO MARRY HER. MAYBE NOW THAT MY POWERS HAVE BEEN ENHANCED I COULD CONVINCE THEM TO ALLOW IT.
I JUST HATE LIVING IN SECRET SO MUCH.

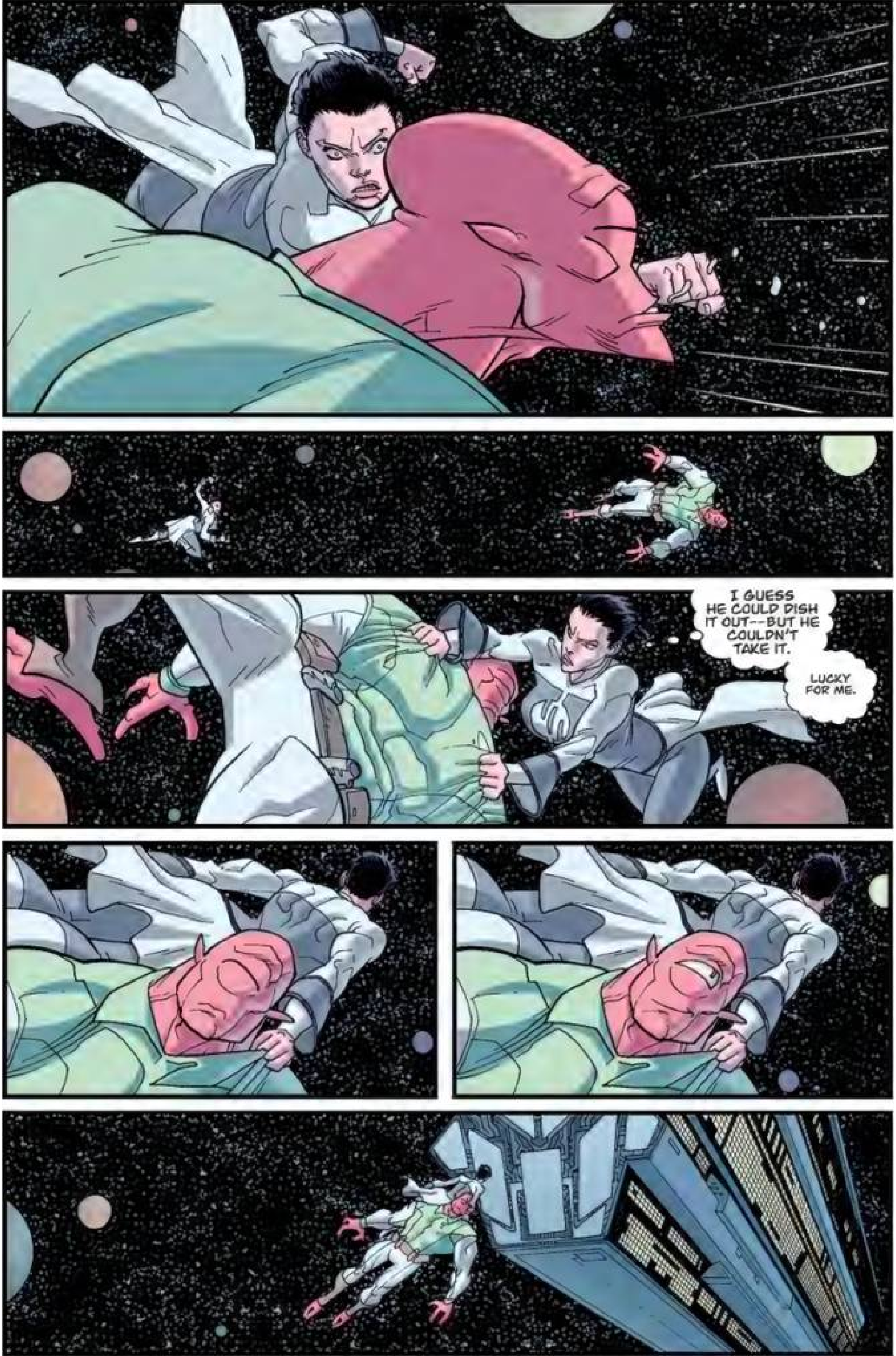


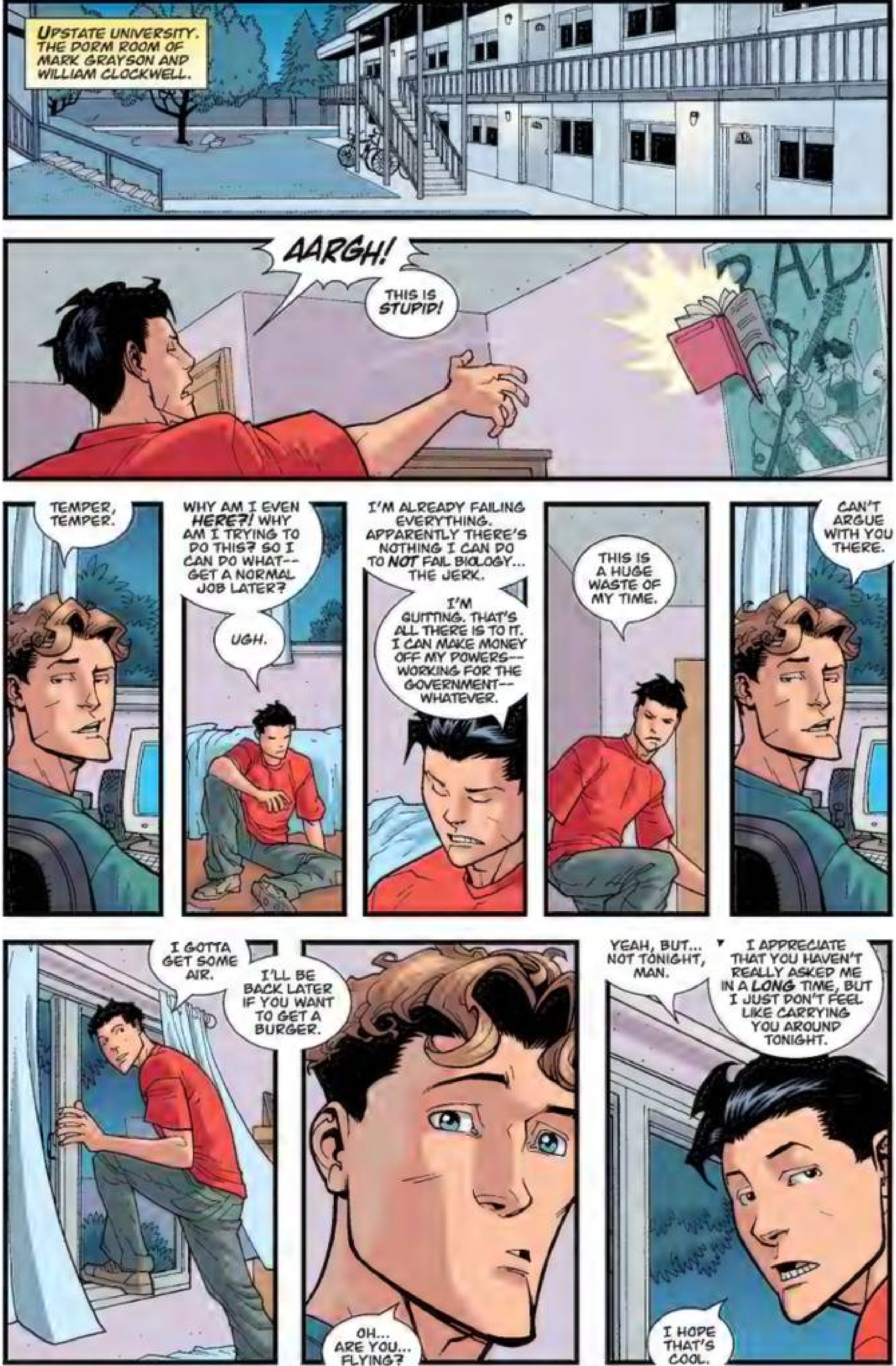

IS THAT A VILTRUMITE SHIP? I THINK IT IS. CRAP.
CRAP.
MAYBE THEY DIDN'T NOTICE ME.
CRAP-- DID THEY JUST--?
THEY STOPPED.
CRAP.
THEY NOTICED.

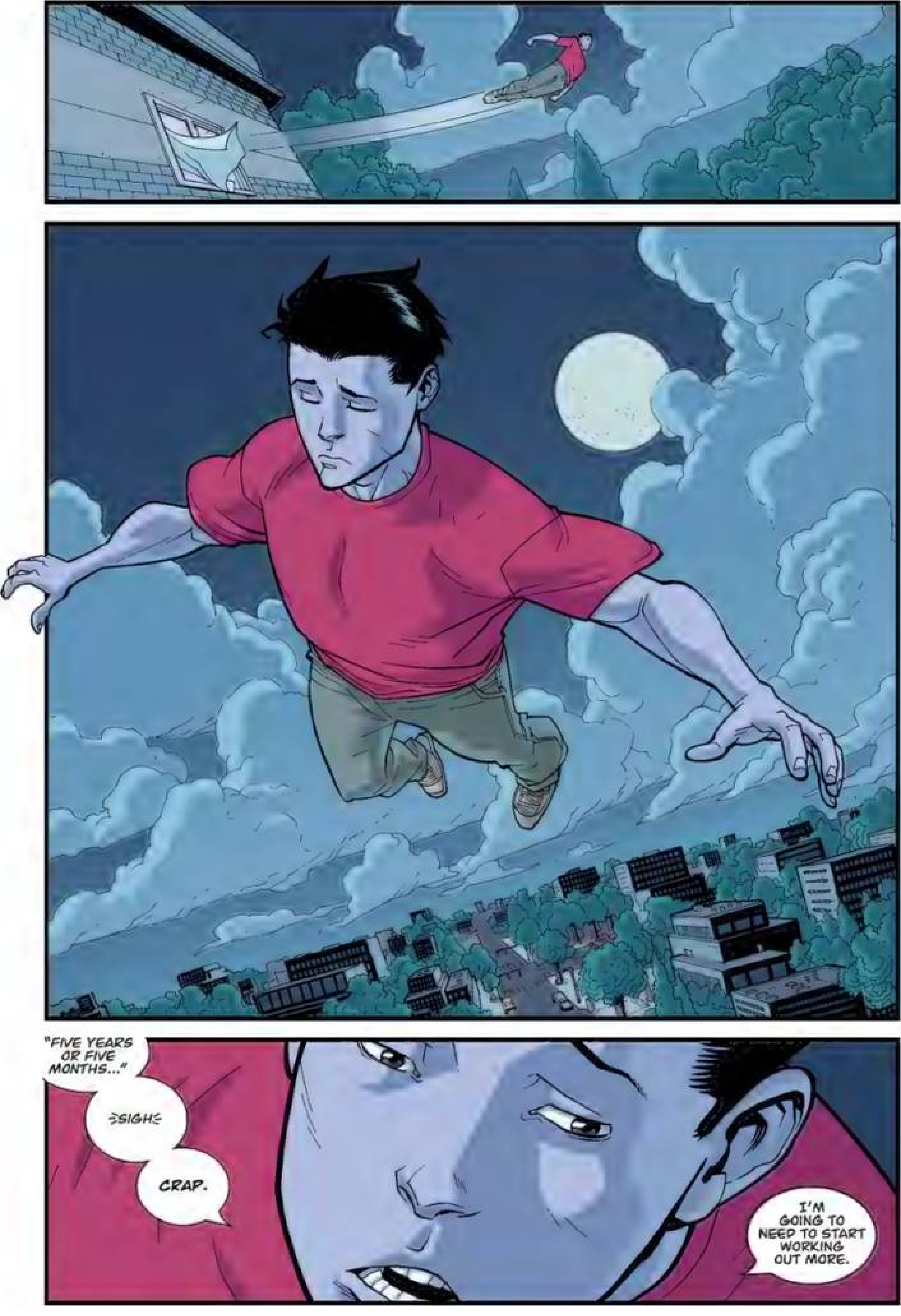

I DON'T SUPPOSE WE CAN JUST TALK THIS OVER?
WHAT DO YOU SAY?
I TRIED THAT ALREADY TODAY.
SORRY.
YOUR LOSS.

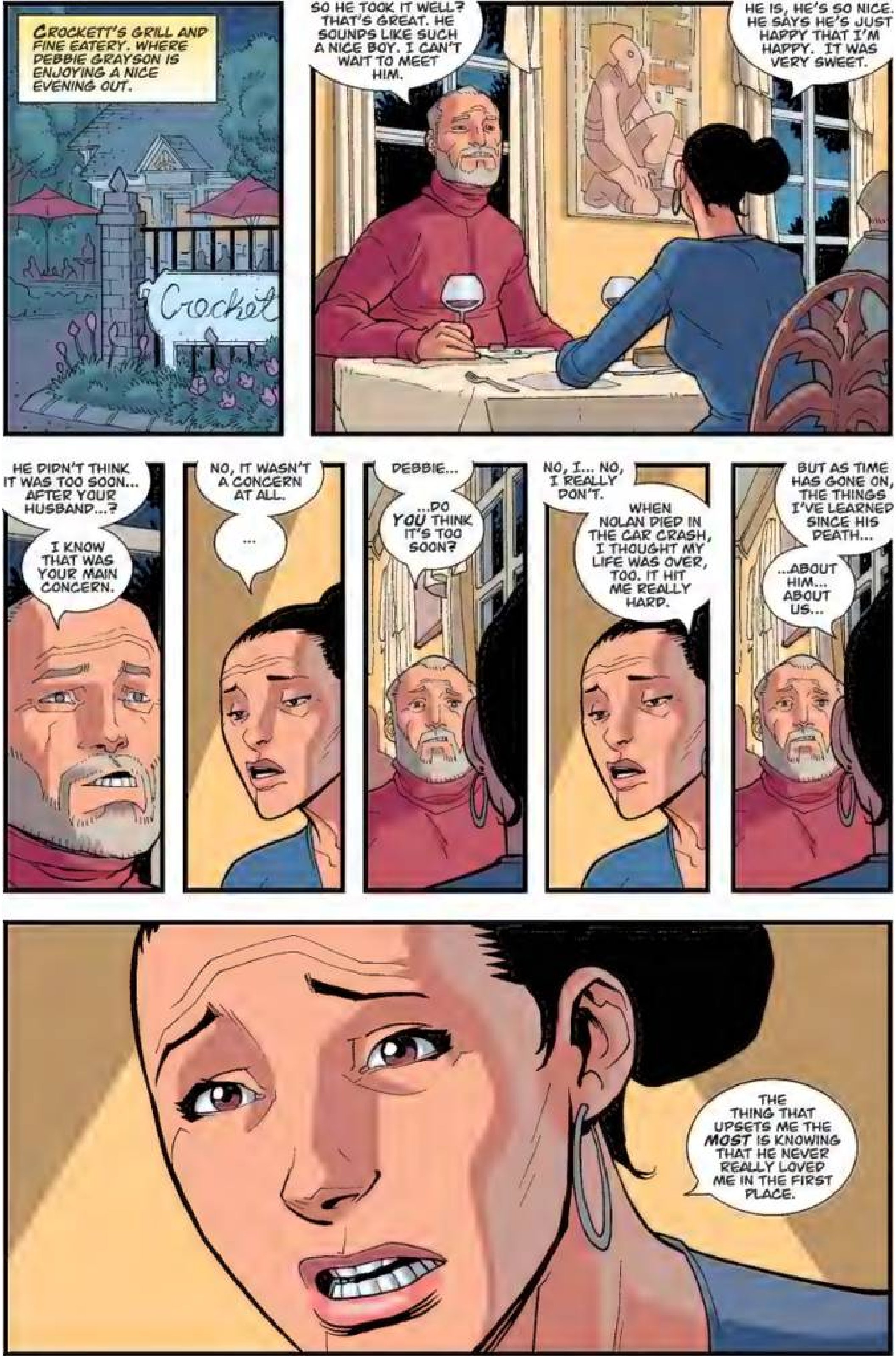

WHAT THE *HELL*, UNOPAN?!
MY FOURTH HUSBAND COULDN'T HIT ME *THAT* HARD.
WHEN THE HELL DID YOU GET SO *STRONG?!*
SORRY.
TRADE SECRET.
WELL, YOUR STRENGTH WILL BE QUITE USEFUL *VERY* SOON. YOU MAY EVEN SURVIVE PRISON LONG ENOUGH TO BE BROUGHT TO TRIAL.
MAYBE.
PRISON?

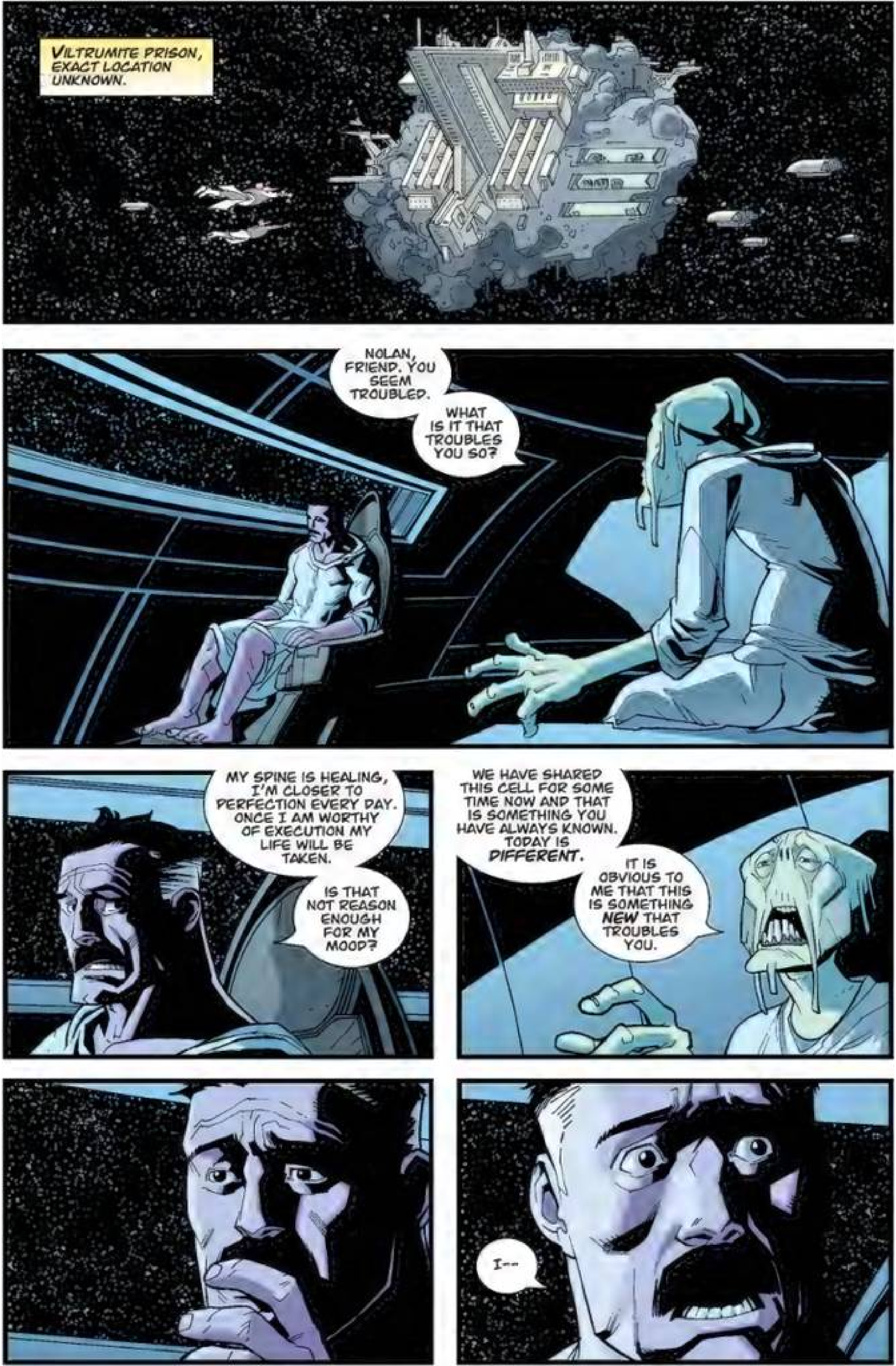

OUR RECORDS INDICATE ON-SITE EXECUTIONS DON'T STICK WITH YOU. WE'LL HAVE TO RESORT TO SOMETHING MORE THOROUGH.
YOU'LL BE TAKEN TO OUR MAXIMUM SECURITY FACILITY--THE SUPER PRISON WHERE WE HOUSE OUR WORST OFFENDERS. IF YOU SURVIVE LONG ENOUGH--YOU'LL STAND TRIAL AND BE EXECUTED.
YOU'RE ALMOST NOT WORTHY OF THE HONOR.
PRISON?
REALLY?
SO, YOUR FATHER WAS TAKEN INTO CUSTODY THEN? THE VILTRUMITES TOOK HIM AWAY?
YEAH, THEY TOOK HIM AWAY--SAID HE WAS GOING TO BE EXECUTED.
I STILL CAN'T BELIEVE HE FOUGHT AGAINST THEM--THAT'S JUST... I DON'T KNOW. WE DON'T REALLY HEAR A LOT ABOUT ROGUE VILTRUMITES--THIS IS--IT'S JUST REALLY INTERESTING.
YOU THINK YOU CAN DEFEAT ME--THROW ME IN PRISON?
GIVE IT YOUR BEST SHOT!
YOU ARE A FOOL TO TAUNT ME.
I'VE KILLED BEINGS FOR LESS.

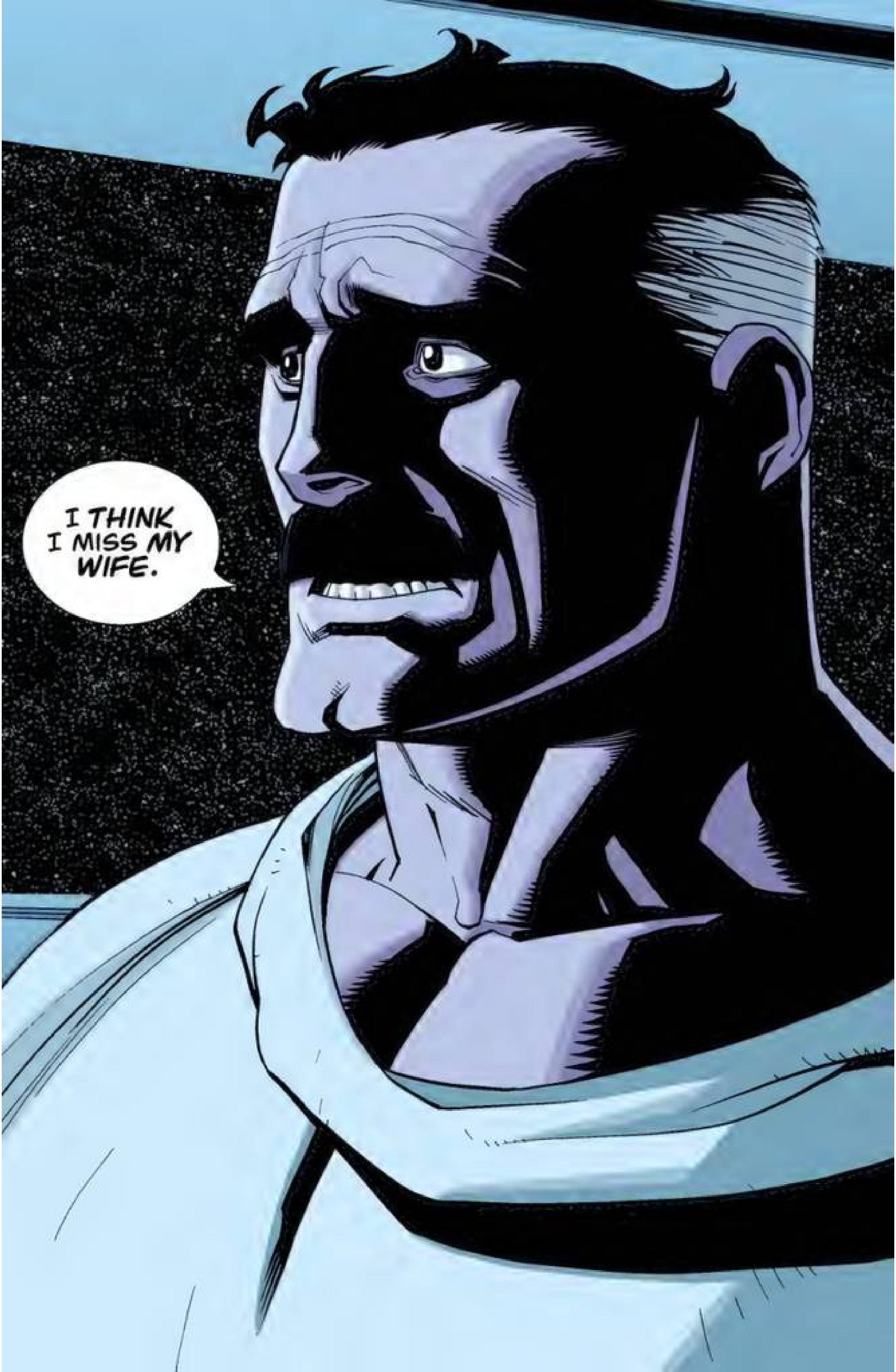

I GUESS HE COULD DISH IT OUT--BUT HE COULDN'T TAKE IT.
LUCKY FOR ME.


UPSTATE UNIVERSITY. THE DORM ROOM OF MARK GRAYSON AND WILLIAM CLOCKWELL.
AARGH!
THIS IS STUPID!
R.A.D.
TEMPER, TEMPER.
WHY AM I EVEN HERE?! WHY AM I TRYING TO DO THIS? SO I CAN DO WHAT-- GET A NORMAL JOB LATER?
UGH.
I'M ALREADY FAILING EVERYTHING. APPARENTLY THERE'S NOTHING I CAN DO TO NOT FAIL BIOLOGY... THE JERK.
I'M QUITTING. THAT'S ALL THERE IS TO IT. I CAN MAKE MONEY OFF MY POWERS-- WORKING FOR THE GOVERNMENT-- WHATEVER.
THIS IS A HUGE WASTE OF MY TIME.
CAN'T ARGUE WITH YOU THERE.
I GOTTA GET SOME AIR.
I'LL BE BACK LATER IF YOU WANT TO GET A BURGER.
OH... ARE YOU... FLYING?
YEAH, BUT... NOT TONIGHT, MAN.
I APPRECIATE THAT YOU HAVEN'T REALLY ASKED ME IN A LONG TIME, BUT I JUST DON'T FEEL LIKE CARRYING YOU AROUND TONIGHT.
I HOPE THAT'S COOL.


"FIVE YEARS OR FIVE MONTHS..."
≈SIGH≈
CRAP.
I'M GOING TO NEED TO START WORKING OUT MORE.

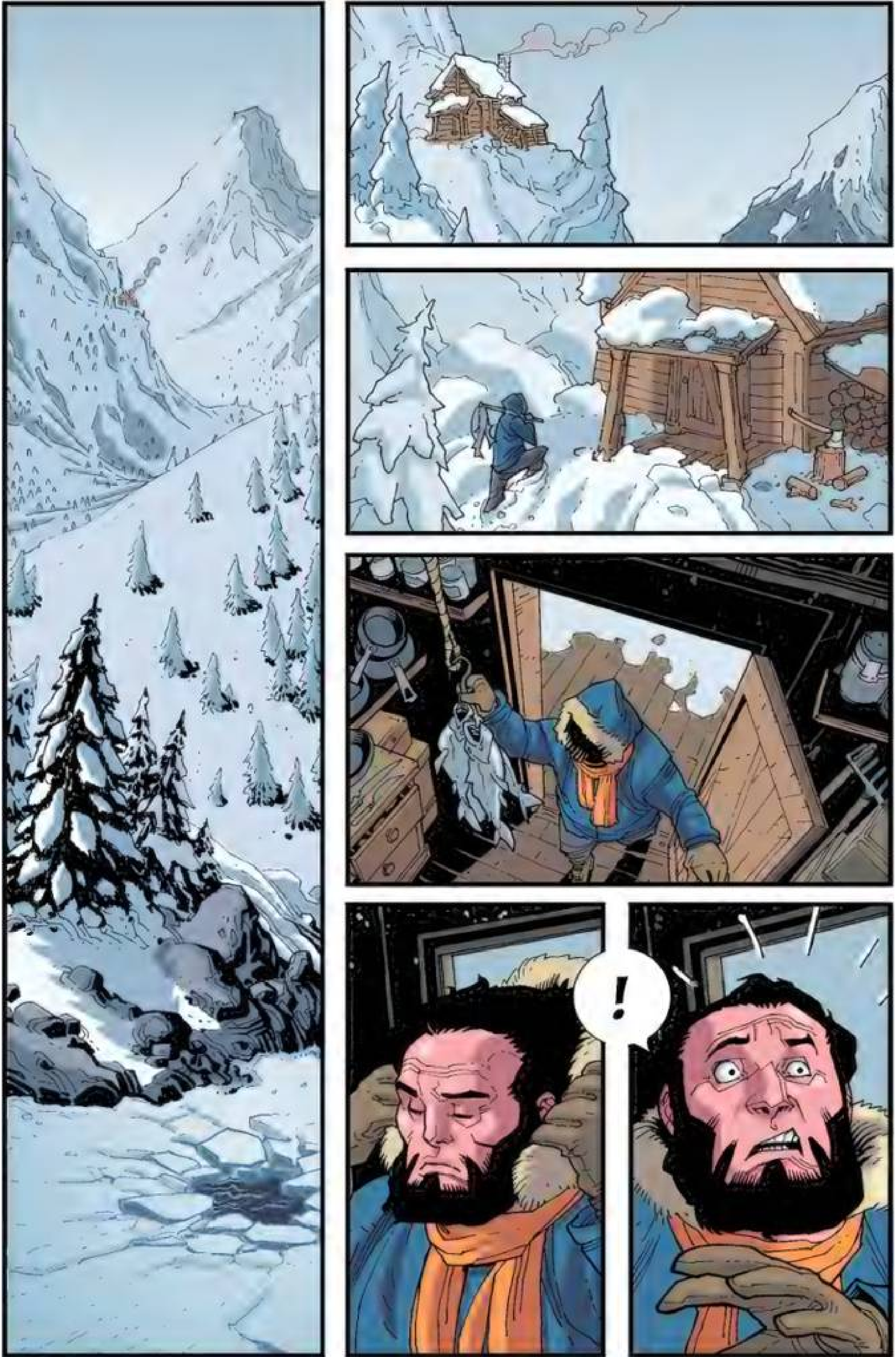

CROCKETT'S GRILL AND FINE EATERY. WHERE DEBBIE GRAYSON IS ENJOYING A NICE EVENING OUT.
Crocket
SO HE TOOK IT WELL? THAT'S GREAT. HE SOUNDS LIKE SUCH A NICE BOY. I CAN'T WAIT TO MEET HIM.
HE IS, HE'S SO NICE. HE SAYS HE'S JUST HAPPY THAT I'M HAPPY. IT WAS VERY SWEET.
HE DIDN'T THINK IT WAS TOO SOON... AFTER YOUR HUSBAND...?
I KNOW THAT WAS YOUR MAIN CONCERN.
NO, IT WASN'T A CONCERN AT ALL.
...
DEBBIE...
...DO *YOU* THINK IT'S TOO SOON?
NO, I... NO, I REALLY DON'T.
WHEN NOLAN DIED IN THE CAR CRASH, I THOUGHT MY LIFE WAS OVER, TOO. IT HIT ME REALLY HARD.
BUT AS TIME HAS GONE ON, THE THINGS I'VE LEARNED SINCE HIS DEATH...
...ABOUT HIM... ABOUT US...
THE THING THAT UPSETS ME THE *MOST* IS KNOWING THAT HE NEVER REALLY LOVED ME IN THE FIRST PLACE.

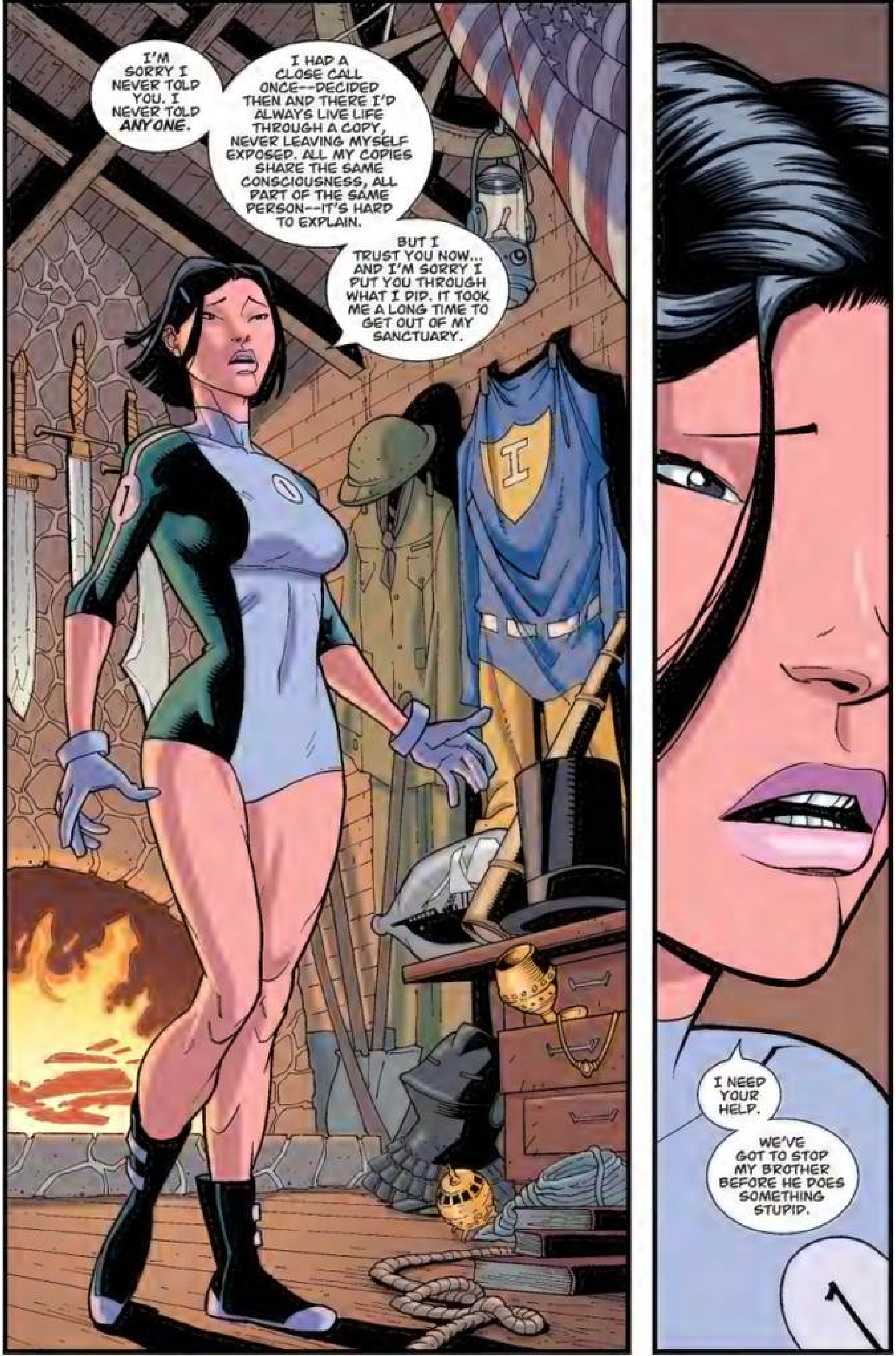

VILTRUMITE PRISON, EXACT LOCATION UNKNOWN.
NOLAN, FRIEND. YOU SEEM TROUBLED.
WHAT IS IT THAT TROUBLES YOU SO?
MY SPINE IS HEALING, I'M CLOSER TO PERFECTION EVERY DAY. ONCE I AM WORTHY OF EXECUTION MY LIFE WILL BE TAKEN.
IS THAT NOT REASON ENOUGH FOR MY MOOD?
WE HAVE SHARED THIS CELL FOR SOME TIME NOW AND THAT IS SOMETHING YOU HAVE ALWAYS KNOWN. TODAY IS DIFFERENT.
IT IS OBVIOUS TO ME THAT THIS IS SOMETHING NEW THAT TROUBLES YOU.
I--

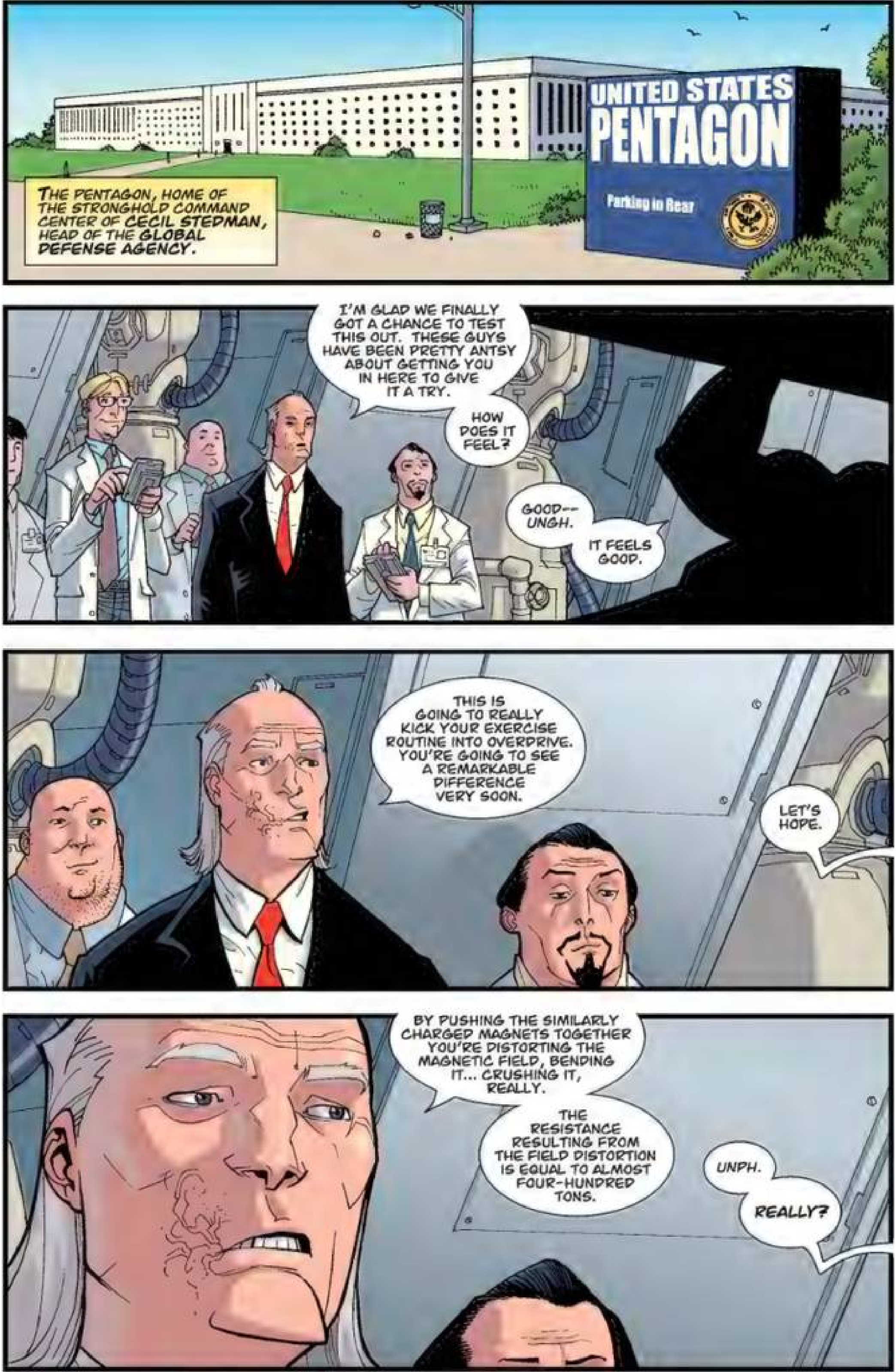

I THINK I MISS MY WIFE.

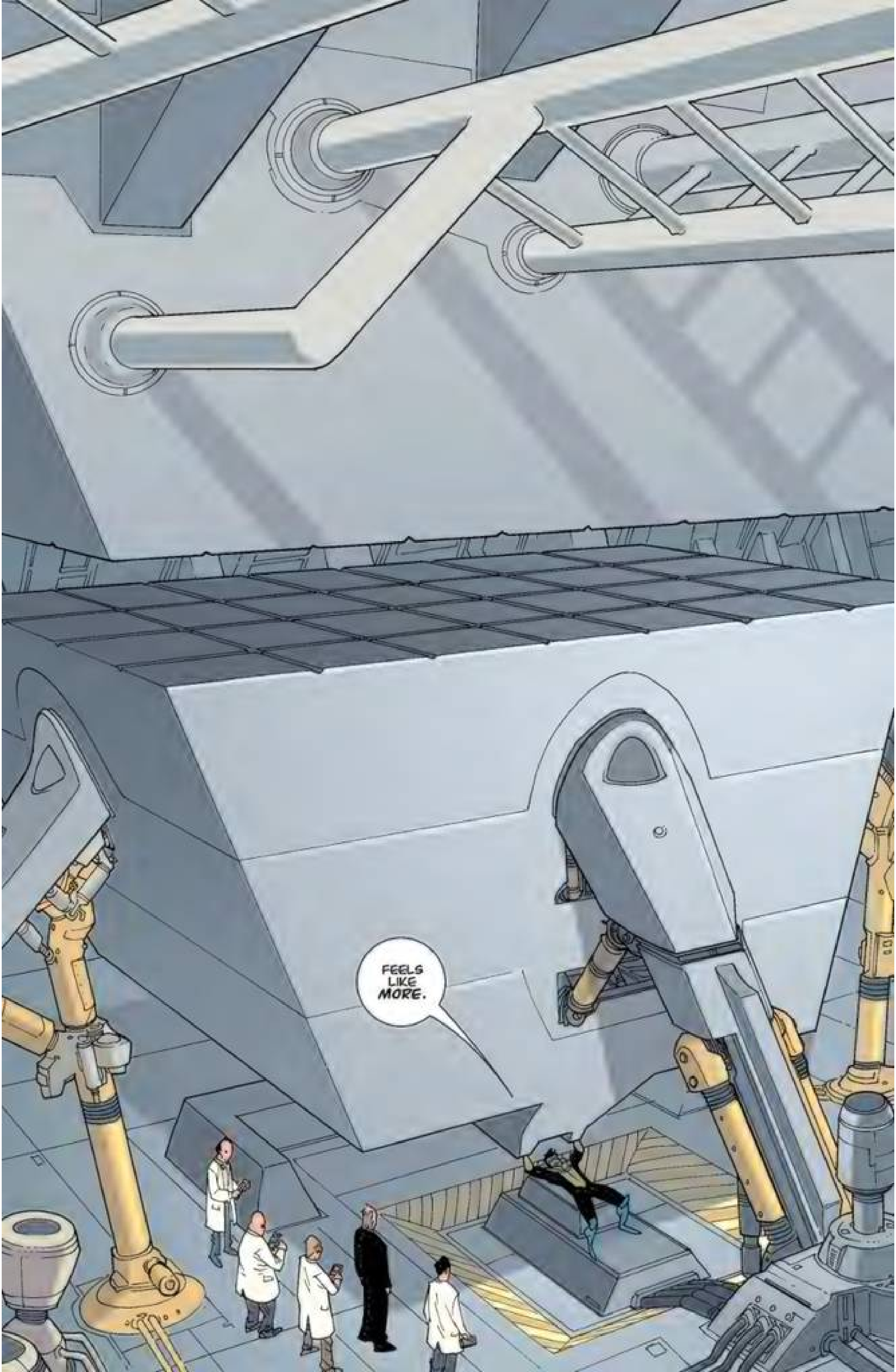
ISSUE FORTY-SIX

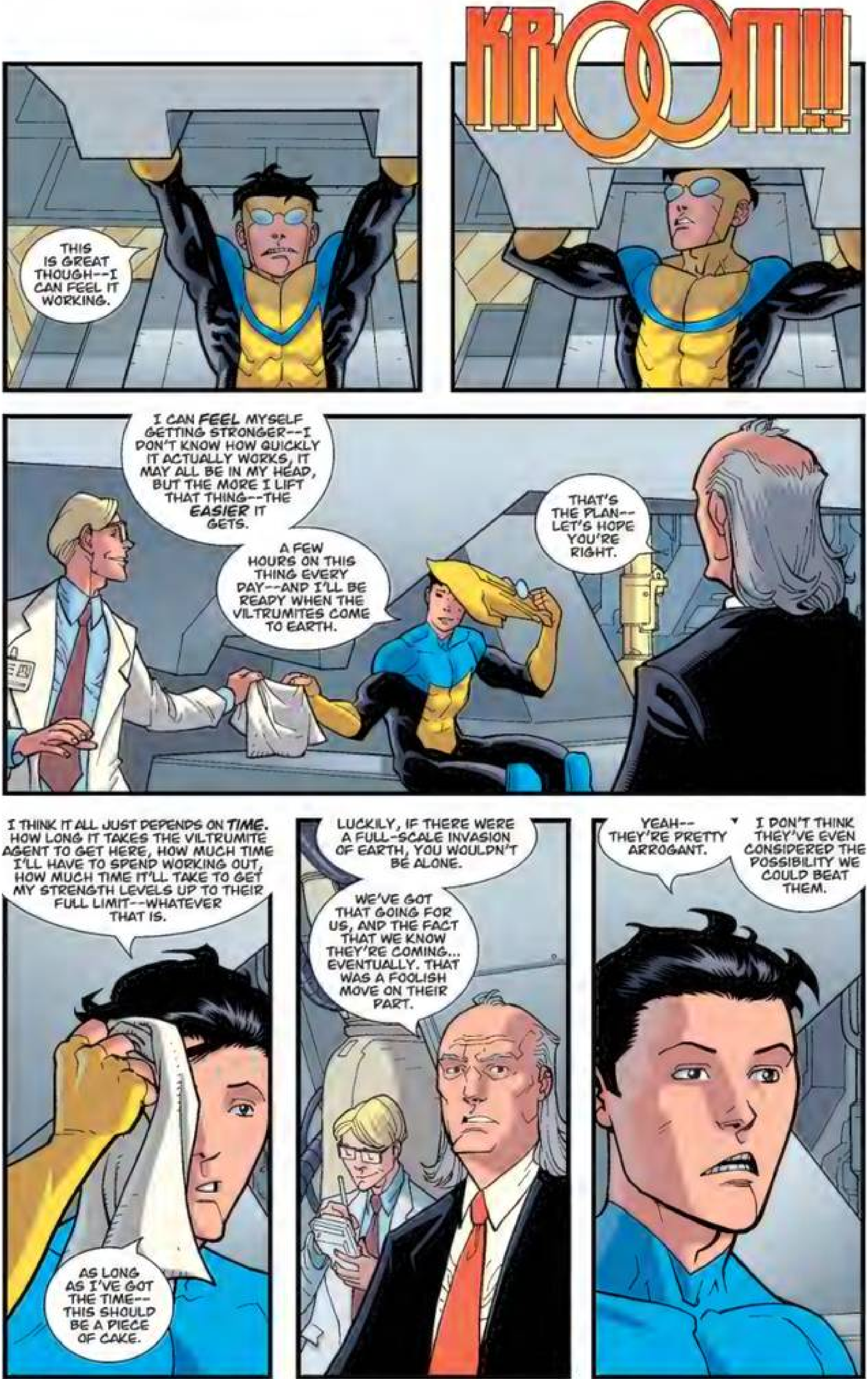
21
18
10
45
7
RYAN

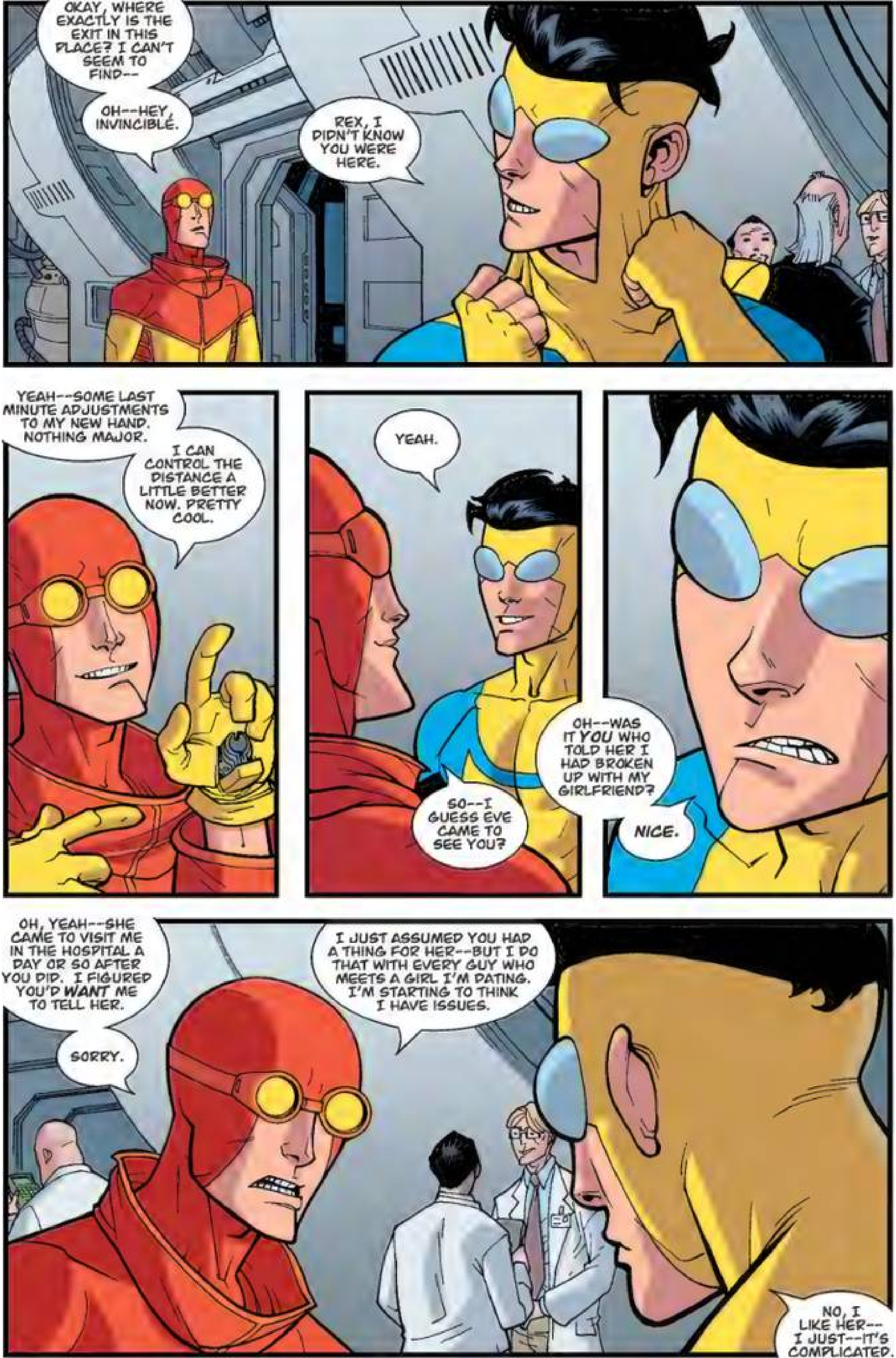


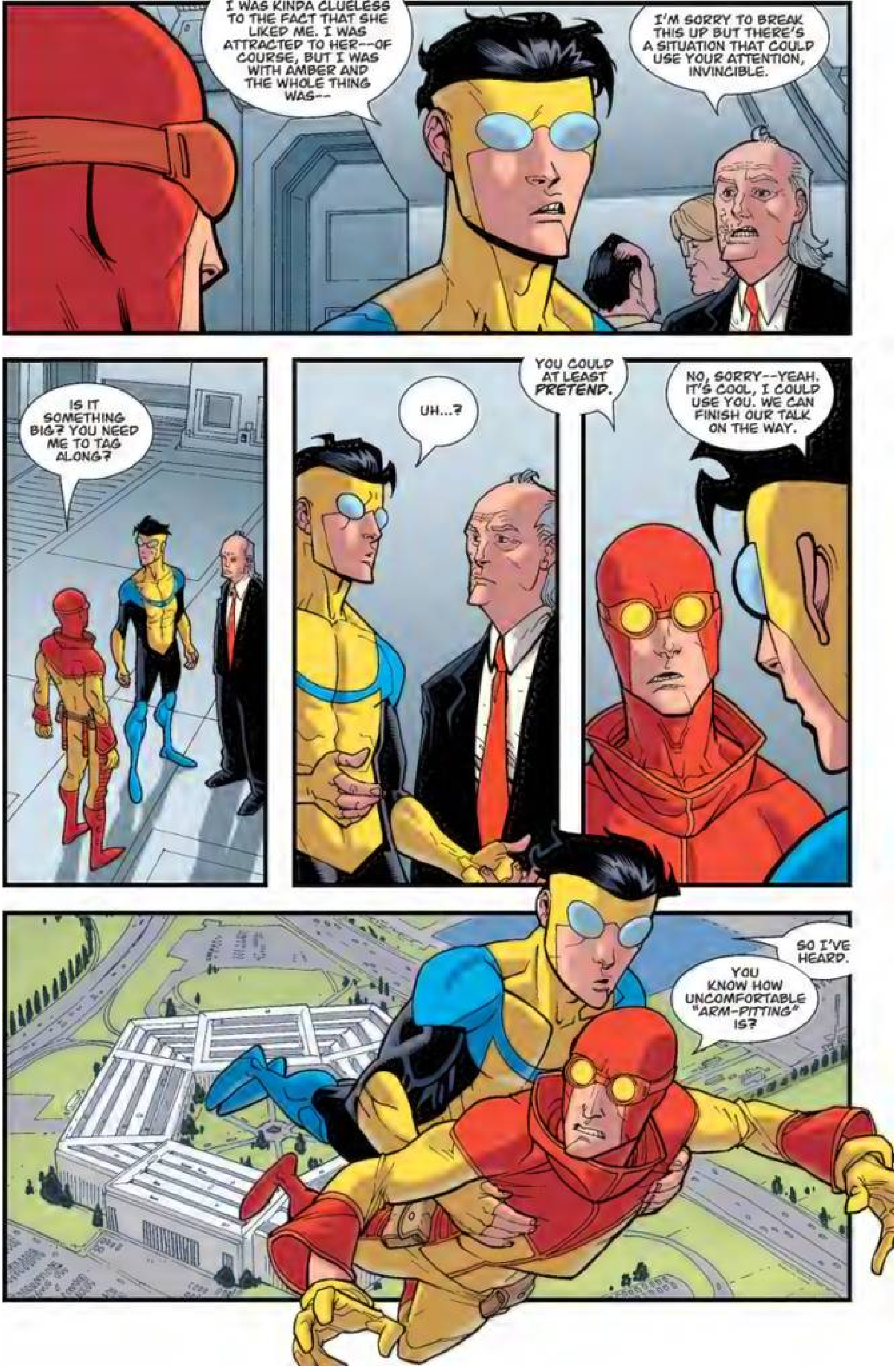

I'M SORRY I NEVER TOLD YOU. I NEVER TOLD **ANYONE**.
I HAD A CLOSE CALL ONCE--DECIDED THEN AND THERE I'D ALWAYS LIVE LIFE THROUGH A COPY, NEVER LEAVING MYSELF EXPOSED. ALL MY COPIES SHARE THE SAME CONSCIOUSNESS, ALL PART OF THE SAME PERSON--IT'S HARD TO EXPLAIN.
BUT I TRUST YOU NOW... AND I'M SORRY I PUT YOU THROUGH WHAT I DID. IT TOOK ME A LONG TIME TO GET OUT OF MY SANCTUARY.
I NEED YOUR HELP.
WE'VE GOT TO STOP MY BROTHER BEFORE HE DOES SOMETHING STUPID.

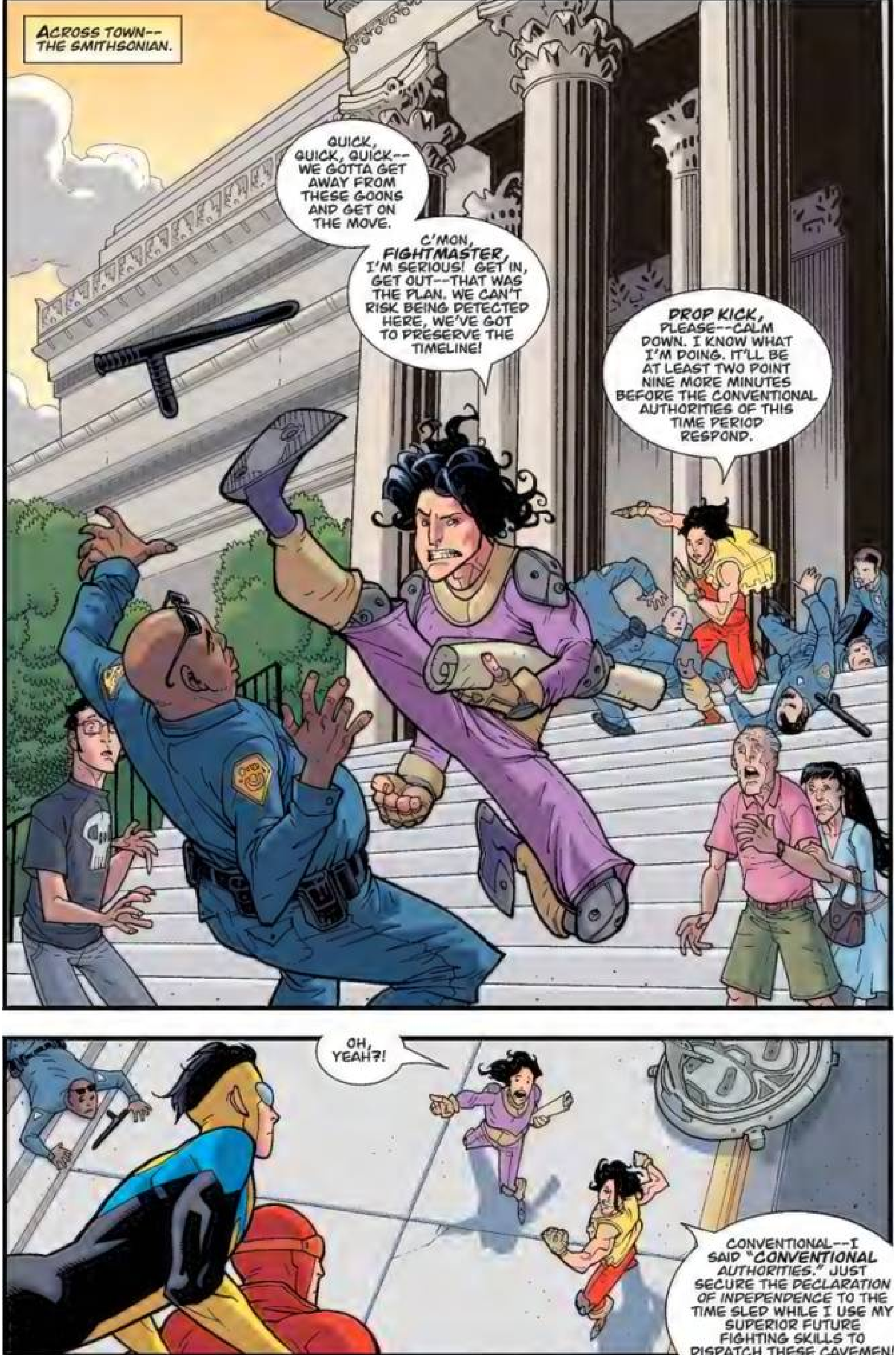

THE PENTAGON, HOME OF THE STRONGHOLD COMMAND CENTER OF **CECIL STEDMAN**, HEAD OF THE **GLOBAL DEFENSE AGENCY**.
UNITED STATES PENTAGON
Parking in Rear
I'M GLAD WE FINALLY GOT A CHANCE TO TEST THIS OUT. THESE GUYS HAVE BEEN PRETTY ANTSY ABOUT GETTING YOU IN HERE TO GIVE IT A TRY.
HOW DOES IT FEEL?
GOOD-- UNGH.
IT FEELS GOOD.
THIS IS GOING TO REALLY KICK YOUR EXERCISE ROUTINE INTO OVERDRIVE. YOU'RE GOING TO SEE A REMARKABLE DIFFERENCE VERY SOON.
LET'S HOPE.
BY PUSHING THE SIMILARLY CHARGED MAGNETS TOGETHER YOU'RE DISTORTING THE MAGNETIC FIELD, BENDING IT... CRUSHING IT, REALLY.
THE RESISTANCE RESULTING FROM THE FIELD DISTORTION IS EQUAL TO ALMOST FOUR-HUNDRED TONS.
UNPH.
REALLY?

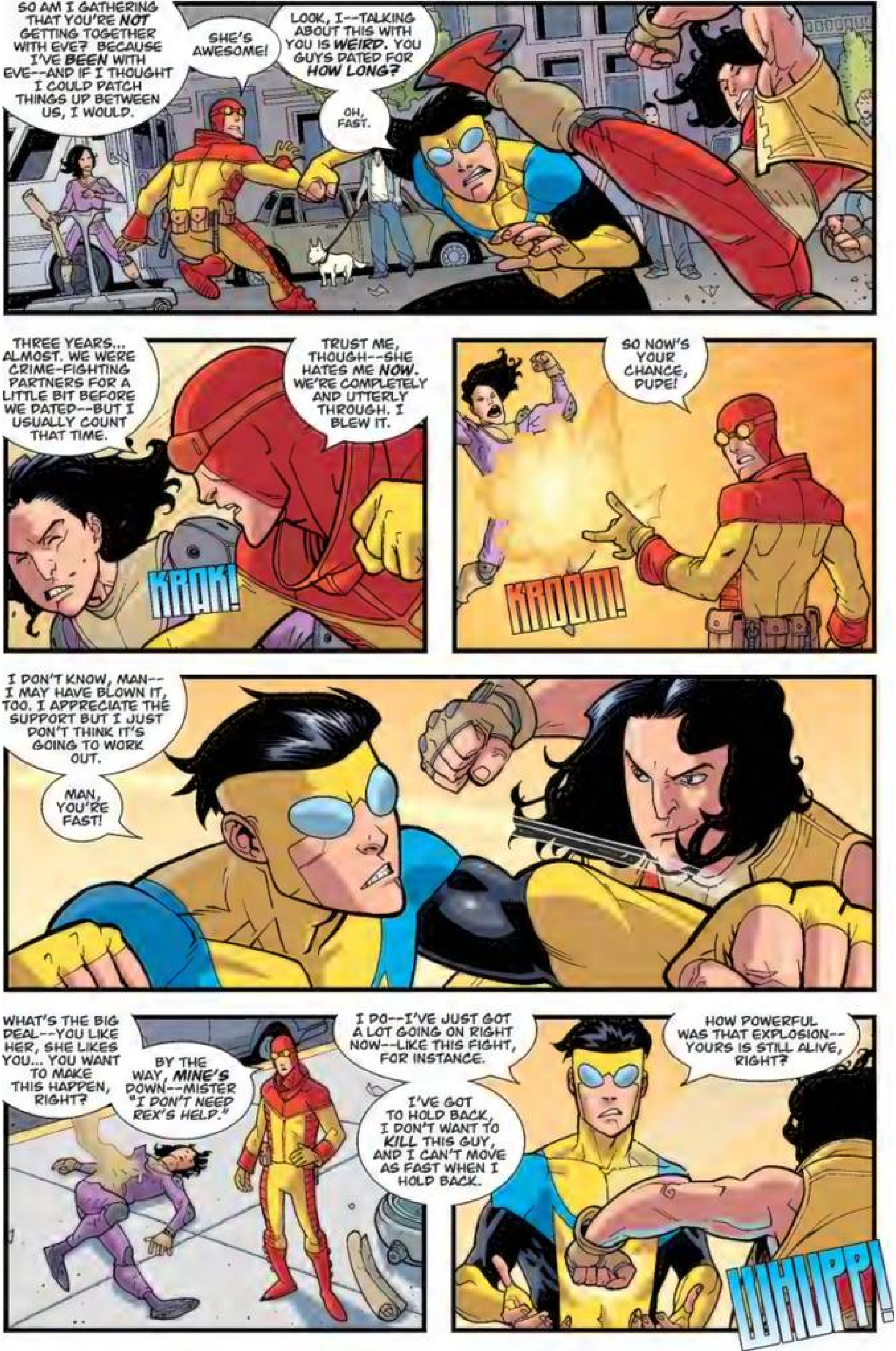

FEELS LIKE MORE.

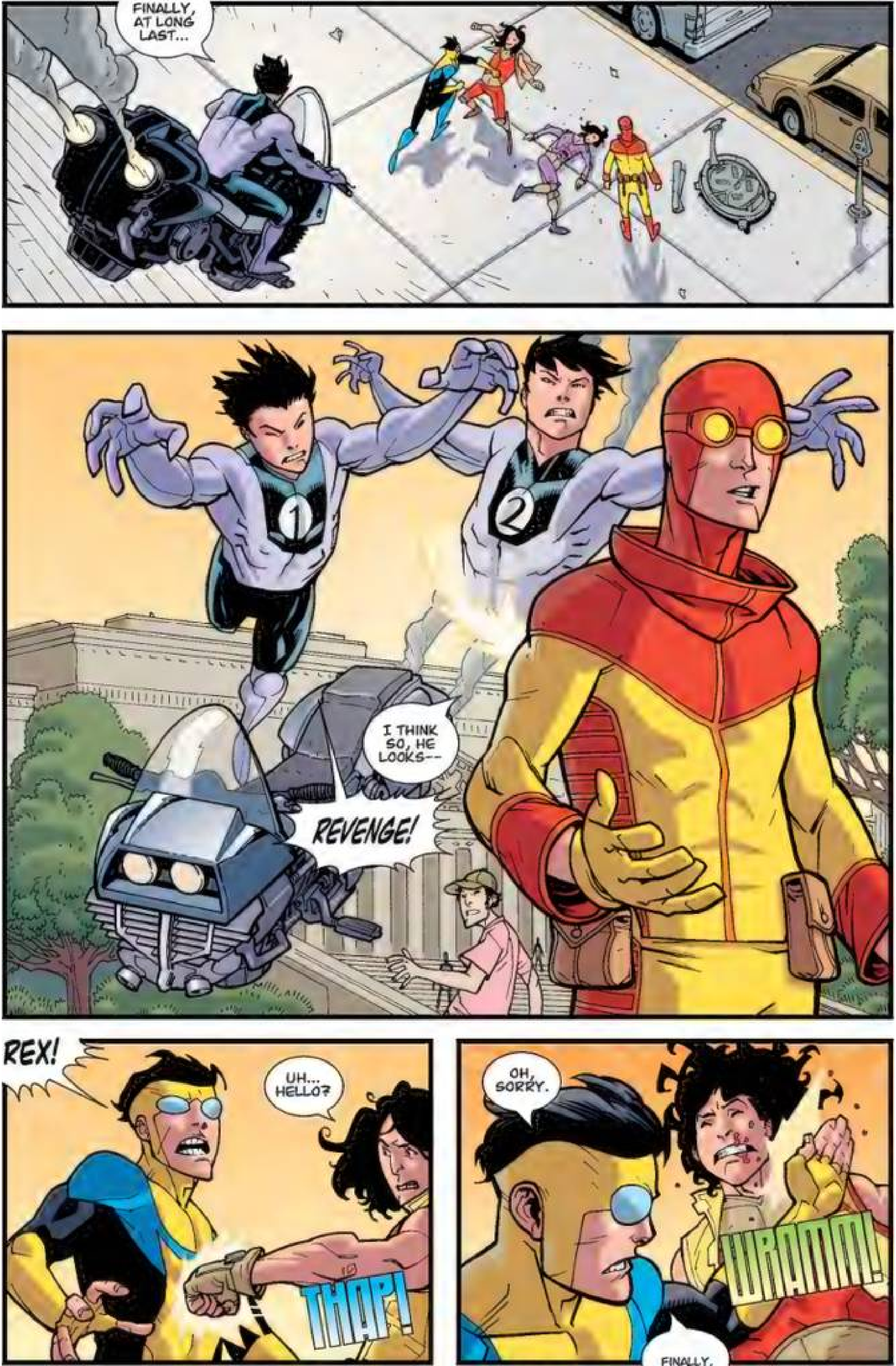

THIS IS GREAT THOUGH--I CAN FEEL IT WORKING.
KROOM!!
I CAN FEEL MYSELF GETTING STRONGER--I DON'T KNOW HOW QUICKLY IT ACTUALLY WORKS, IT MAY ALL BE IN MY HEAD, BUT THE MORE I LIFT THAT THING--THE EASIER IT GETS.
A FEW HOURS ON THIS THING EVERY DAY--AND I'LL BE READY WHEN THE VILTRUMITES COME TO EARTH.
THAT'S THE PLAN--LET'S HOPE YOU'RE RIGHT.
I THINK IT ALL JUST DEPENDS ON TIME. HOW LONG IT TAKES THE VILTRUMITE AGENT TO GET HERE, HOW MUCH TIME I'LL HAVE TO SPEND WORKING OUT, HOW MUCH TIME IT'LL TAKE TO GET MY STRENGTH LEVELS UP TO THEIR FULL LIMIT--WHATEVER THAT IS.
AS LONG AS I'VE GOT THE TIME--THIS SHOULD BE A PIECE OF CAKE.
LUCKILY, IF THERE WERE A FULL-SCALE INVASION OF EARTH, YOU WOULDN'T BE ALONE.
WE'VE GOT THAT GOING FOR US, AND THE FACT THAT WE KNOW THEY'RE COMING... EVENTUALLY. THAT WAS A FOOLISH MOVE ON THEIR PART.
YEAH--THEY'RE PRETTY ARROGANT.
I DON'T THINK THEY'VE EVEN CONSIDERED THE POSSIBILITY WE COULD BEAT THEM.

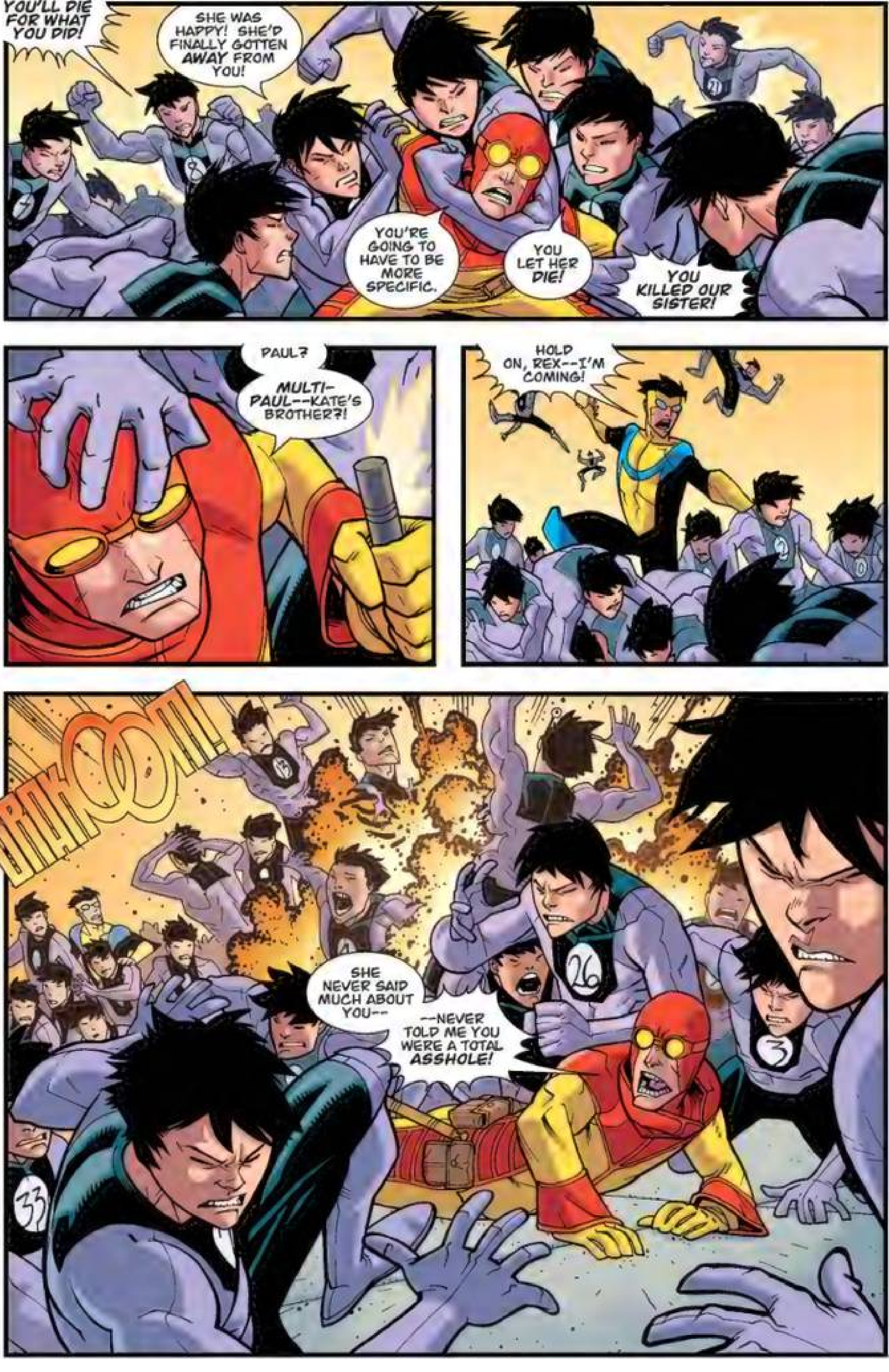

OKAY, WHERE EXACTLY IS THE EXIT IN THIS PLACE? I CAN'T SEEM TO FIND--
OH--HEY, INVINCIBLE.
REX, I DIDN'T KNOW YOU WERE HERE.
YEAH--SOME LAST MINUTE ADJUSTMENTS TO MY NEW HAND. NOTHING MAJOR.
I CAN CONTROL THE DISTANCE A LITTLE BETTER NOW. PRETTY COOL.
YEAH.
SO--I GUESS EVE CAME TO SEE YOU?
OH--WAS IT *YOU* WHO TOLD HER I HAD BROKEN UP WITH MY GIRLFRIEND?
NICE.
OH, YEAH--SHE CAME TO VISIT ME IN THE HOSPITAL A DAY OR SO AFTER YOU DID. I FIGURED YOU'D *WANT* ME TO TELL HER.
SORRY.
I JUST ASSUMED YOU HAD A THING FOR HER--BUT I DO THAT WITH EVERY GUY WHO MEETS A GIRL I'M DATING. I'M STARTING TO THINK I HAVE ISSUES.
NO, I LIKE HER-- I JUST--IT'S COMPLICATED

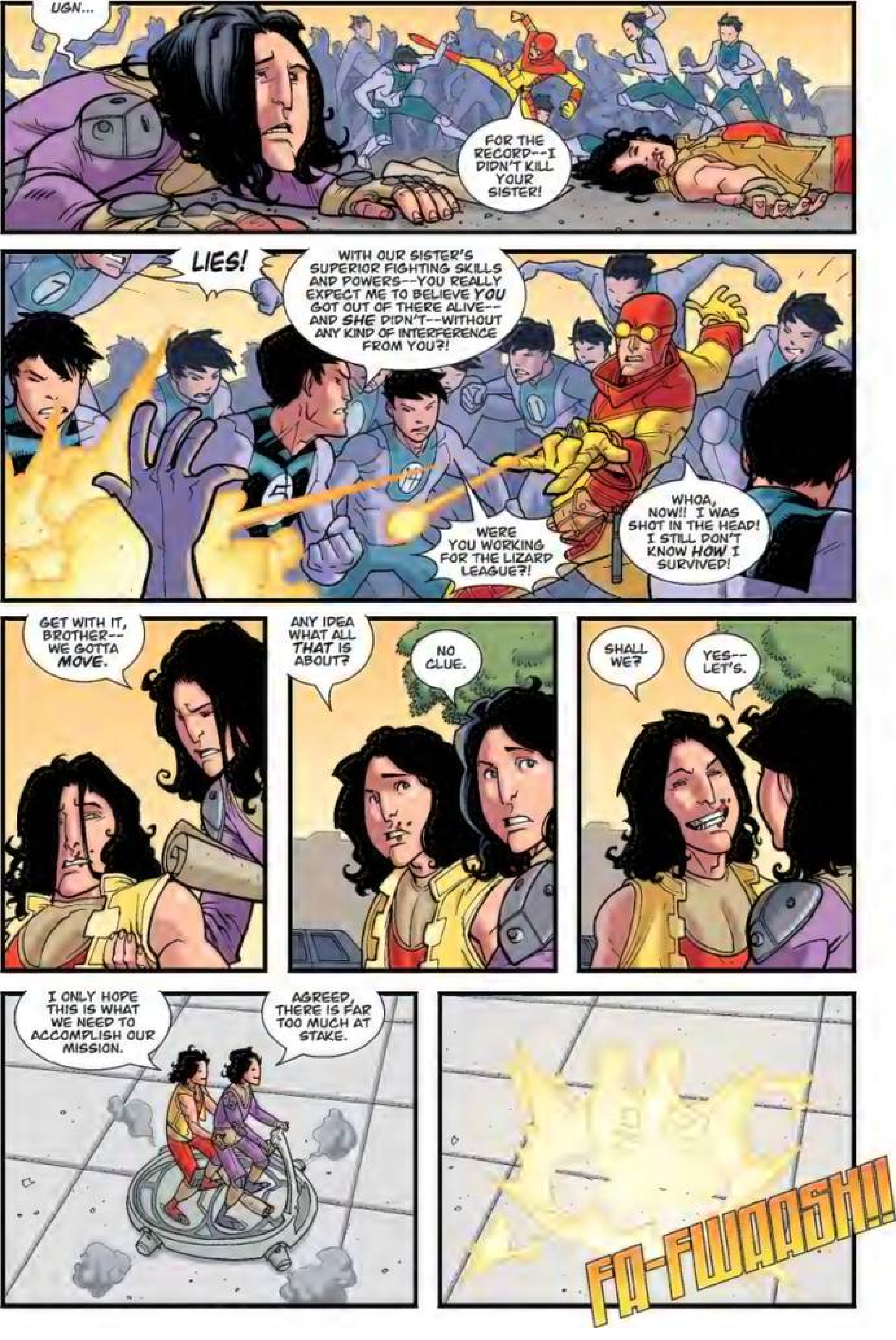

I WAS KINDA CLUELESS TO THE FACT THAT SHE LIKED ME. I WAS ATTRACTED TO HER--OF COURSE, BUT I WAS WITH AMBER AND THE WHOLE THING WAS--
I'M SORRY TO BREAK THIS UP BUT THERE'S A SITUATION THAT COULD USE YOUR ATTENTION, INVINCIBLE.
IS IT SOMETHING BIG? YOU NEED ME TO TAG ALONG?
UH...?
YOU COULD AT LEAST PRETEND.
NO, SORRY--YEAH. IT'S COOL, I COULD USE YOU. WE CAN FINISH OUR TALK ON THE WAY.
YOU KNOW HOW UNCOMFORTABLE "ARM-PITTING" IS?
SO I'VE HEARD.

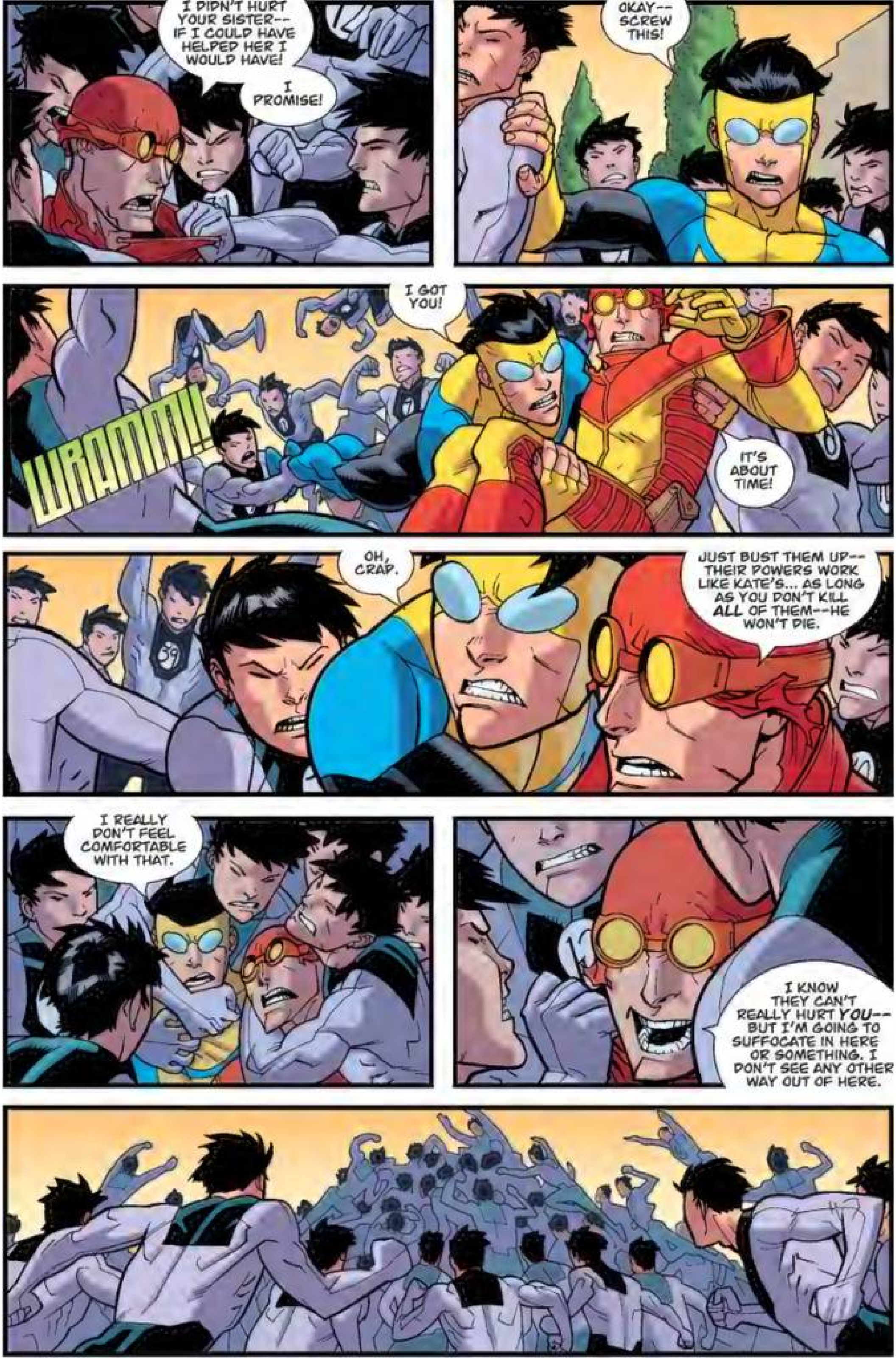

ACROSS TOWN-- THE SMITHSONIAN.
QUICK, QUICK, QUICK-- WE GOTTA GET AWAY FROM THESE GOONS AND GET ON THE MOVE.
C'MON, **FIGHTMASTER,** I'M SERIOUS! GET IN, GET OUT--THAT WAS THE PLAN. WE CAN'T RISK BEING DETECTED HERE, WE'VE GOT TO PRESERVE THE TIMELINE!
DROP KICK, PLEASE--CALM DOWN. I KNOW WHAT I'M DOING. IT'LL BE AT LEAST TWO POINT NINE MORE MINUTES BEFORE THE CONVENTIONAL AUTHORITIES OF THIS TIME PERIOD RESPOND.
OH, YEAH?!
CONVENTIONAL--I SAID "**CONVENTIONAL** AUTHORITIES." JUST SECURE THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE TO THE TIME SLED WHILE I USE MY SUPERIOR FUTURE FIGHTING SKILLS TO DISPATCH THESE CAVEMEN!

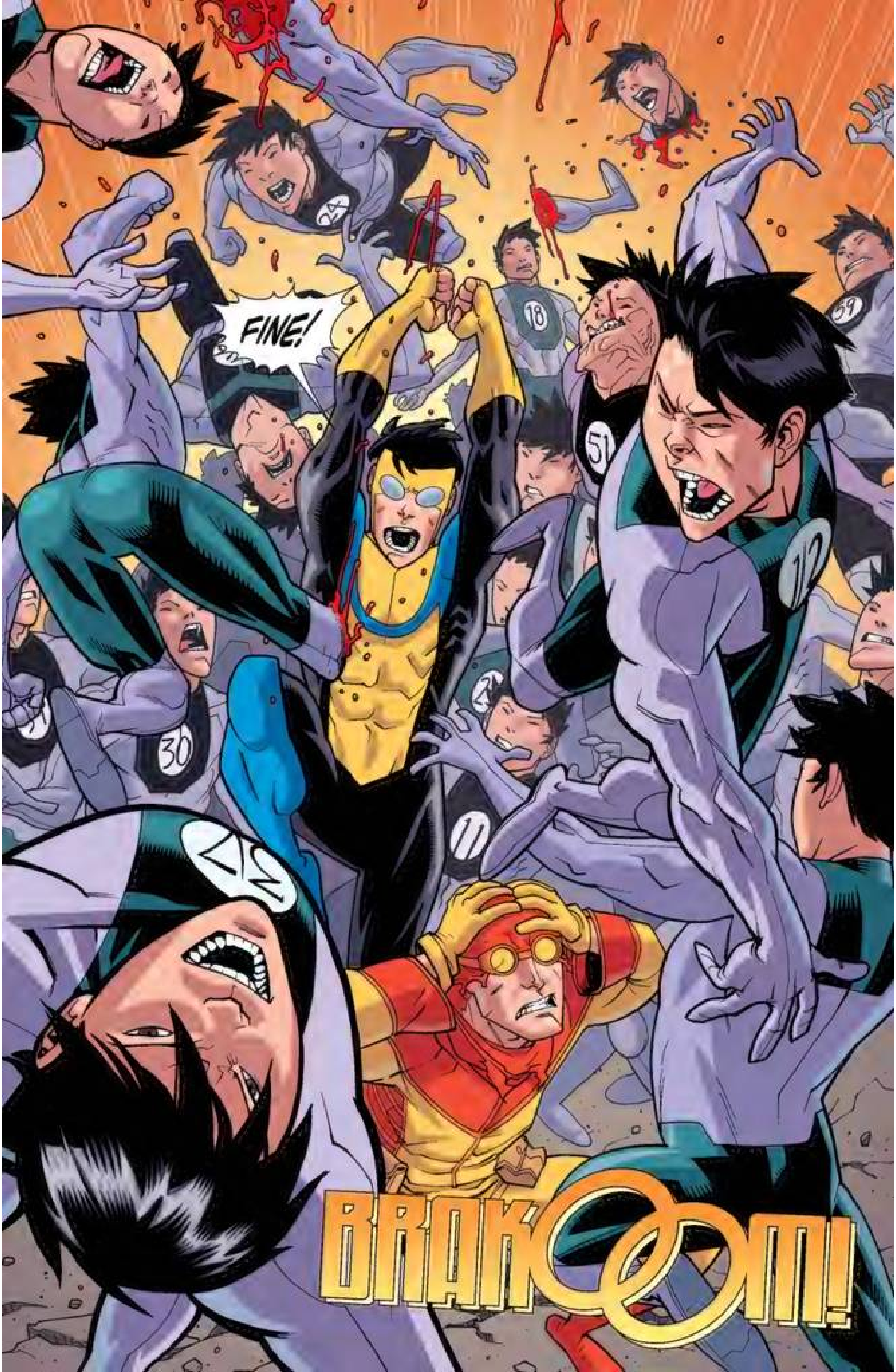

SO AM I GATHERING THAT YOU'RE NOT GETTING TOGETHER WITH EVE? BECAUSE I'VE BEEN WITH EVE--AND IF I THOUGHT I COULD PATCH THINGS UP BETWEEN US, I WOULD.
SHE'S AWESOME!
LOOK, I--TALKING ABOUT THIS WITH YOU IS WEIRD. YOU GUYS DATED FOR HOW LONG?
OH, FAST.
THREE YEARS... ALMOST. WE WERE CRIME-FIGHTING PARTNERS FOR A LITTLE BIT BEFORE WE DATED--BUT I USUALLY COUNT THAT TIME.
TRUST ME, THOUGH--SHE HATES ME NOW. WE'RE COMPLETELY AND UTTERLY THROUGH. I BLEW IT.
KRAK!
SO NOW'S YOUR CHANCE, DUDE!
KROOM!
I DON'T KNOW, MAN-- I MAY HAVE BLOWN IT, TOO. I APPRECIATE THE SUPPORT BUT I JUST DON'T THINK IT'S GOING TO WORK OUT.
MAN, YOU'RE FAST!
WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL--YOU LIKE HER, SHE LIKES YOU... YOU WANT TO MAKE THIS HAPPEN, RIGHT?
BY THE WAY, MINE'S DOWN--MISTER "I DON'T NEED REX'S HELP."
I DO--I'VE JUST GOT A LOT GOING ON RIGHT NOW--LIKE THIS FIGHT, FOR INSTANCE.
I'VE GOT TO HOLD BACK, I DON'T WANT TO KILL THIS GUY, AND I CAN'T MOVE AS FAST WHEN I HOLD BACK.
HOW POWERFUL WAS THAT EXPLOSION-- YOURS IS STILL ALIVE, RIGHT?
WHIPP!

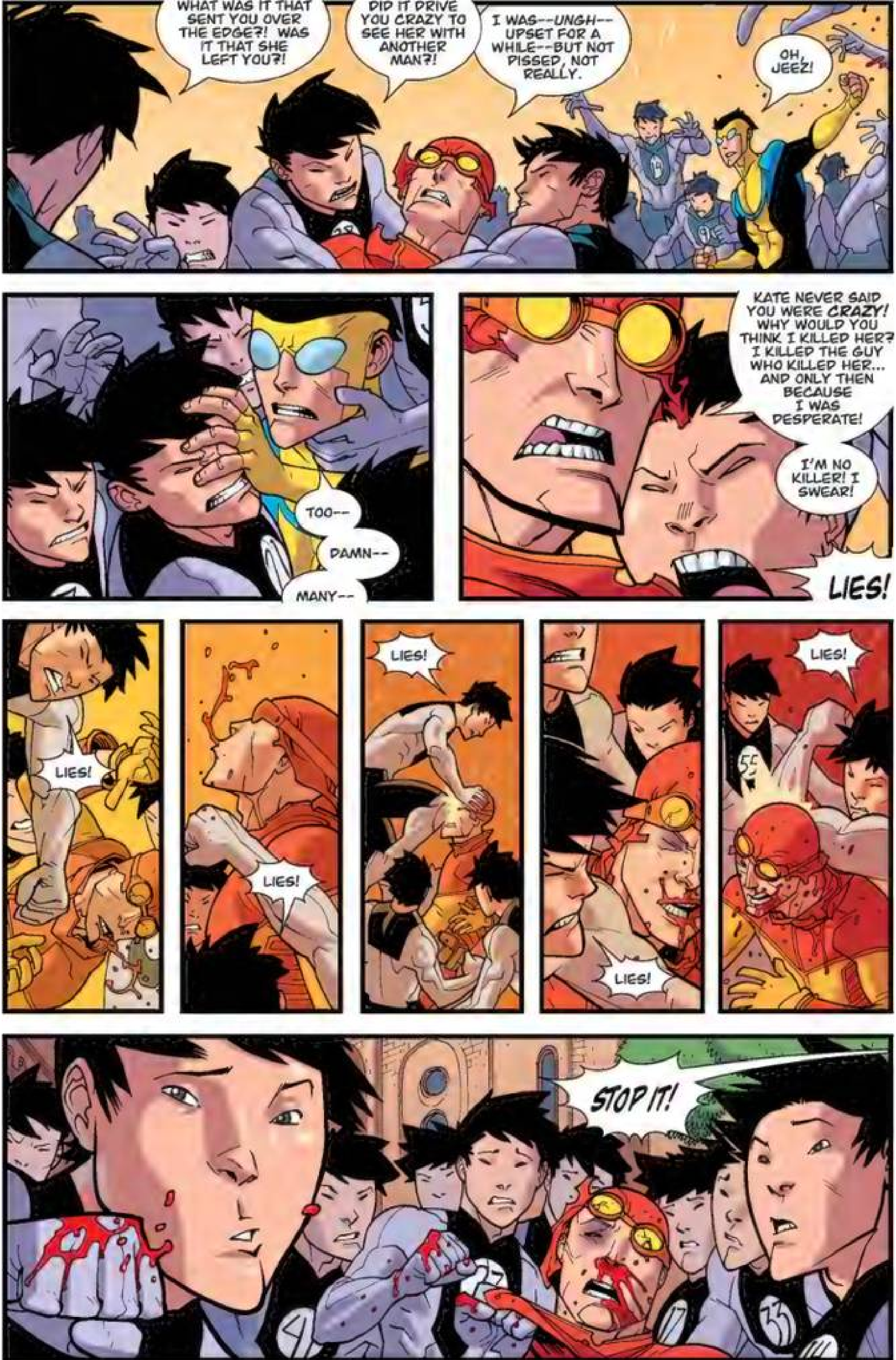

FINALLY, AT LONG LAST...
I THINK SO, HE LOOKS--
REVENGE!
REX!
UH... HELLO?
THAP!
OH, SORRY.
WRAMM!
FINALLY,

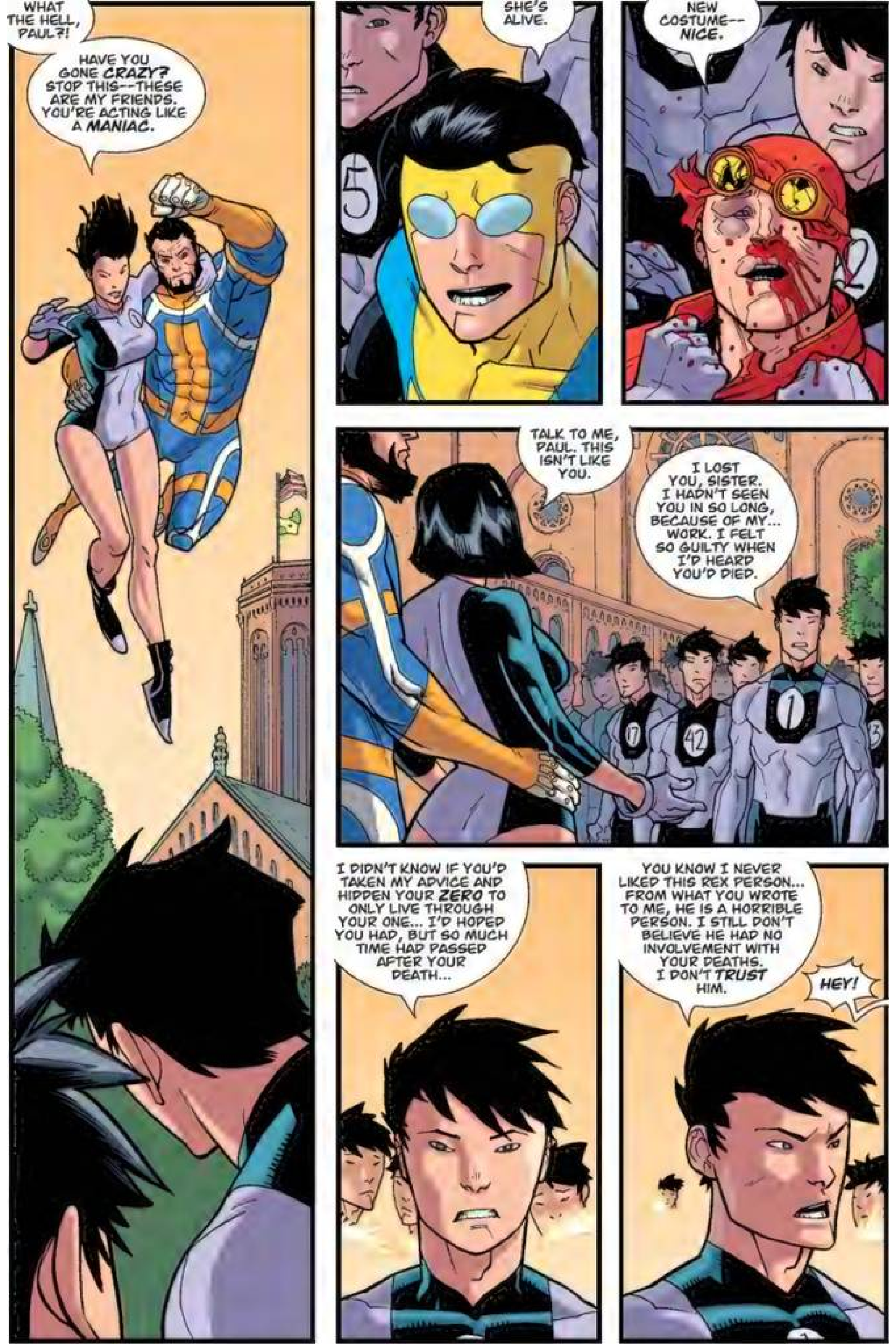

YOU'LL DIE FOR WHAT YOU DID!
SHE WAS HAPPY! SHE'D FINALLY GOTTEN AWAY FROM YOU!
YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE TO BE MORE SPECIFIC.
YOU LET HER DIE!
YOU KILLED OUR SISTER!
8
21
PAUL?
MULTI-PAUL--KATE'S BROTHER?!
HOLD ON, REX--I'M COMING!
BRAKOOM!
26
3
33
SHE NEVER SAID MUCH ABOUT YOU--
--NEVER TOLD ME YOU WERE A TOTAL ASSHOLE!

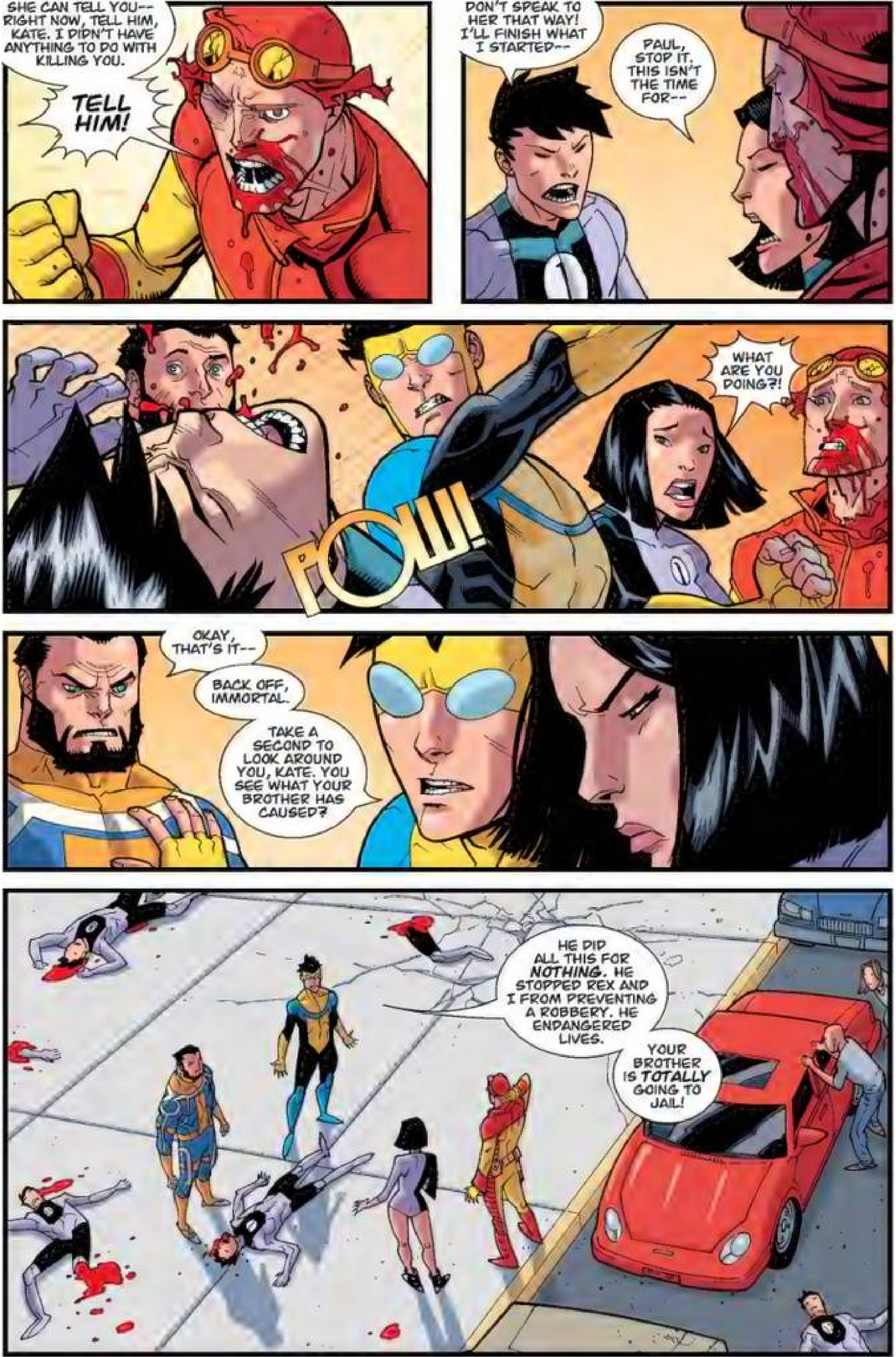

UGN...
FOR THE RECORD--I DIDN'T KILL YOUR SISTER!
LIES!
WITH OUR SISTER'S SUPERIOR FIGHTING SKILLS AND POWERS--YOU REALLY EXPECT ME TO BELIEVE YOU GOT OUT OF THERE ALIVE--AND SHE DIDN'T--WITHOUT ANY KIND OF INTERFERENCE FROM YOU?!
WERE YOU WORKING FOR THE LIZARD LEAGUE?!
WHOA, NOW!! I WAS SHOT IN THE HEAD! I STILL DON'T KNOW HOW I SURVIVED!
GET WITH IT, BROTHER--WE GOTTA MOVE.
ANY IDEA WHAT ALL THAT IS ABOUT?
NO CLUE.
SHALL WE?
YES--LET'S.
I ONLY HOPE THIS IS WHAT WE NEED TO ACCOMPLISH OUR MISSION.
AGREED, THERE IS FAR TOO MUCH AT STAKE.
FA-FWOOSH!!

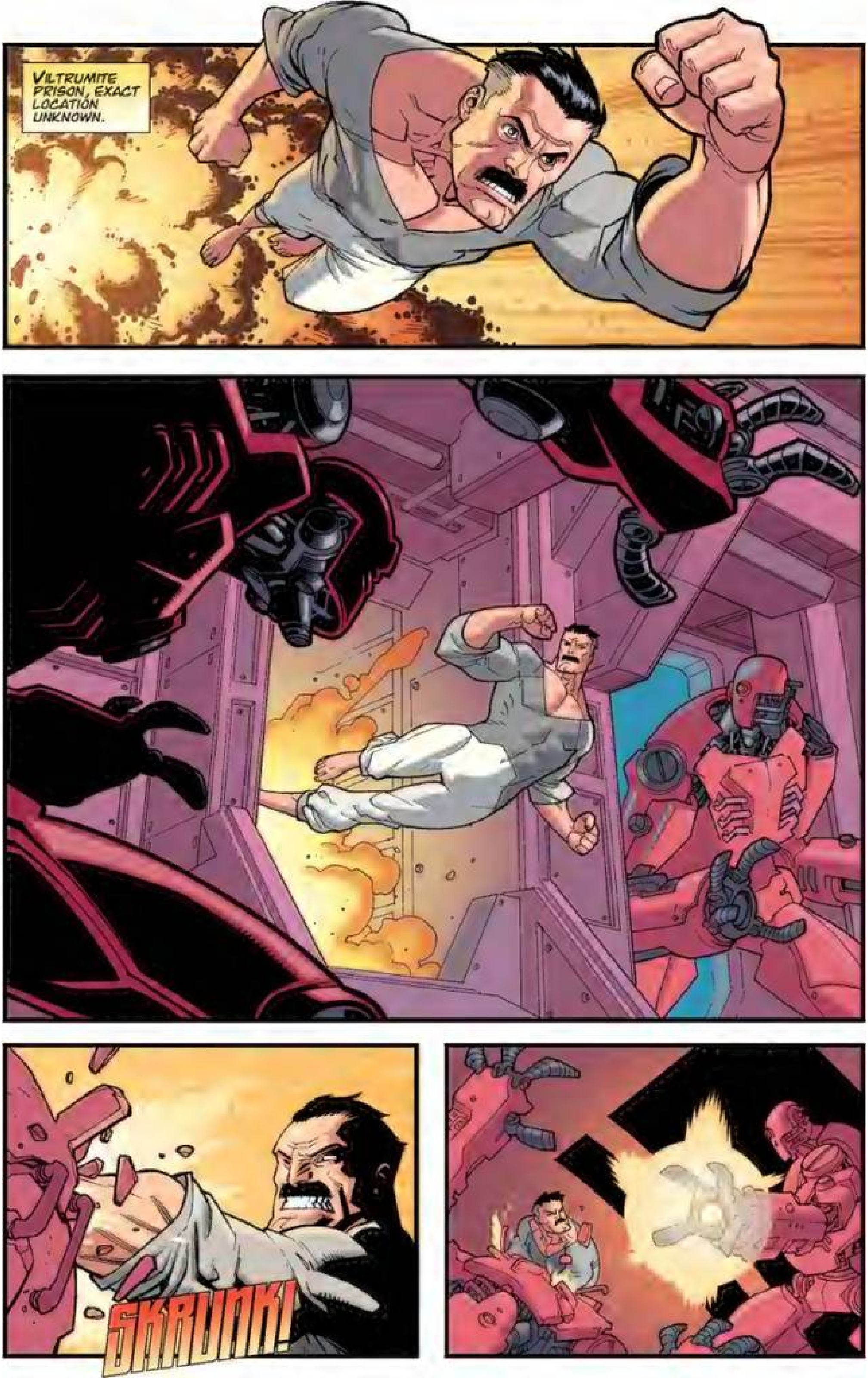

I DIDN'T HURT YOUR SISTER-- IF I COULD HAVE HELPED HER I WOULD HAVE!
I PROMISE!
OKAY-- SCREW THIS!
I GOT YOU!
WRAMM!!
IT'S ABOUT TIME!
OH, CRAP.
JUST BUST THEM UP-- THEIR POWERS WORK LIKE KATE'S... AS LONG AS YOU DON'T KILL **ALL** OF THEM--HE WON'T DIE.
I REALLY DON'T FEEL COMFORTABLE WITH THAT.
I KNOW THEY CAN'T REALLY HURT *YOU*-- BUT I'M GOING TO SUFFOCATE IN HERE OR SOMETHING. I DON'T SEE ANY OTHER WAY OUT OF HERE.

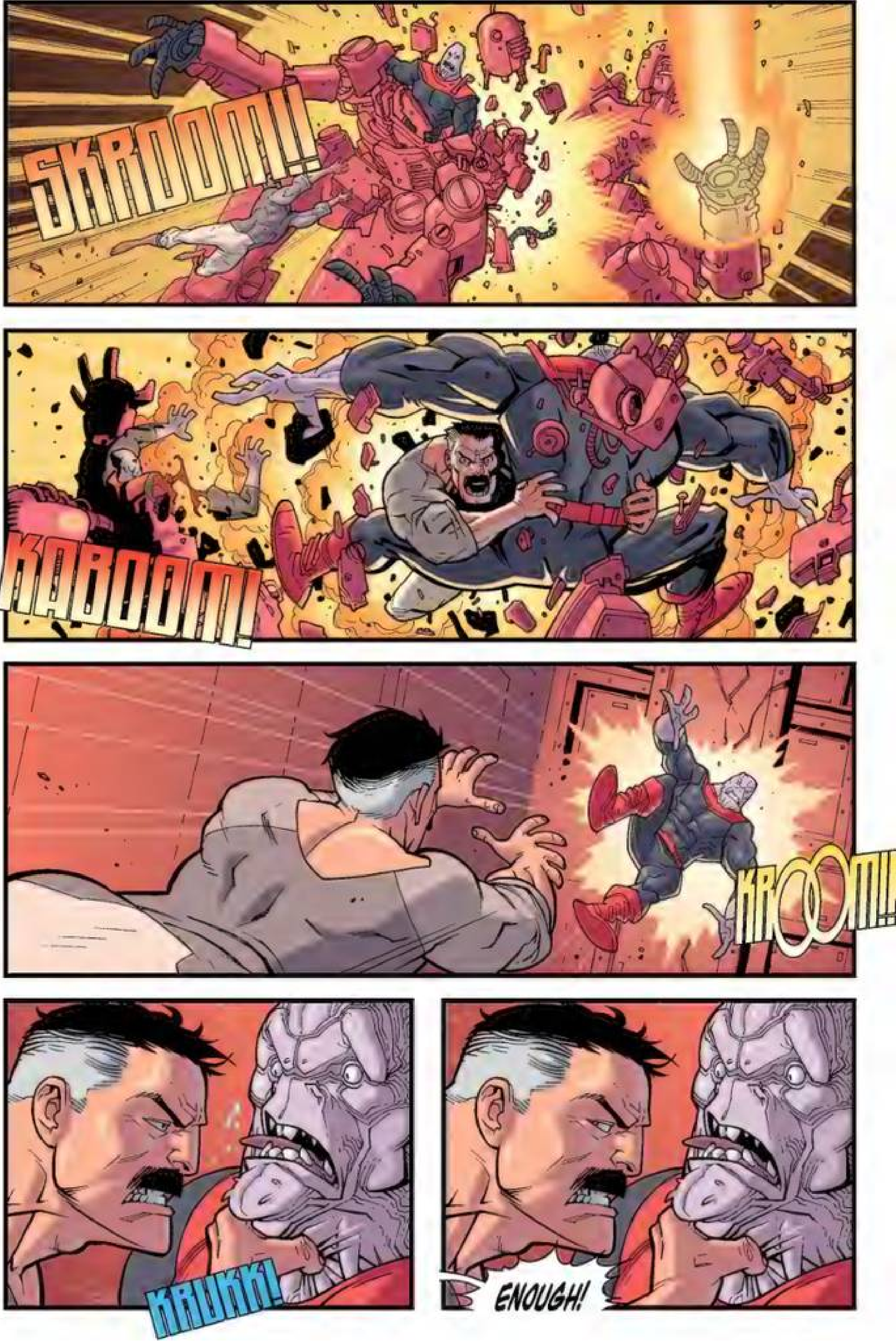

FINE!
BRAKOOM!

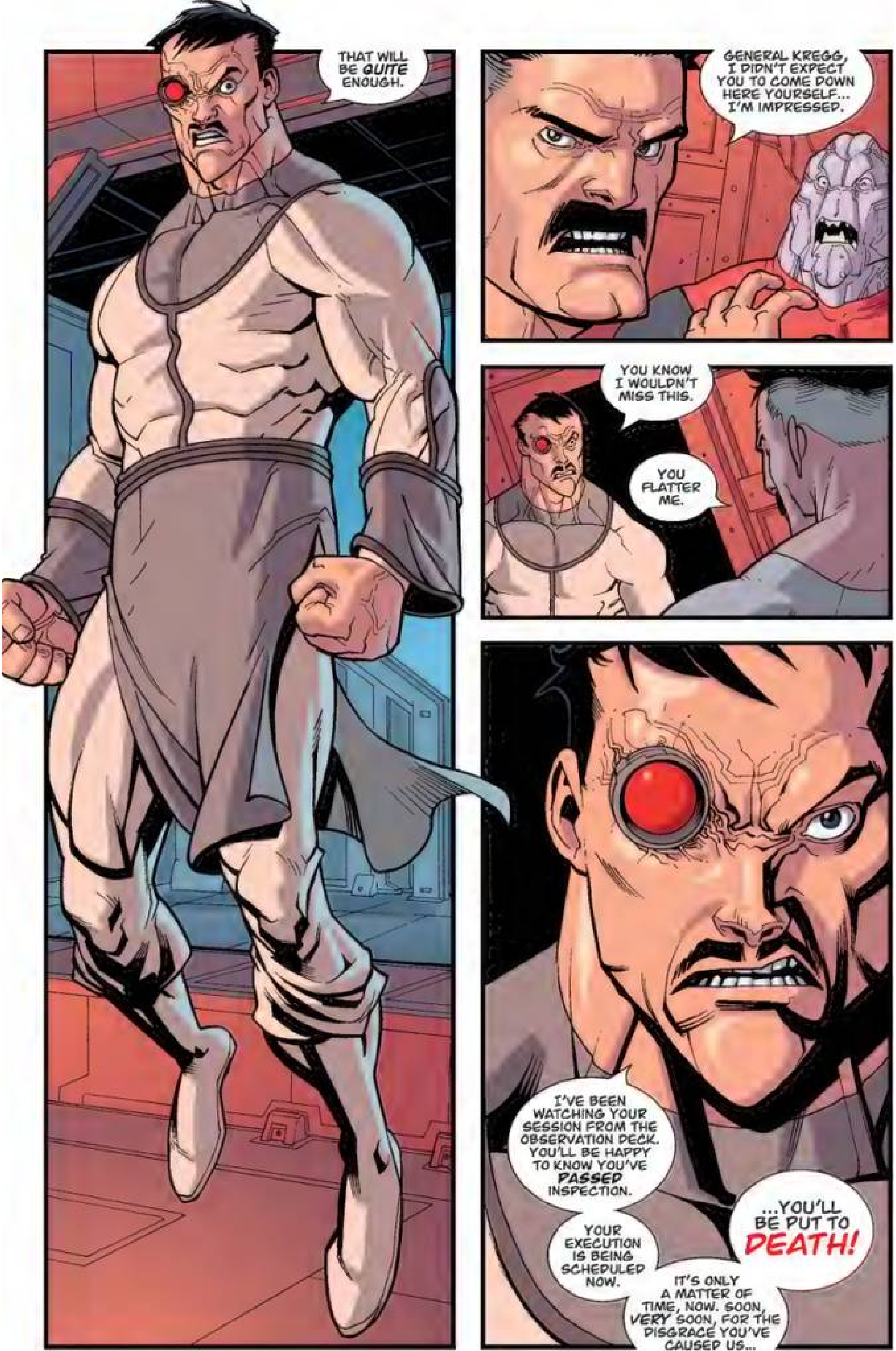

WHAT WAS IT THAT SENT YOU OVER THE EDGE?! WAS IT THAT SHE LEFT YOU?!
DID IT DRIVE YOU CRAZY TO SEE HER WITH ANOTHER MAN?!
I WAS--UNGH--UPSET FOR A WHILE--BUT NOT PISSED, NOT REALLY.
OH, JEEZ!
TOO--
DAMN--
MANY--
KATE NEVER SAID YOU WERE *CRAZY*! WHY WOULD YOU THINK I KILLED HER? I KILLED THE GUY WHO KILLED HER... AND ONLY THEN BECAUSE I WAS DESPERATE!
I'M NO KILLER! I SWEAR!
LIES!
LIES!
LIES!
LIES!
LIES!
LIES!
STOP IT!


WHAT THE HELL, PAUL?!
HAVE YOU GONE **CRAZY?** STOP THIS--THESE ARE MY FRIENDS. YOU'RE ACTING LIKE A **MANIAC.**
SHE'S ALIVE.
NEW COSTUME-- **NICE.**
TALK TO ME, PAUL. THIS ISN'T LIKE YOU.
I LOST YOU, SISTER. I HADN'T SEEN YOU IN SO LONG, BECAUSE OF MY... WORK. I FELT SO GUILTY WHEN I'D HEARD YOU'D DIED.
I DIDN'T KNOW IF YOU'D TAKEN MY ADVICE AND HIDDEN YOUR **ZERO** TO ONLY LIVE THROUGH YOUR ONE... I'D HOPED YOU HAD, BUT SO MUCH TIME HAD PASSED AFTER YOUR DEATH...
YOU KNOW I NEVER LIKED THIS REX PERSON... FROM WHAT YOU WROTE TO ME, HE IS A HORRIBLE PERSON. I STILL DON'T BELIEVE HE HAD NO INVOLVEMENT WITH YOUR DEATHS. I DON'T **TRUST** HIM.
HEY!

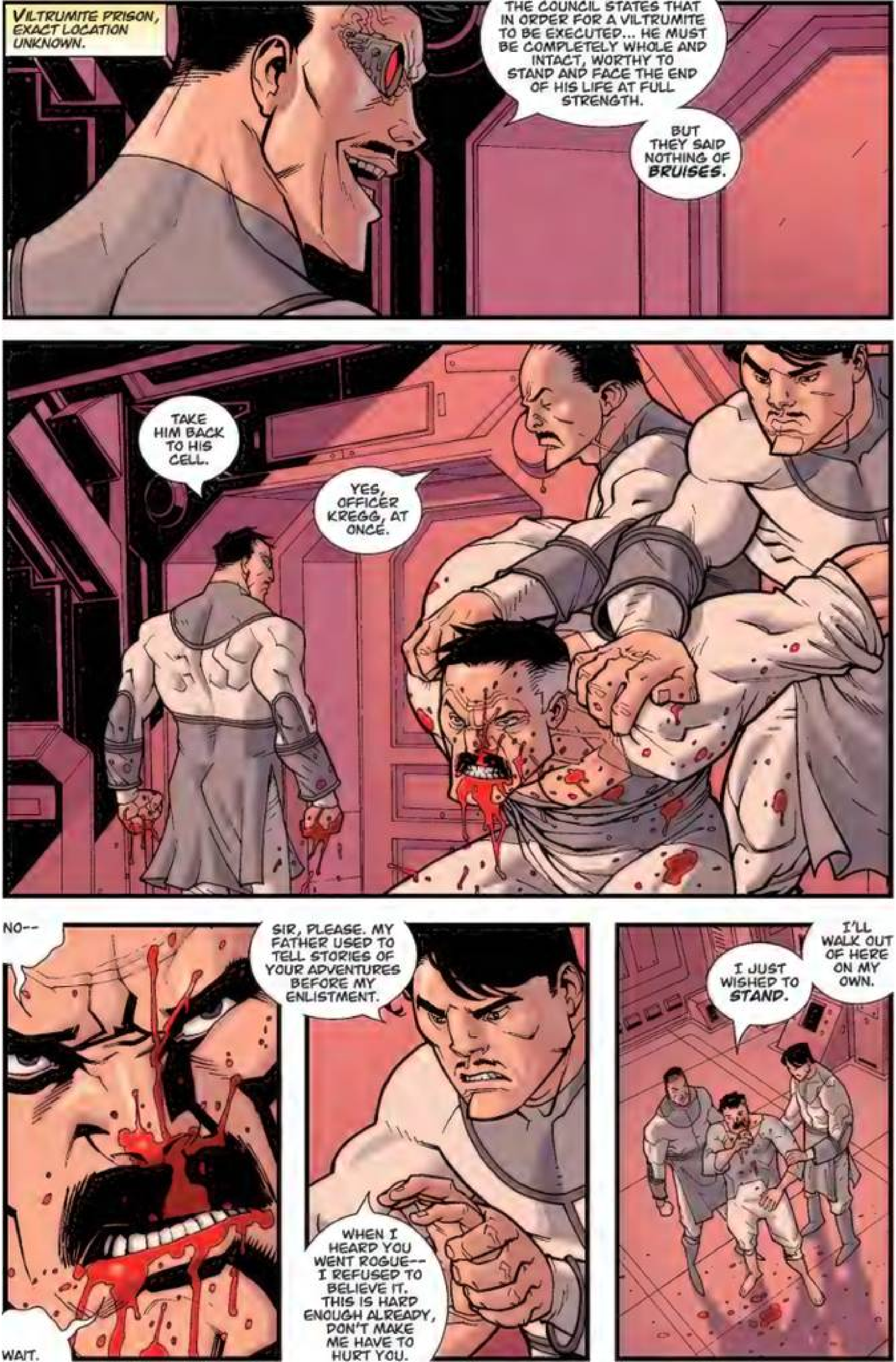

SHE CAN TELL YOU-- RIGHT NOW, TELL HIM, KATE. I DIDN'T HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH KILLING YOU.
TELL HIM!
DON'T SPEAK TO HER THAT WAY! I'LL FINISH WHAT I STARTED--
PAUL, STOP IT. THIS ISN'T THE TIME FOR--
POW!
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!
OKAY, THAT'S IT--
BACK OFF, IMMORTAL.
TAKE A SECOND TO LOOK AROUND YOU, KATE. YOU SEE WHAT YOUR BROTHER HAS CAUSED?
HE DID ALL THIS FOR *NOTHING*. HE STOPPED REX AND I FROM PREVENTING A ROBBERY. HE ENDANGERED LIVES.
YOUR BROTHER IS *TOTALLY* GOING TO JAIL!

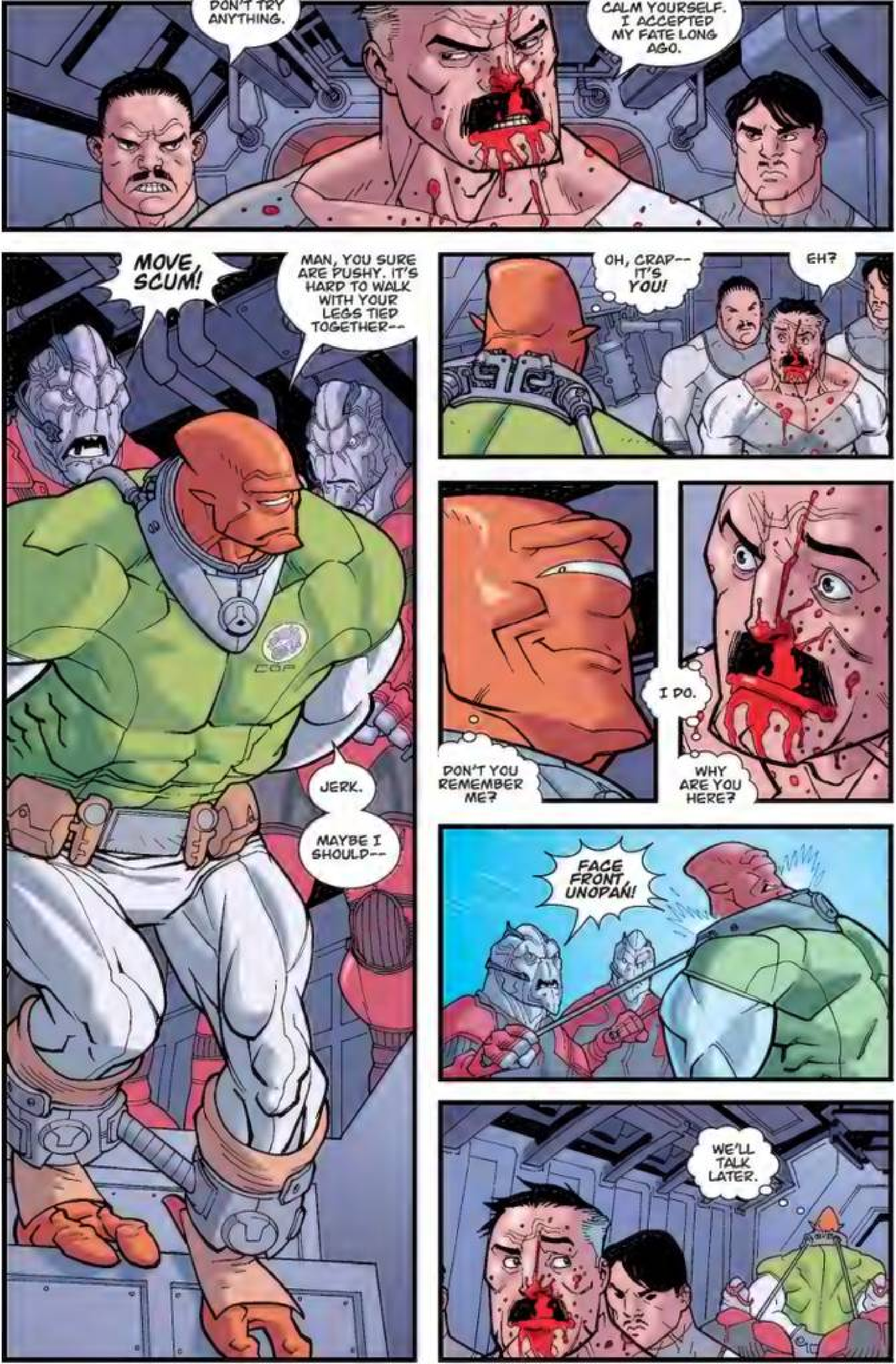

VILTRUMITE PRISON, EXACT LOCATION UNKNOWN.
SKRUNK!

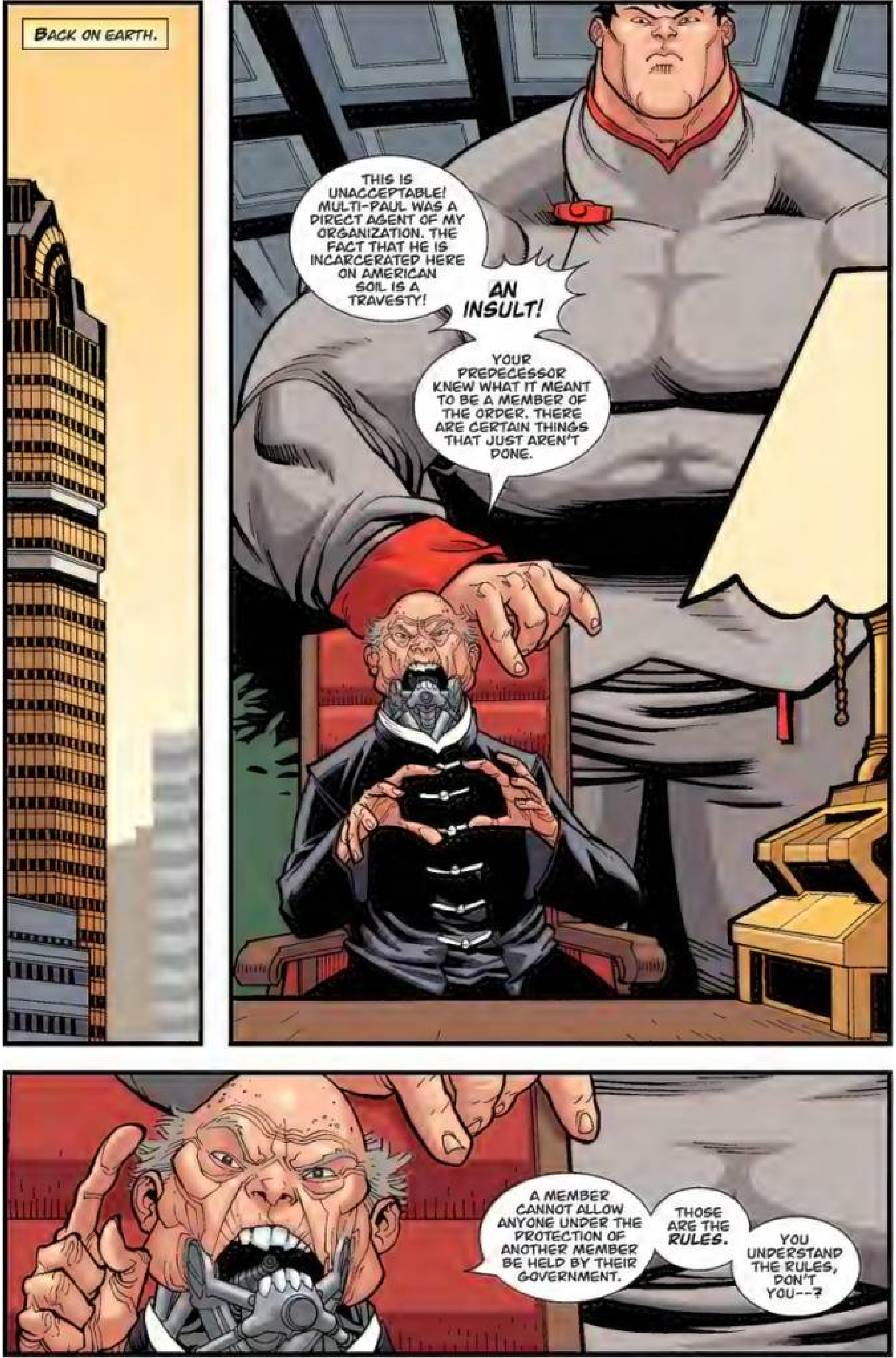

SKROOM!!
KABOOM!
KROOOM!!
KRUKK!
ENOUGH!

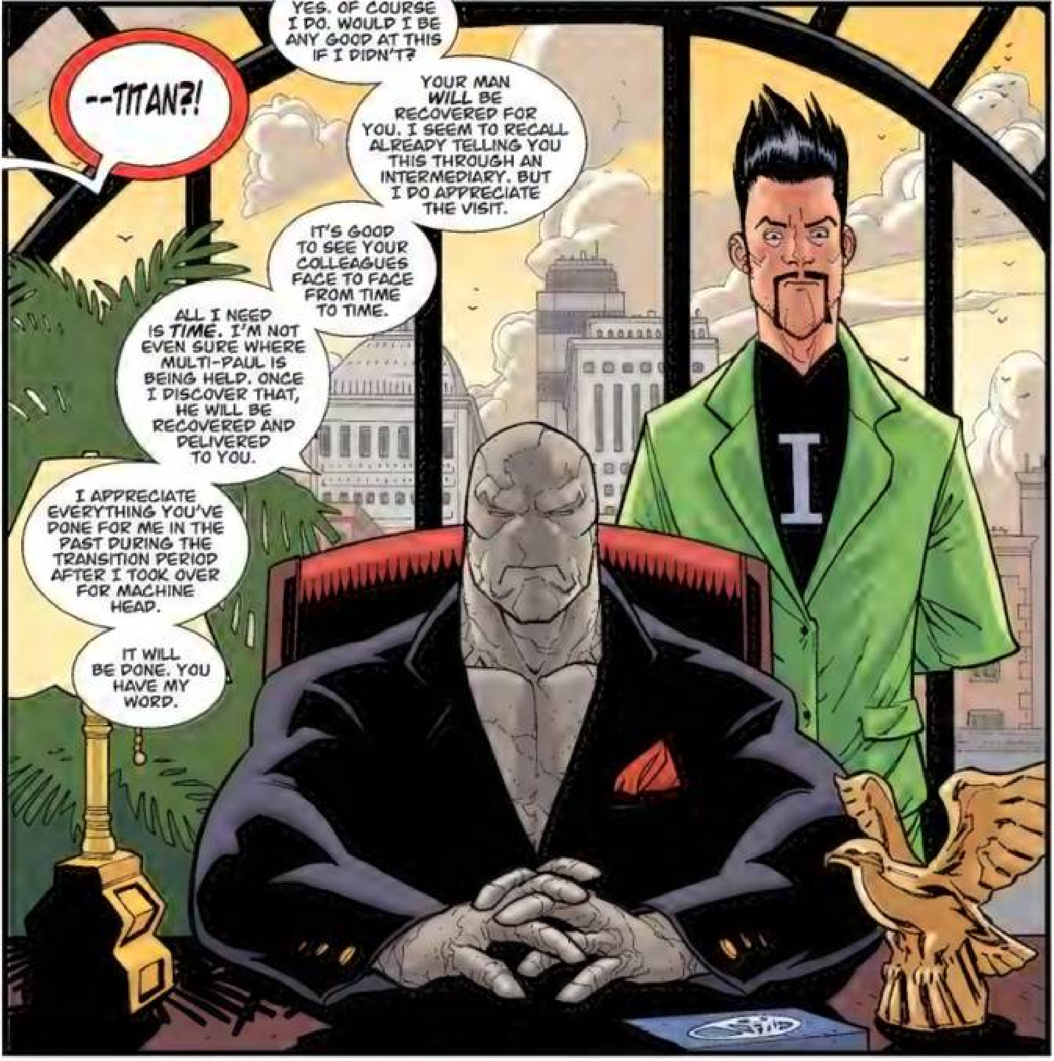

THAT WILL BE *QUITE* ENOUGH.
GENERAL KREGG, I DIDN'T EXPECT YOU TO COME DOWN HERE YOURSELF... I'M IMPRESSED.
YOU KNOW I WOULDN'T MISS THIS.
YOU FLATTER ME.
I'VE BEEN WATCHING YOUR SESSION FROM THE OBSERVATION DECK. YOU'LL BE HAPPY TO KNOW YOU'VE *PASSED* INSPECTION.
YOUR EXECUTION IS BEING SCHEDULED NOW.
IT'S ONLY A MATTER OF TIME, NOW. SOON, *VERY* SOON, FOR THE DISGRACE YOU'VE CAUSED US...
...YOU'LL BE PUT TO DEATH!

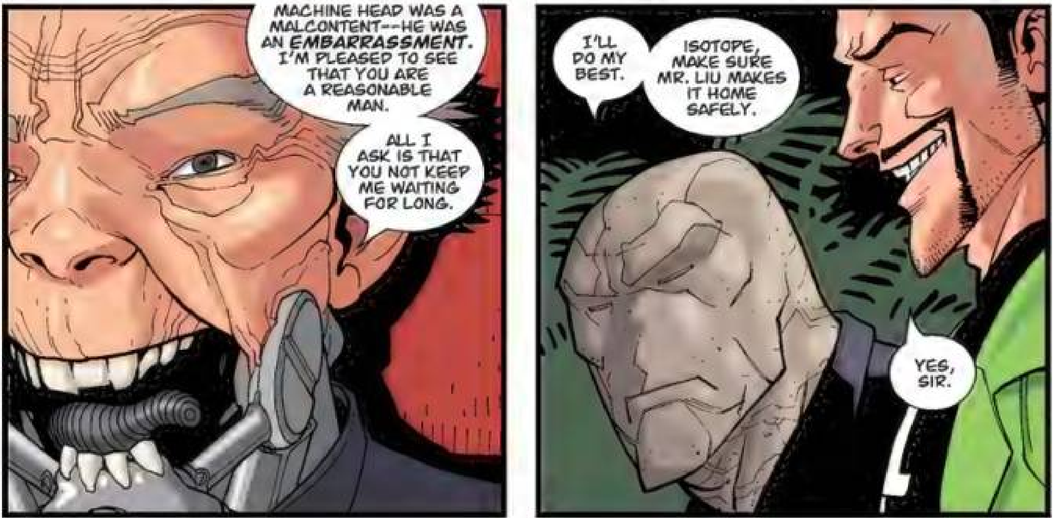
ISSUE FORTY-SEVEN

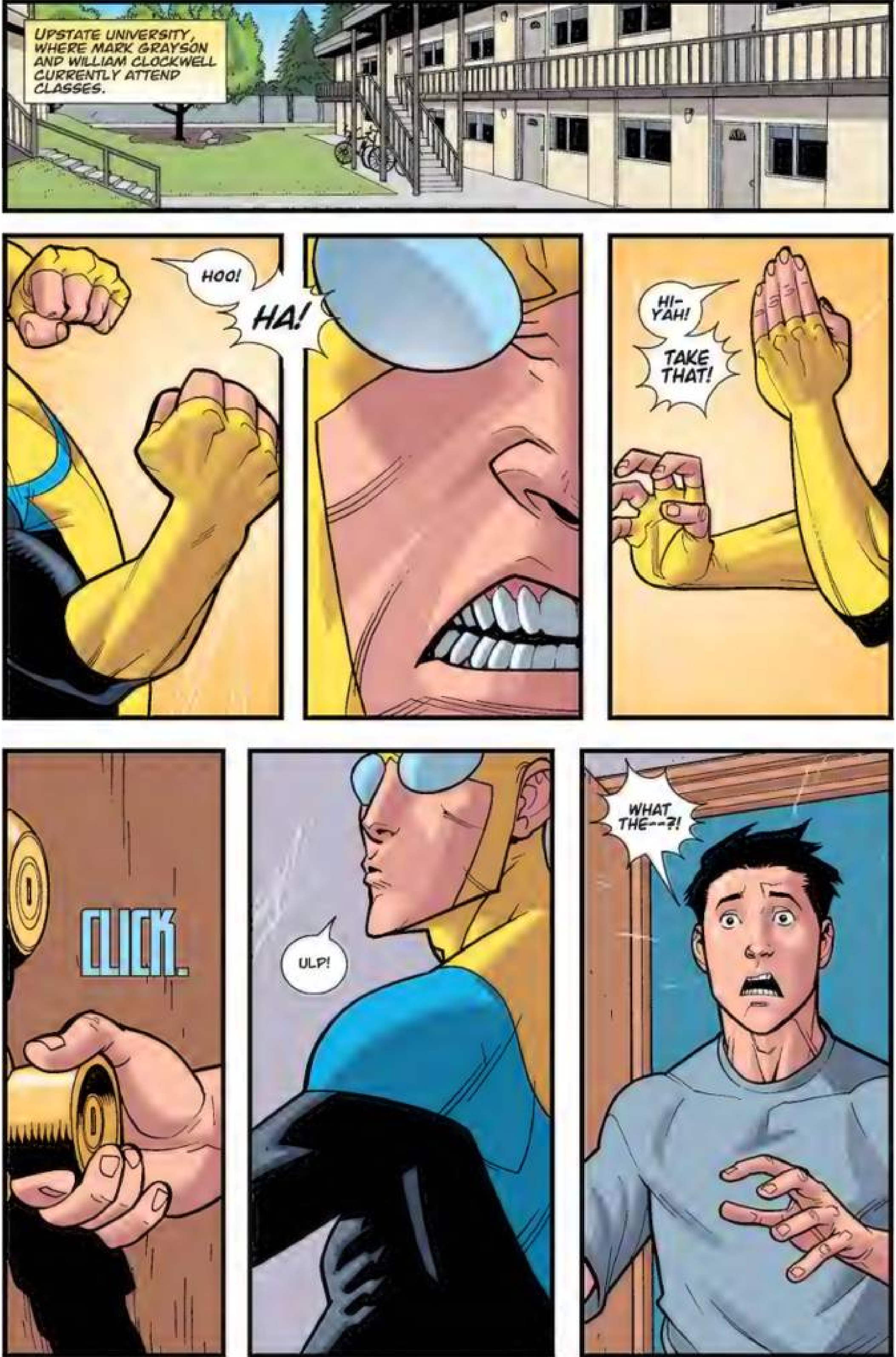

VILTRUMITE PRISON, EXACT LOCATION UNKNOWN.
THE COUNCIL STATES THAT IN ORDER FOR A VILTRUMITE TO BE EXECUTED... HE MUST BE COMPLETELY WHOLE AND INTACT, WORTHY TO STAND AND FACE THE END OF HIS LIFE AT FULL STRENGTH.
BUT THEY SAID NOTHING OF **BRUISES**.
TAKE HIM BACK TO HIS CELL.
YES, OFFICER KREGG, AT ONCE.
NO--
WAIT.
SIR, PLEASE. MY FATHER USED TO TELL STORIES OF YOUR ADVENTURES BEFORE MY ENLISTMENT.
WHEN I HEARD YOU WENT ROGUE-- I REFUSED TO BELIEVE IT. THIS IS HARD ENOUGH ALREADY, DON'T MAKE ME HAVE TO HURT YOU.
I JUST WISHED TO **STAND**.
I'LL WALK OUT OF HERE ON MY OWN.

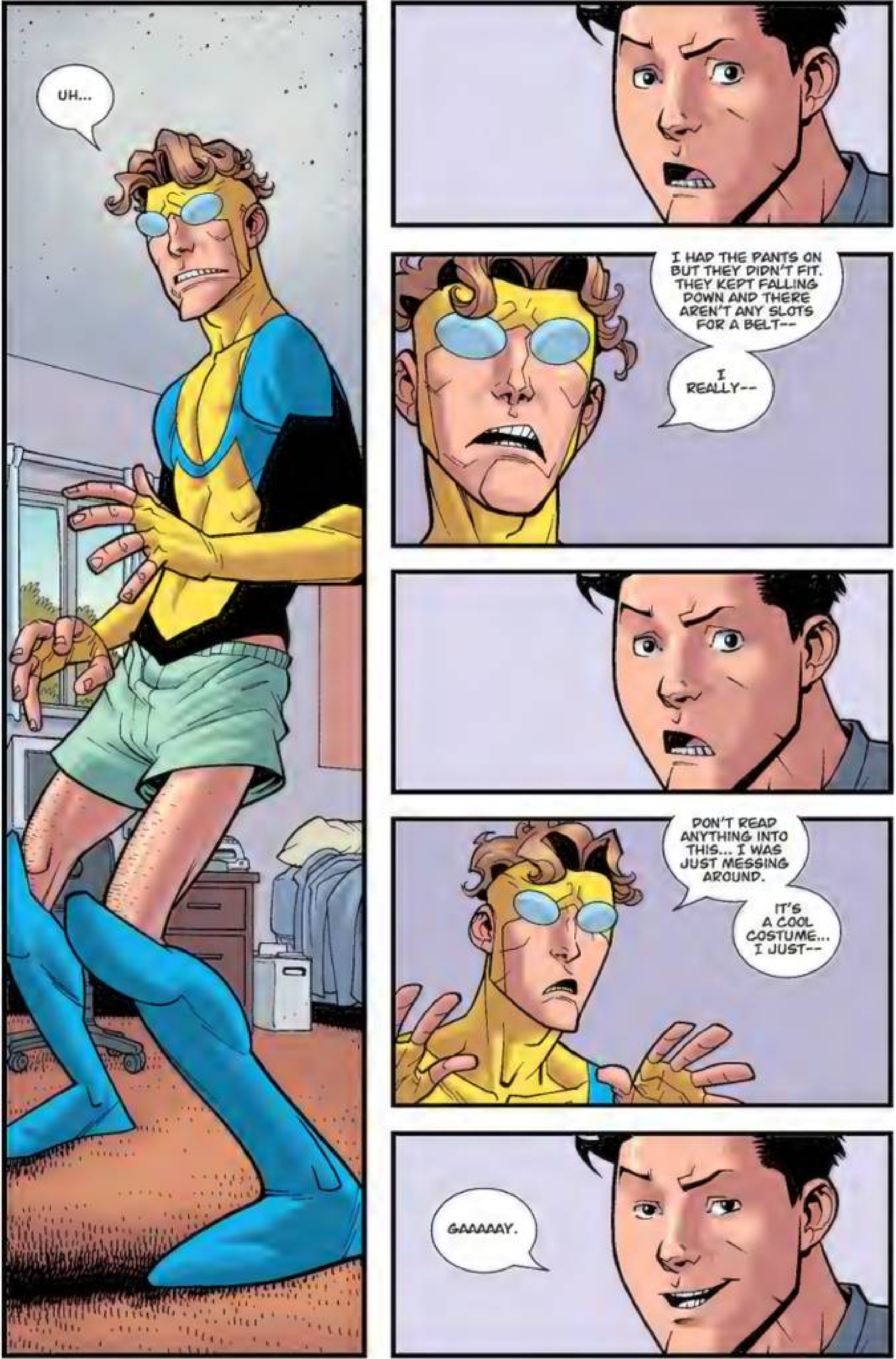

DON'T TRY ANYTHING.
CALM YOURSELF. I ACCEPTED MY FATE LONG AGO.
MOVE, SCUM!
MAN, YOU SURE ARE PUSHY. IT'S HARD TO WALK WITH YOUR LEGS TIED TOGETHER--
COP
JERK.
MAYBE I SHOULD--
OH, CRAP-- IT'S YOU!
EH?
DON'T YOU REMEMBER ME?
I DO.
WHY ARE YOU HERE?
FACE FRONT, UNOPAN!
WE'LL TALK LATER.

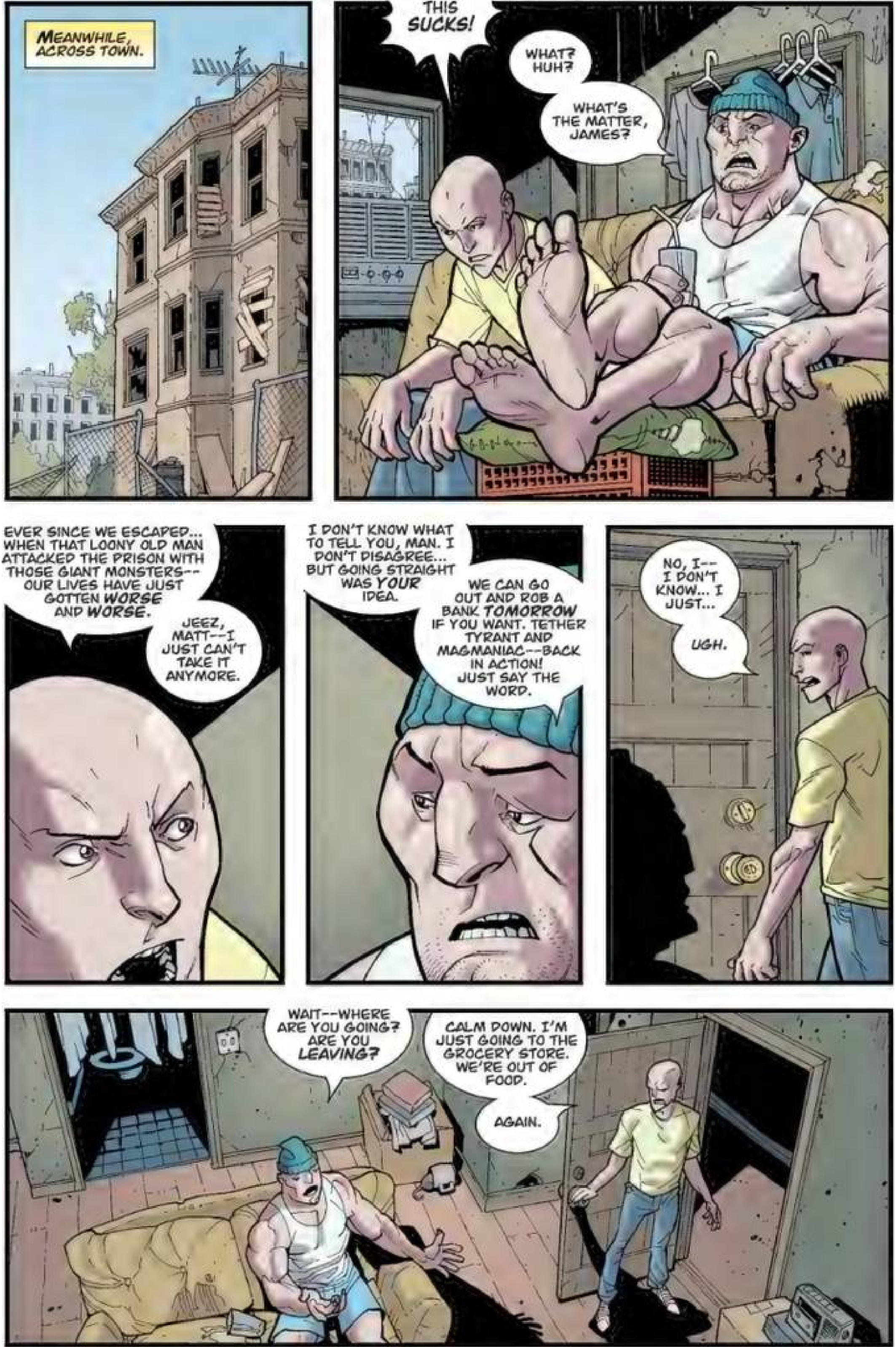

BACK ON EARTH.
THIS IS UNACCEPTABLE! MULTI-PAUL WAS A DIRECT AGENT OF MY ORGANIZATION. THE FACT THAT HE IS INCARCERATED HERE ON AMERICAN SOIL IS A TRAVESTY!
AN INSULT!
YOUR PREDECESSOR KNEW WHAT IT MEANT TO BE A MEMBER OF THE ORDER. THERE ARE CERTAIN THINGS THAT JUST AREN'T DONE.
A MEMBER CANNOT ALLOW ANYONE UNDER THE PROTECTION OF ANOTHER MEMBER BE HELD BY THEIR GOVERNMENT.
THOSE ARE THE *RULES.*
YOU UNDERSTAND THE RULES, DON'T YOU--?

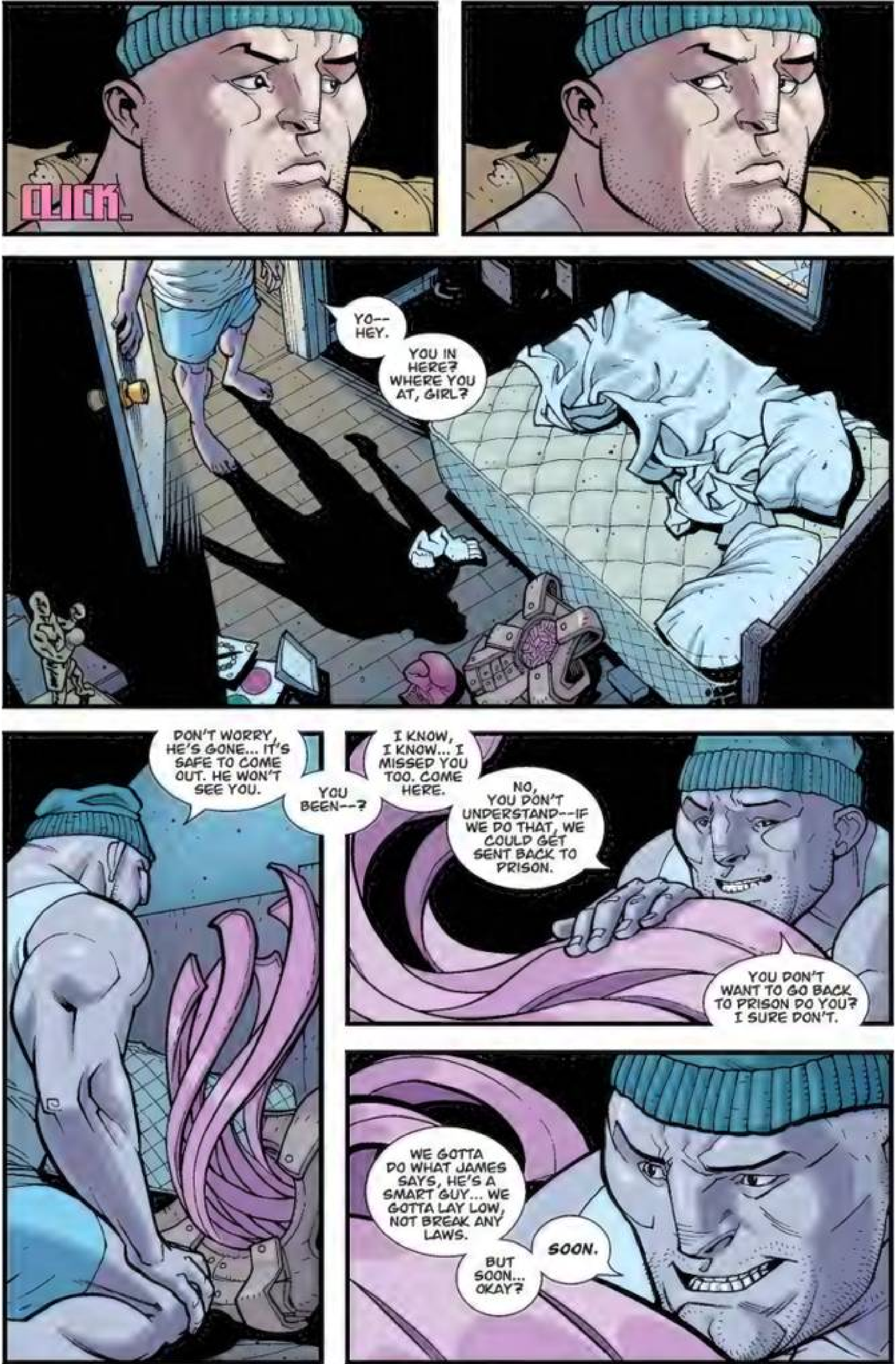

--TITAN?!
YES. OF COURSE I DO. WOULD I BE ANY GOOD AT THIS IF I DIDN'T?
YOUR MAN WILL BE RECOVERED FOR YOU. I SEEM TO RECALL ALREADY TELLING YOU THIS THROUGH AN INTERMEDIARY. BUT I DO APPRECIATE THE VISIT.
IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOUR COLLEAGUES FACE TO FACE FROM TIME TO TIME.
ALL I NEED IS TIME. I'M NOT EVEN SURE WHERE MULTI-PAUL IS BEING HELD. ONCE I DISCOVER THAT, HE WILL BE RECOVERED AND DELIVERED TO YOU.
I APPRECIATE EVERYTHING YOU'VE DONE FOR ME IN THE PAST DURING THE TRANSITION PERIOD AFTER I TOOK OVER FOR MACHINE HEAD.
IT WILL BE DONE. YOU HAVE MY WORD.

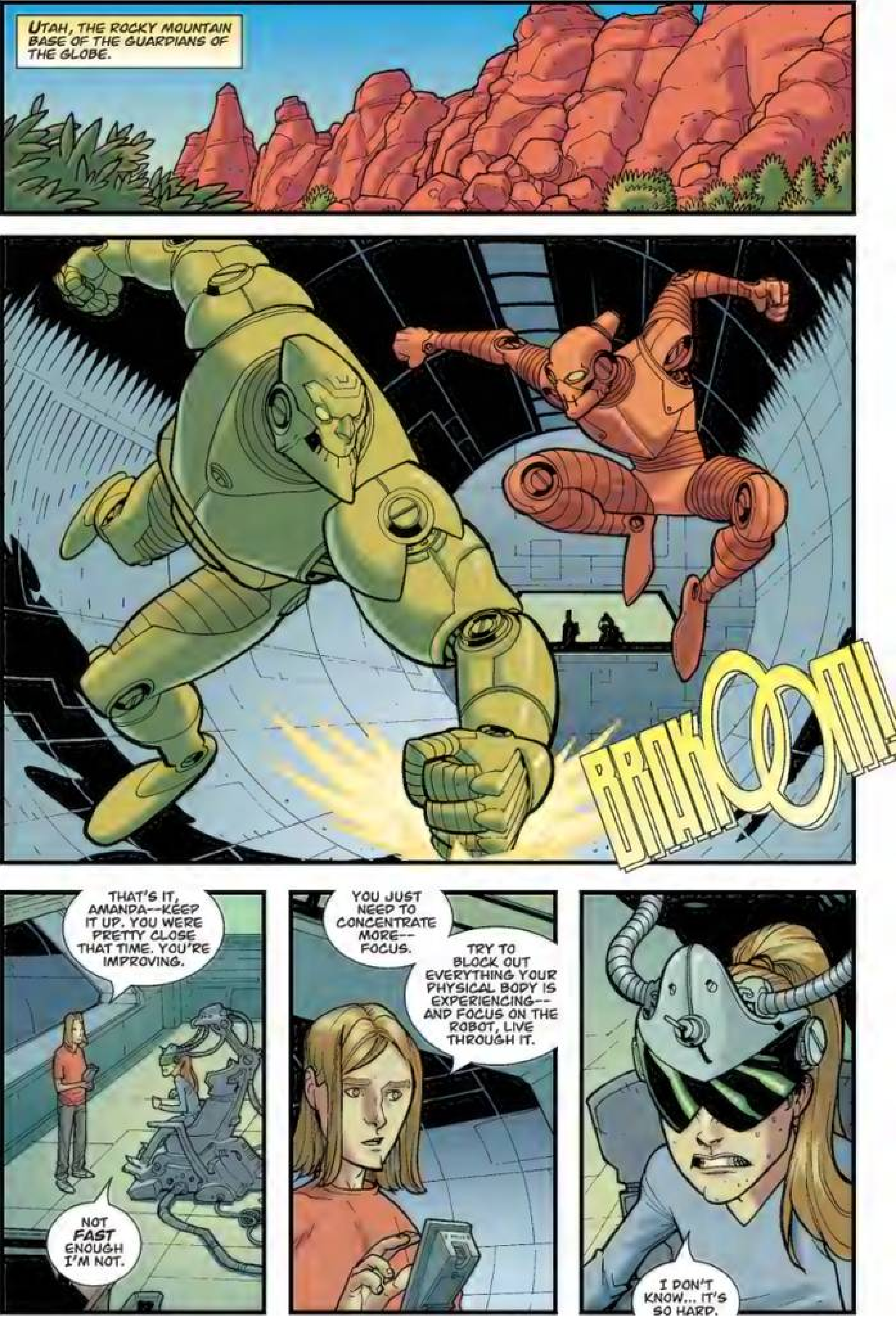

MACHINE HEAD WAS A MALCONTENT--HE WAS AN EMBARRASSMENT. I'M PLEASED TO SEE THAT YOU ARE A REASONABLE MAN.
ALL I ASK IS THAT YOU NOT KEEP ME WAITING FOR LONG.
I'LL DO MY BEST.
ISOTOPE, MAKE SURE MR. LIU MAKES IT HOME SAFELY.
YES, SIR.

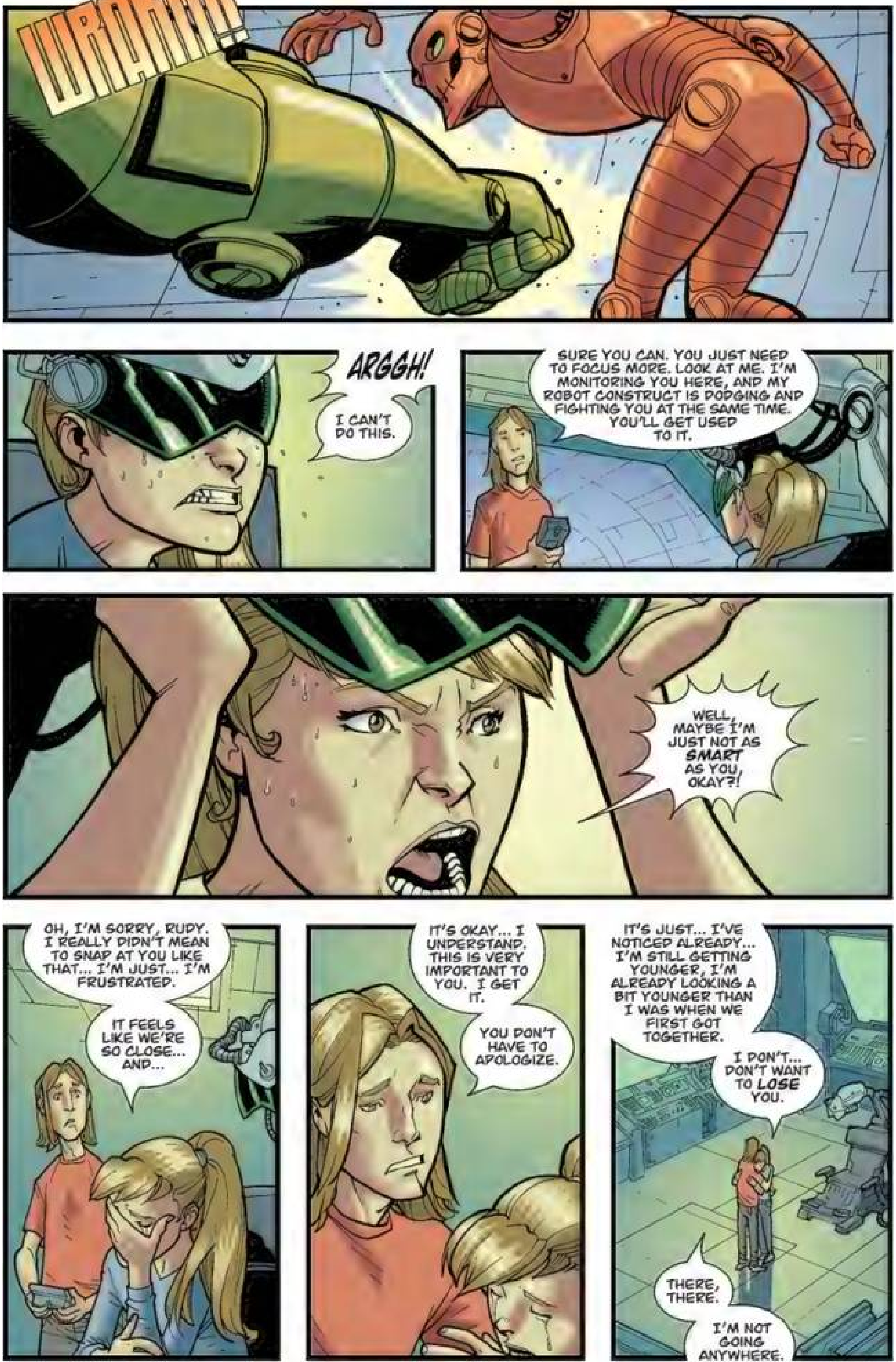

UPSTATE UNIVERSITY, WHERE MARK GRAYSON AND WILLIAM CLOCKWELL CURRENTLY ATTEND CLASSES.
HOO!
HA!
HI-YAH!
TAKE THAT!
CLICK.
ULP!
WHAT THE--?!

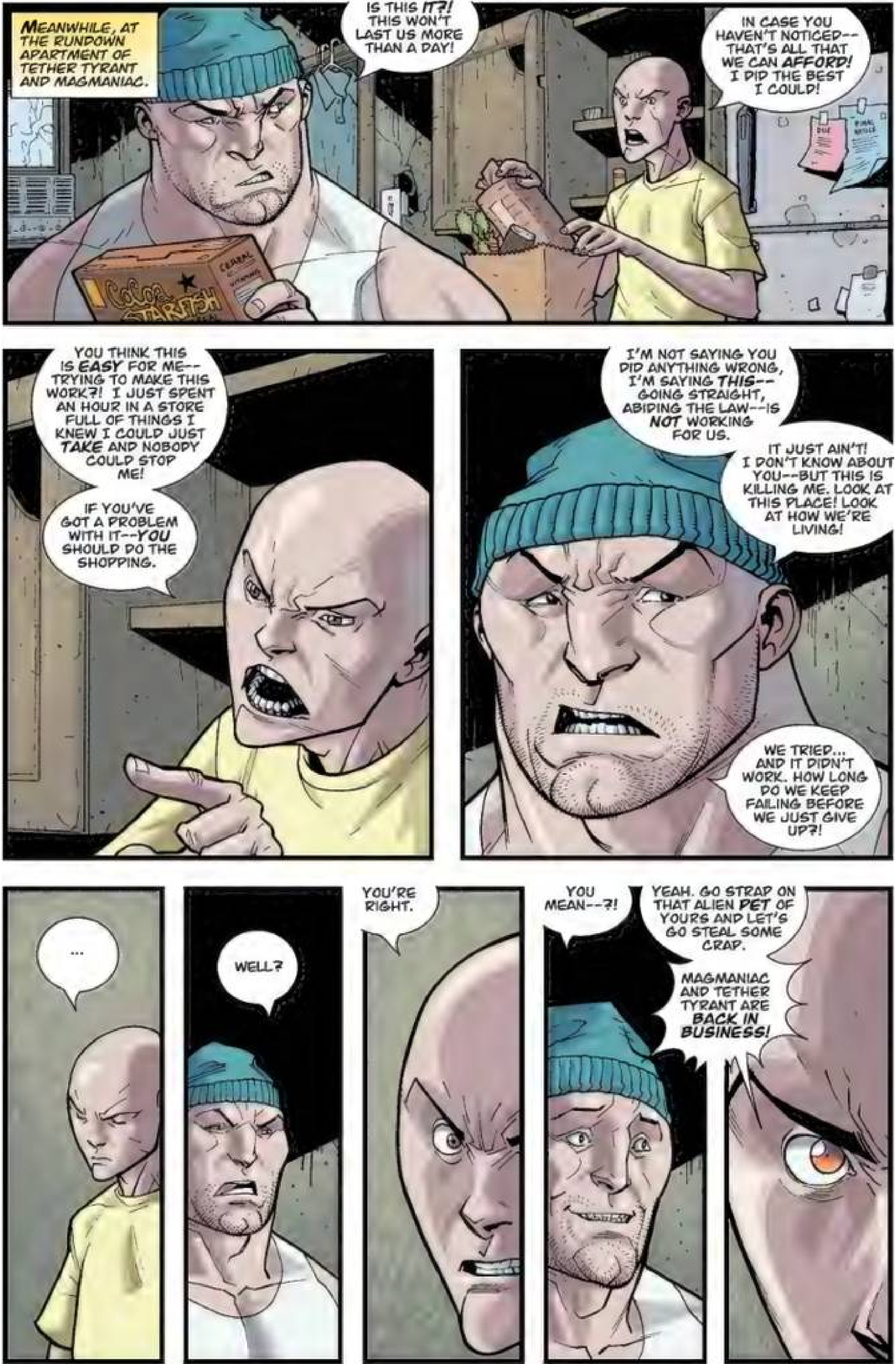

UH...
I HAD THE PANTS ON BUT THEY DIDN'T FIT. THEY KEPT FALLING DOWN AND THERE AREN'T ANY SLOTS FOR A BELT--
I REALLY--
DON'T READ ANYTHING INTO THIS... I WAS JUST MESSING AROUND.
IT'S A COOL COSTUME... I JUST--
GAAAAAY.

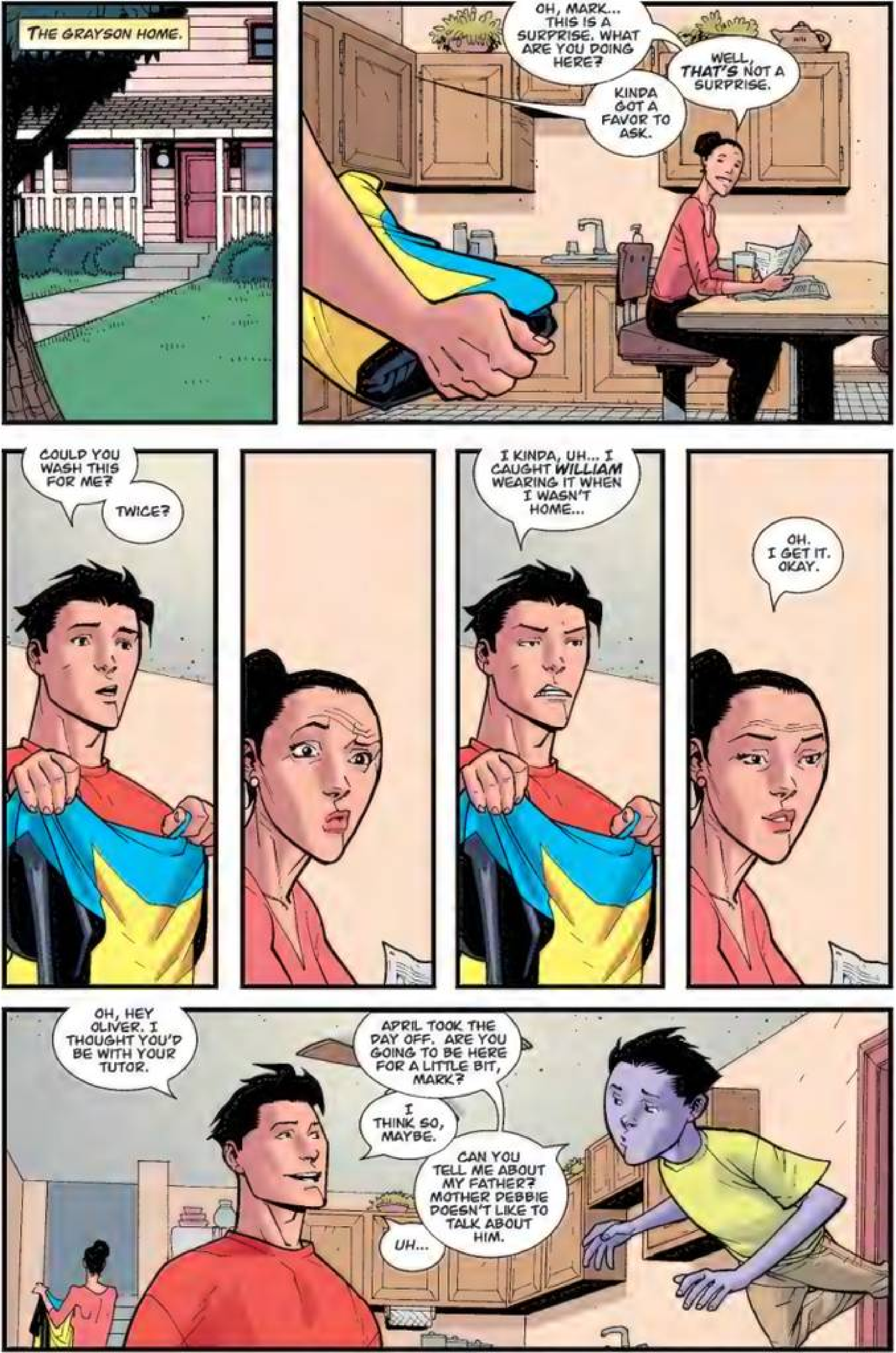

MEANWHILE, ACROSS TOWN.
THIS SUCKS!
WHAT? HUH?
WHAT'S THE MATTER, JAMES?
EVER SINCE WE ESCAPED... WHEN THAT LOONY OLD MAN ATTACKED THE PRISON WITH THOSE GIANT MONSTERS--OUR LIVES HAVE JUST GOTTEN WORSE AND WORSE.
JEEZ, MATT--I JUST CAN'T TAKE IT ANYMORE.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO TELL YOU, MAN. I DON'T DISAGREE... BUT GOING STRAIGHT WAS YOUR IDEA.
WE CAN GO OUT AND ROB A BANK TOMORROW IF YOU WANT. TETHER TYRANT AND MAGMANIAC--BACK IN ACTION! JUST SAY THE WORD.
NO, I-- I DON'T KNOW... I JUST...
UGH.
WAIT--WHERE ARE YOU GOING? ARE YOU LEAVING?
CALM DOWN. I'M JUST GOING TO THE GROCERY STORE. WE'RE OUT OF FOOD.
AGAIN.

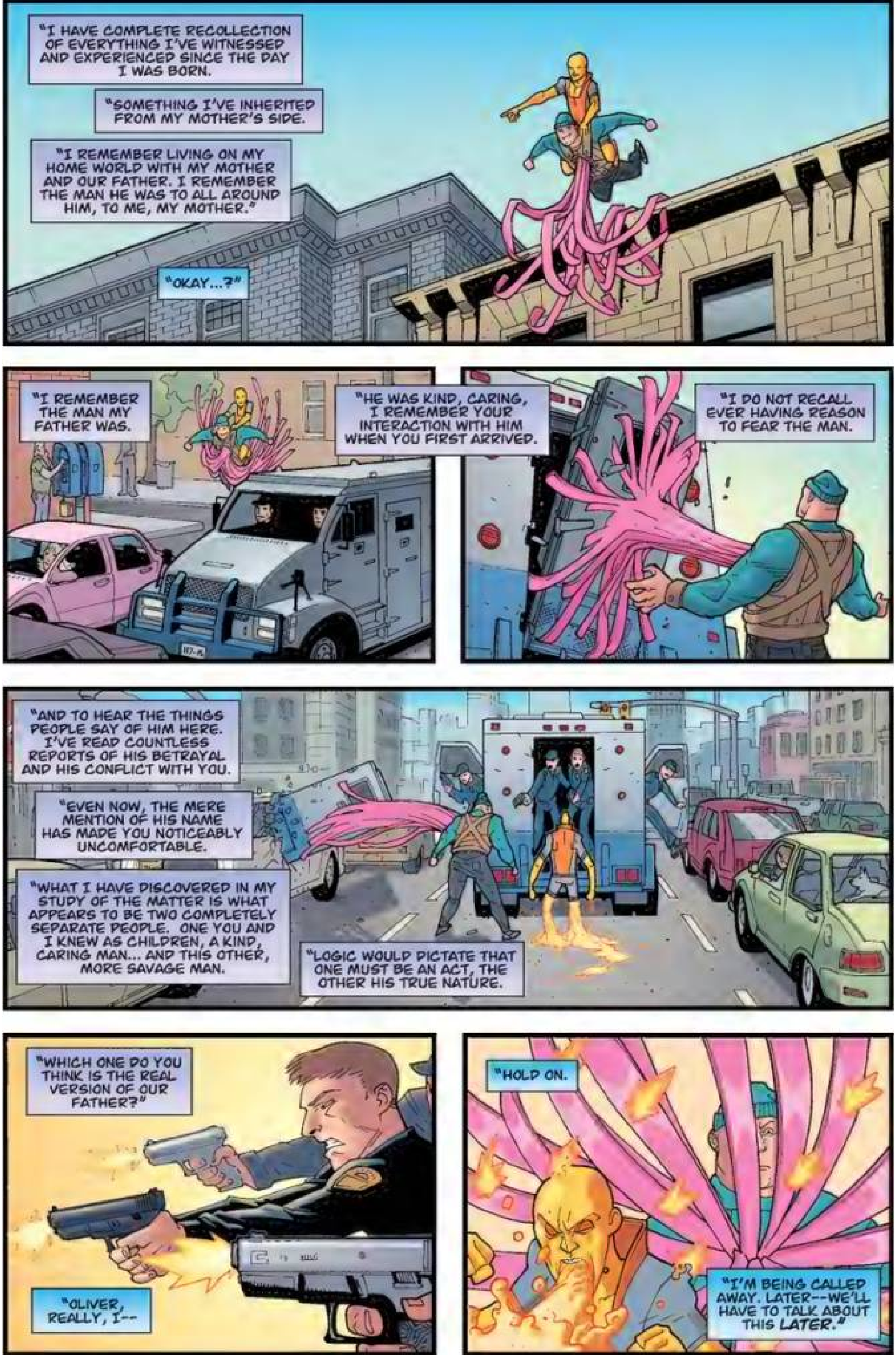

CLICK
YO-- HEY.
YOU IN HERE? WHERE YOU AT, GIRL?
DON'T WORRY, HE'S GONE... IT'S SAFE TO COME OUT. HE WON'T SEE YOU.
YOU BEEN--?
I KNOW, I KNOW... I MISSED YOU TOO. COME HERE.
NO, YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND--IF WE DO THAT, WE COULD GET SENT BACK TO PRISON.
YOU DON'T WANT TO GO BACK TO PRISON DO YOU? I SURE DON'T.
WE GOTTA DO WHAT JAMES SAYS, HE'S A SMART GUY... WE GOTTA LAY LOW, NOT BREAK ANY LAWS.
BUT SOON... OKAY?
SOON.

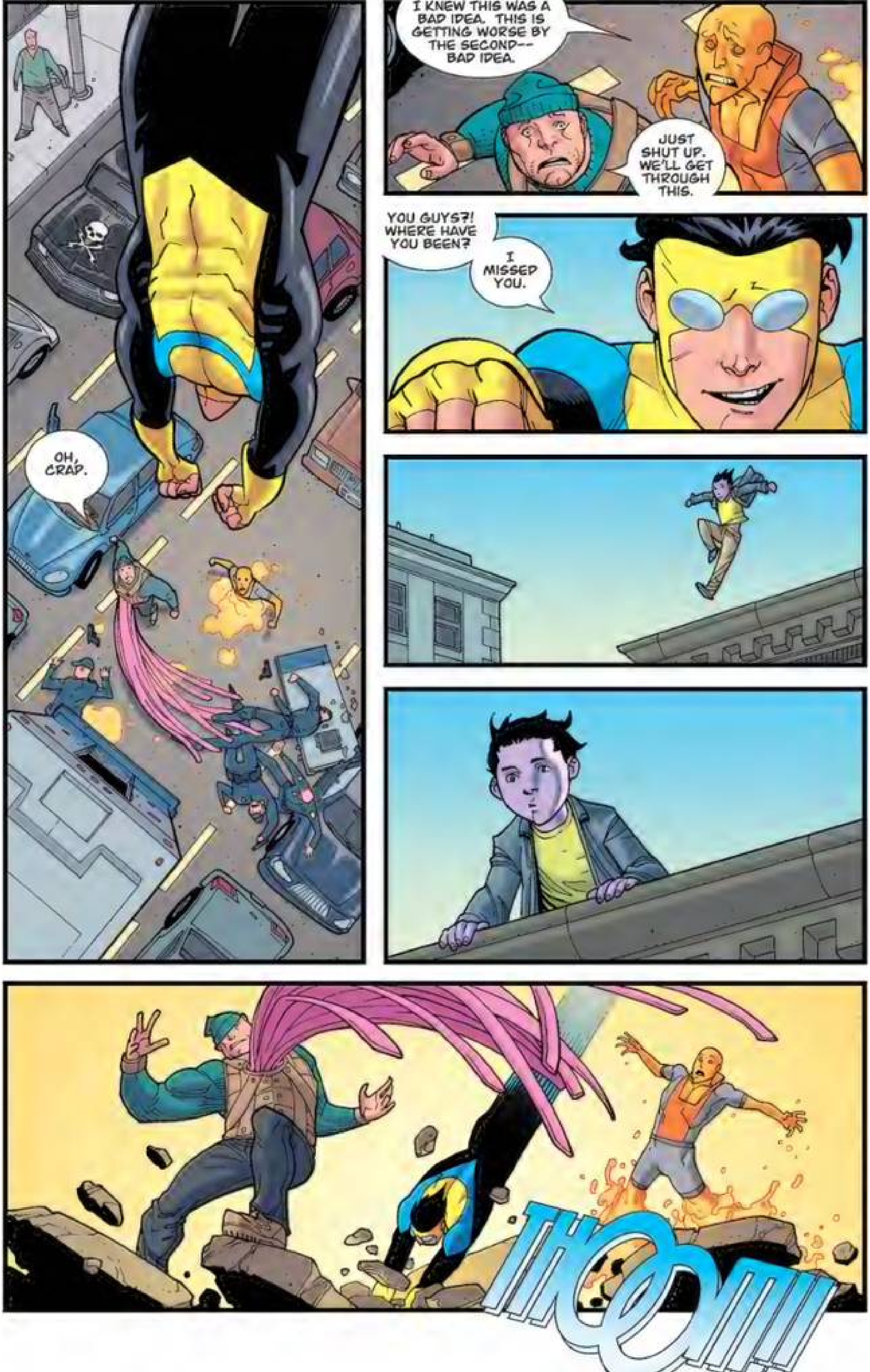

UTAH, THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN BASE OF THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE.
BRAKOOM!!
THAT'S IT, AMANDA--KEEP IT UP. YOU WERE PRETTY CLOSE THAT TIME. YOU'RE IMPROVING.
NOT FAST ENOUGH I'M NOT.
YOU JUST NEED TO CONCENTRATE MORE--FOCUS.
TRY TO BLOCK OUT EVERYTHING YOUR PHYSICAL BODY IS EXPERIENCING--AND FOCUS ON THE ROBOT, LIVE THROUGH IT.
I DON'T KNOW... IT'S SO HARD.

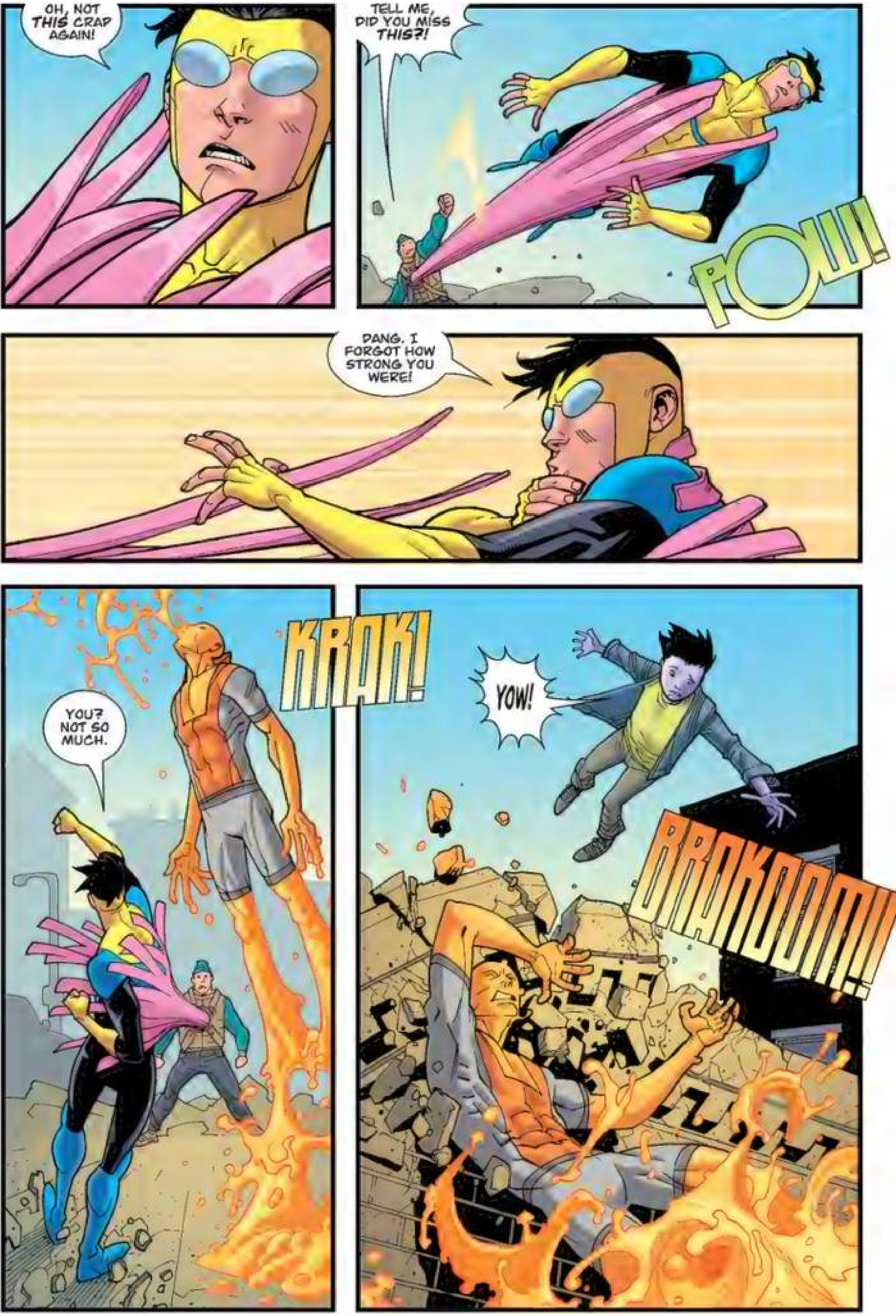

WRAKK!!
ARGGH!
I CAN'T DO THIS.
SURE YOU CAN. YOU JUST NEED TO FOCUS MORE. LOOK AT ME. I'M MONITORING YOU HERE, AND MY ROBOT CONSTRUCT IS DODGING AND FIGHTING YOU AT THE SAME TIME. YOU'LL GET USED TO IT.
WELL, MAYBE I'M JUST NOT AS SMART AS YOU, OKAY?!
OH, I'M SORRY, RUDY. I REALLY DIDN'T MEAN TO SNAP AT YOU LIKE THAT... I'M JUST... I'M FRUSTRATED.
IT FEELS LIKE WE'RE SO CLOSE... AND...
IT'S OKAY... I UNDERSTAND. THIS IS VERY IMPORTANT TO YOU. I GET IT.
YOU DON'T HAVE TO APOLOGIZE.
IT'S JUST... I'VE NOTICED ALREADY... I'M STILL GETTING YOUNGER, I'M ALREADY LOOKING A BIT YOUNGER THAN I WAS WHEN WE FIRST GOT TOGETHER.
I DON'T... DON'T WANT TO LOSE YOU.
THERE, THERE.
I'M NOT GOING ANYWHERE.

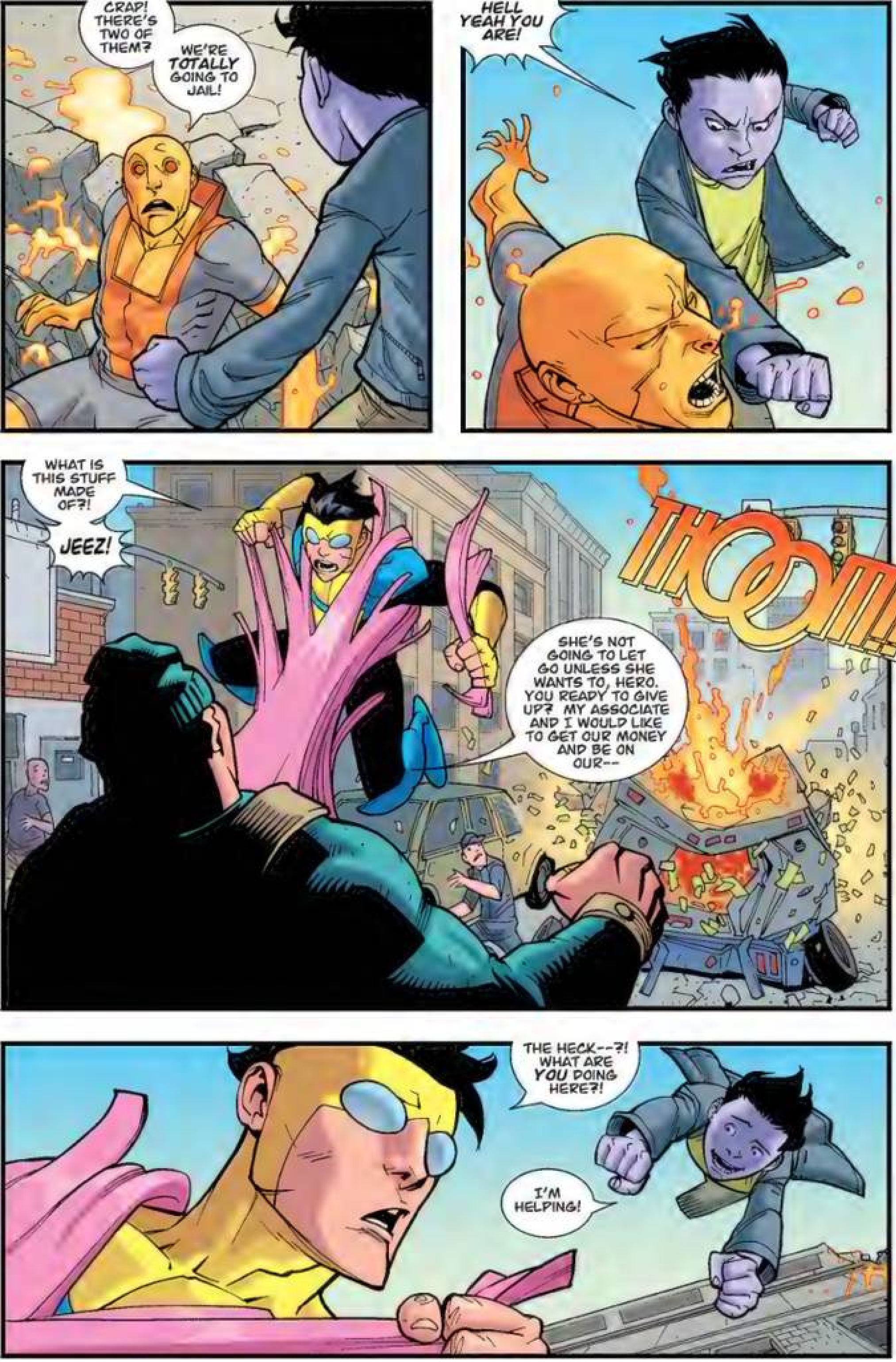

MEANWHILE, AT THE RUNDOWN APARTMENT OF TETHER TYRANT AND MAGMANIAC.
IS THIS IT?! THIS WON'T LAST US MORE THAN A DAY!
COLOR STARFISH
CEREAL
IN CASE YOU HAVEN'T NOTICED-- THAT'S ALL THAT WE CAN AFFORD! I DID THE BEST I COULD!
YOU THINK THIS IS EASY FOR ME-- TRYING TO MAKE THIS WORK?! I JUST SPENT AN HOUR IN A STORE FULL OF THINGS I KNEW I COULD JUST TAKE AND NOBODY COULD STOP ME!
IF YOU'VE GOT A PROBLEM WITH IT--YOU SHOULD DO THE SHOPPING.
I'M NOT SAYING YOU DID ANYTHING WRONG, I'M SAYING THIS-- GOING STRAIGHT, ABIDING THE LAW--IS NOT WORKING FOR US.
IT JUST AIN'T! I DON'T KNOW ABOUT YOU--BUT THIS IS KILLING ME. LOOK AT THIS PLACE! LOOK AT HOW WE'RE LIVING!
WE TRIED... AND IT DIDN'T WORK. HOW LONG DO WE KEEP FAILING BEFORE WE JUST GIVE UP?!
...
WELL?
YOU'RE RIGHT.
YOU MEAN--?!
YEAH. GO STRAP ON THAT ALIEN PET OF YOURS AND LET'S GO STEAL SOME CRAP.
MAGMANIAC AND TETHER TYRANT ARE BACK IN BUSINESS!

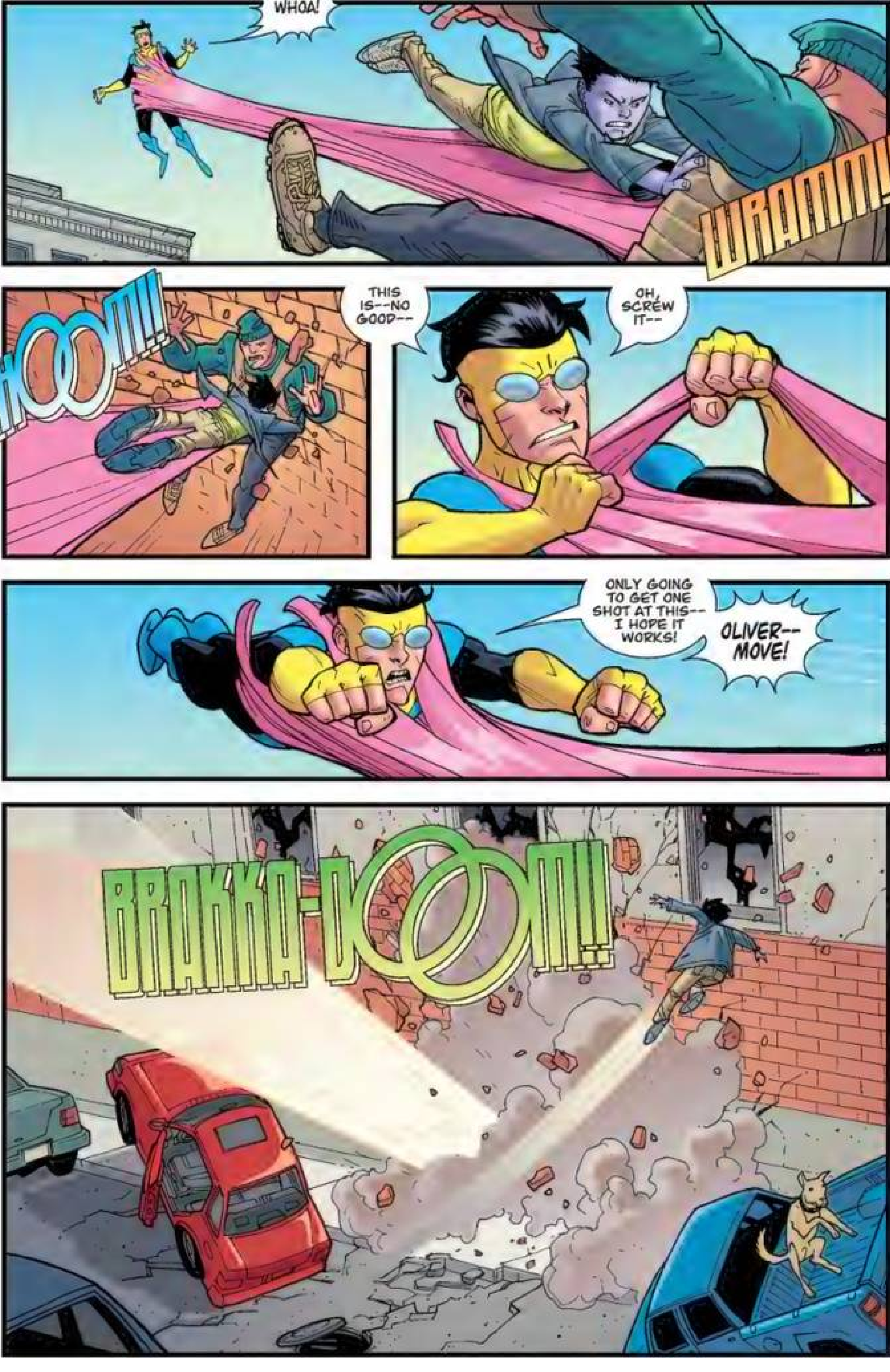

THE GRAYSON HOME.
OH, MARK... THIS IS A SURPRISE. WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
KINDA GOT A FAVOR TO ASK.
WELL, THAT'S NOT A SURPRISE.
COULD YOU WASH THIS FOR ME?
TWICE?
I KINDA, UH... I CAUGHT WILLIAM WEARING IT WHEN I WASN'T HOME...
OH. I GET IT. OKAY.
OH, HEY OLIVER. I THOUGHT YOU'D BE WITH YOUR TUTOR.
APRIL TOOK THE DAY OFF. ARE YOU GOING TO BE HERE FOR A LITTLE BIT, MARK?
I THINK SO, MAYBE.
CAN YOU TELL ME ABOUT MY FATHER? MOTHER DEBBIE DOESN'T LIKE TO TALK ABOUT HIM.
UH...

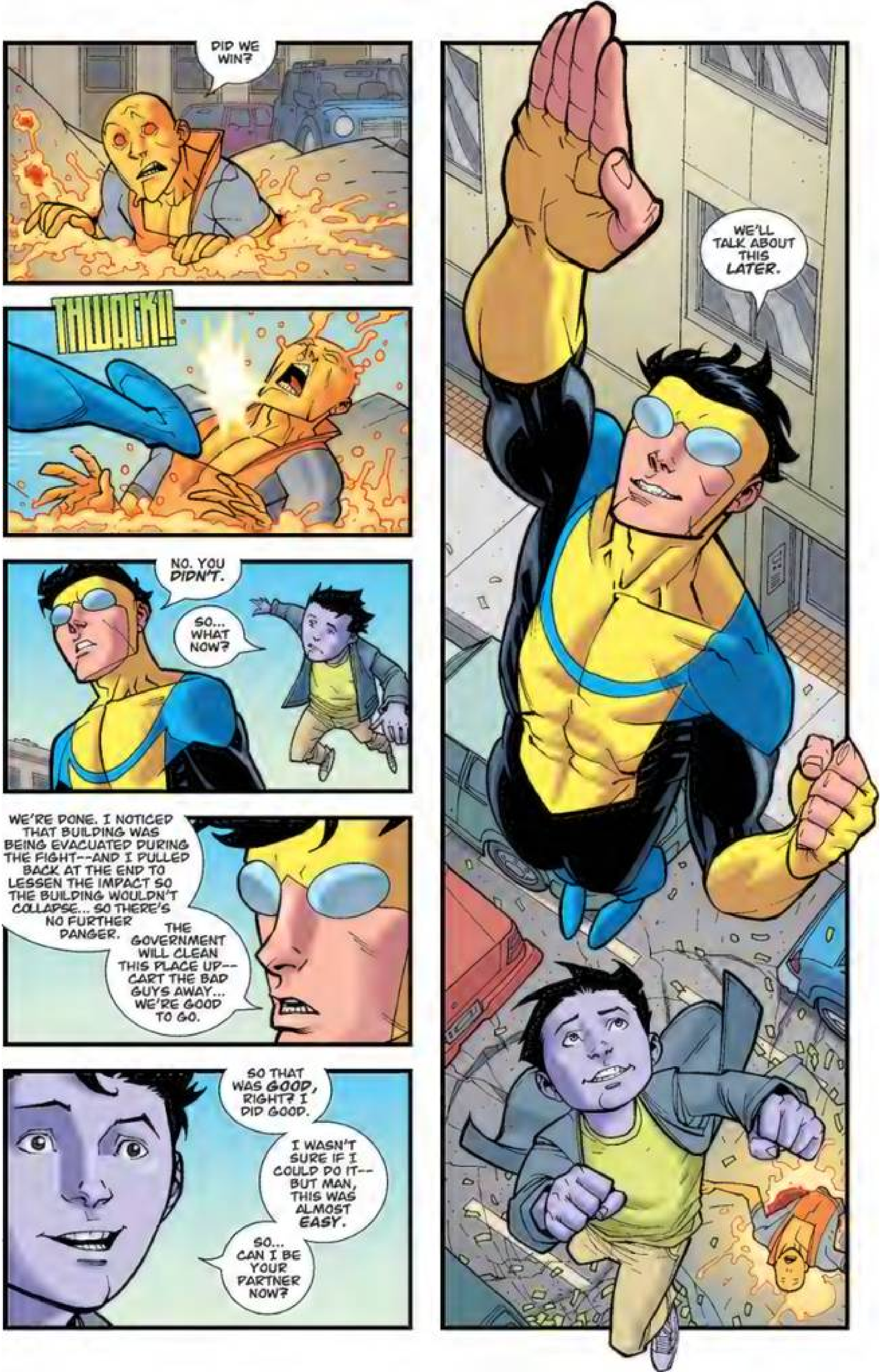

"I HAVE COMPLETE RECOLLECTION OF EVERYTHING I'VE WITNESSED AND EXPERIENCED SINCE THE DAY I WAS BORN.
"SOMETHING I'VE INHERITED FROM MY MOTHER'S SIDE.
"I REMEMBER LIVING ON MY HOME WORLD WITH MY MOTHER AND OUR FATHER. I REMEMBER THE MAN HE WAS TO ALL AROUND HIM, TO ME, MY MOTHER."
"OKAY...?"
"I REMEMBER THE MAN MY FATHER WAS.
"HE WAS KIND, CARING, I REMEMBER YOUR INTERACTION WITH HIM WHEN YOU FIRST ARRIVED.
"I DO NOT RECALL EVER HAVING REASON TO FEAR THE MAN.
!
"AND TO HEAR THE THINGS PEOPLE SAY OF HIM HERE. I'VE READ COUNTLESS REPORTS OF HIS BETRAYAL AND HIS CONFLICT WITH YOU.
"EVEN NOW, THE MERE MENTION OF HIS NAME HAS MADE YOU NOTICEABLY UNCOMFORTABLE.
"WHAT I HAVE DISCOVERED IN MY STUDY OF THE MATTER IS WHAT APPEARS TO BE TWO COMPLETELY SEPARATE PEOPLE. ONE YOU AND I KNEW AS CHILDREN, A KIND, CARING MAN... AND THIS OTHER, MORE SAVAGE MAN.
"LOGIC WOULD DICTATE THAT ONE MUST BE AN ACT, THE OTHER HIS TRUE NATURE.
"WHICH ONE DO YOU THINK IS THE REAL VERSION OF OUR FATHER?"
"OLIVER, REALLY, I--
"HOLD ON.
"I'M BEING CALLED AWAY. LATER--WE'LL HAVE TO TALK ABOUT THIS LATER."

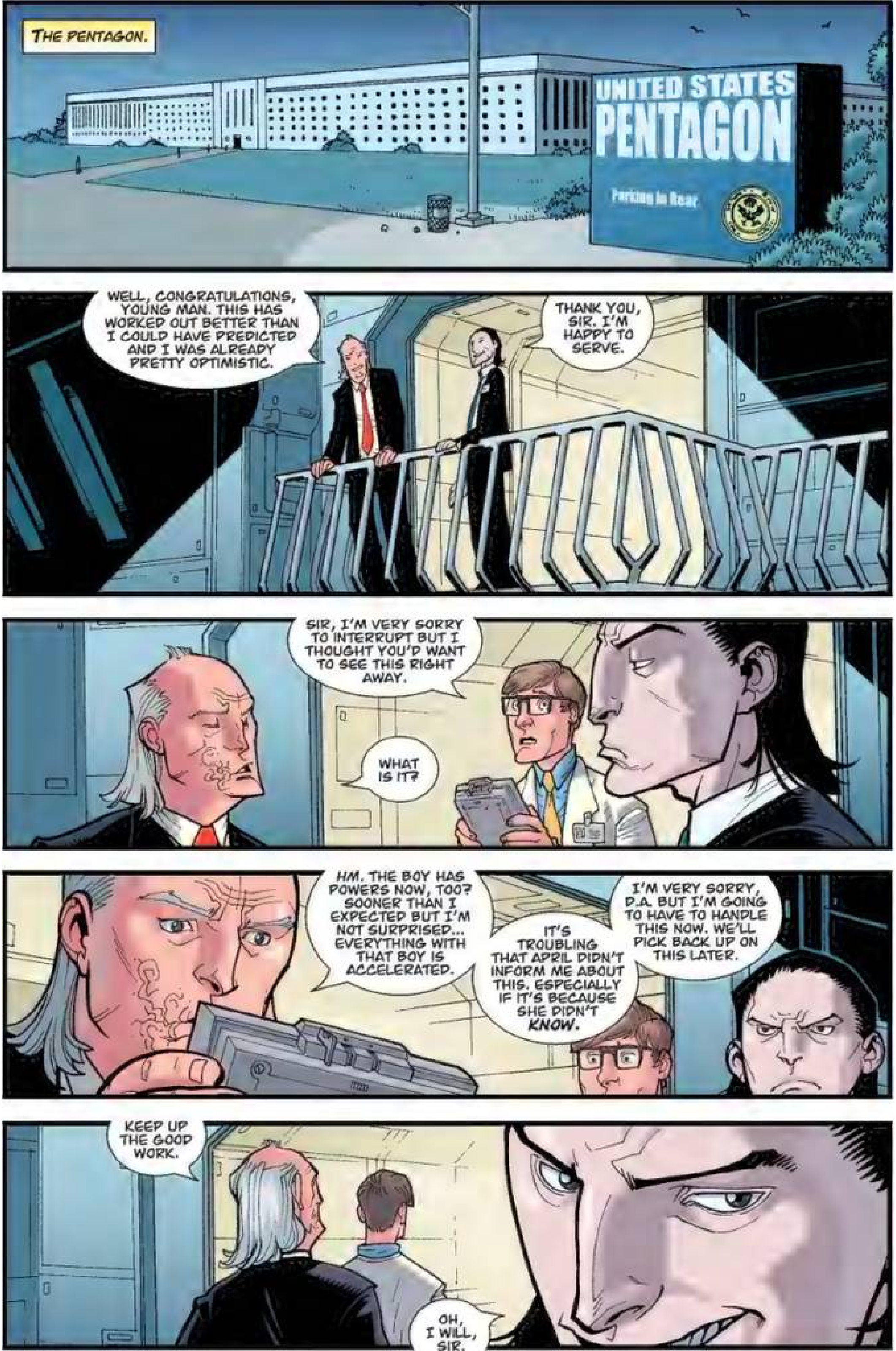

OH, CRAP.
I KNEW THIS WAS A BAD IDEA. THIS IS GETTING WORSE BY THE SECOND-- BAD IDEA.
JUST SHUT UP. WE'LL GET THROUGH THIS.
YOU GUYS?! WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN?
I MISSED YOU.
THOOM

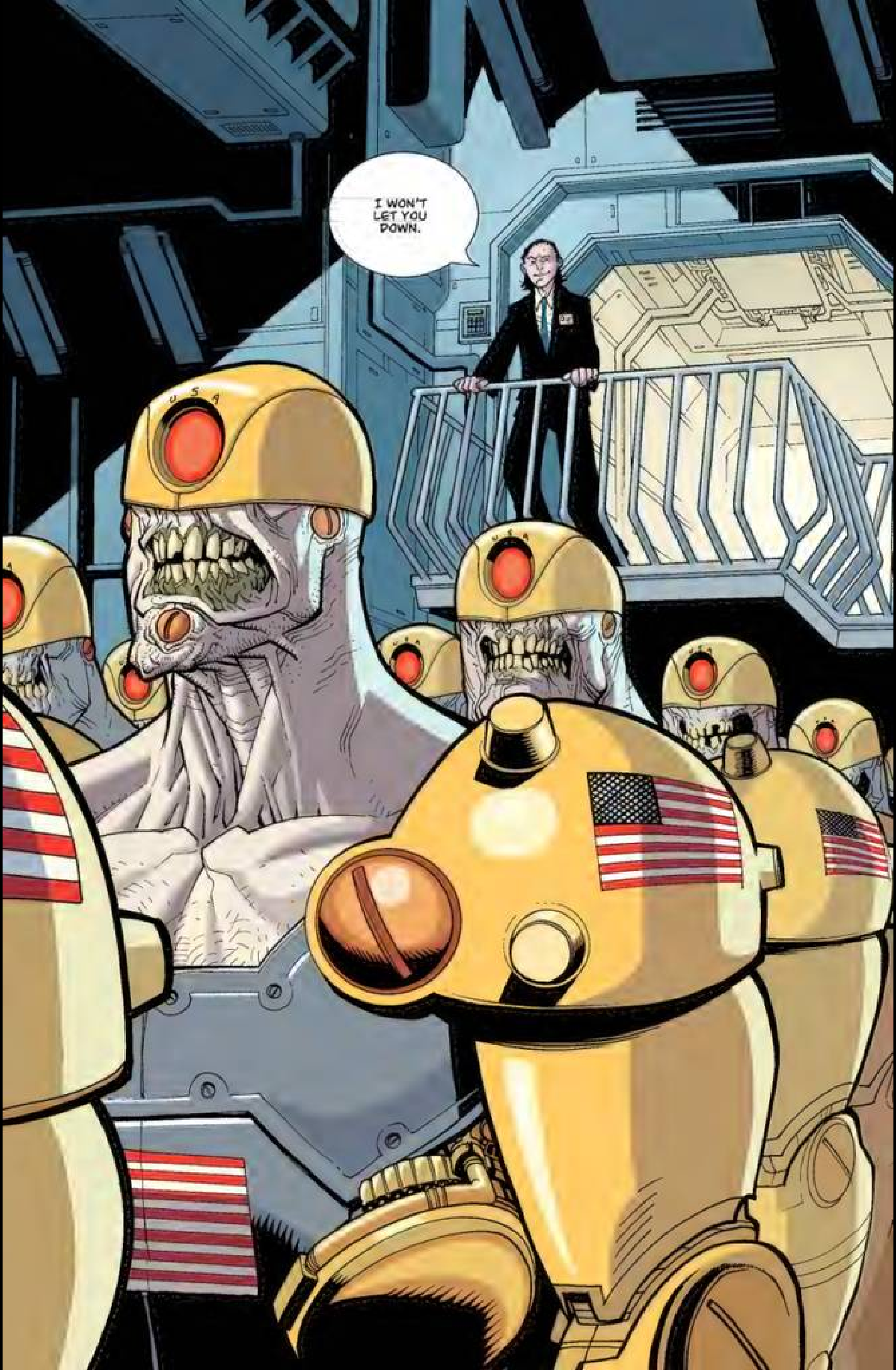

OH, NOT THIS CRAP AGAIN!
TELL ME, DID YOU MISS THIS?!
POW!
DANG. I FORGOT HOW STRONG YOU WERE!
KRAK!
YOU? NOT SO MUCH.
YOW!
BRAKOOM!!


CRAP! THERE'S TWO OF THEM?
WE'RE TOTALLY GOING TO JAIL!
HELL YEAH YOU ARE!
WHAT IS THIS STUFF MADE OF?!
JEEZ!
THOOM!!!
SHE'S NOT GOING TO LET GO UNLESS SHE WANTS TO, HERO. YOU READY TO GIVE UP? MY ASSOCIATE AND I WOULD LIKE TO GET OUR MONEY AND BE ON OUR--
THE HECK--?! WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?!
I'M HELPING!


WHOA!
WRAMMM!!
CHOOM!!
THIS IS--NO GOOD--
OH, SCREW IT--
ONLY GOING TO GET ONE SHOT AT THIS-- I HOPE IT WORKS!
OLIVER-- MOVE!
BRAKKA-DOOM!!


DID WE WIN?
THWACK!!
NO. YOU *DIDN'T*.
SO... WHAT NOW?
WE'RE DONE. I NOTICED THAT BUILDING WAS BEING EVACUATED DURING THE FIGHT--AND I PULLED BACK AT THE END TO LESSEN THE IMPACT SO THE BUILDING WOULDN'T COLLAPSE... SO THERE'S NO FURTHER DANGER.
THE GOVERNMENT WILL CLEAN THIS PLACE UP--CART THE BAD GUYS AWAY... WE'RE GOOD TO GO.
SO THAT WAS *GOOD*, RIGHT? I DID GOOD.
I WASN'T SURE IF I COULD DO IT--BUT MAN, THIS WAS ALMOST *EASY*.
SO... CAN I BE YOUR PARTNER NOW?
WE'LL TALK ABOUT THIS *LATER*.


THE PENTAGON.
UNITED STATES PENTAGON
Parking in Rear
WELL, CONGRATULATIONS, YOUNG MAN. THIS HAS WORKED OUT BETTER THAN I COULD HAVE PREDICTED AND I WAS ALREADY PRETTY OPTIMISTIC.
THANK YOU, SIR. I'M HAPPY TO SERVE.
SIR, I'M VERY SORRY TO INTERRUPT BUT I THOUGHT YOU'D WANT TO SEE THIS RIGHT AWAY.
WHAT IS IT?
HM. THE BOY HAS POWERS NOW, TOO? SOONER THAN I EXPECTED BUT I'M NOT SURPRISED... EVERYTHING WITH THAT BOY IS ACCELERATED.
IT'S TROUBLING THAT APRIL DIDN'T INFORM ME ABOUT THIS. ESPECIALLY IF IT'S BECAUSE SHE DIDN'T KNOW.
I'M VERY SORRY, D.A. BUT I'M GOING TO HAVE TO HANDLE THIS NOW. WE'LL PICK BACK UP ON THIS LATER.
KEEP UP THE GOOD WORK.
OH, I WILL, SIR.


I WON'T LET YOU DOWN.
U S A

Since first breaking in as the writer of his self-published Battle Pope, **ROBERT KIRKMAN** has been a strident proponent of creator-owned comics. Making his home at Image Comics early on, Kirkman is the creator and co-creator of some of the company's most beloved titles, including Invincible, The Walking Dead and The Astounding Wolf-Man. Based on the strength of his creator-owned properties, the writer was offered work at Marvel Comics, where he worked on popular characters such as the X-Men and Fantastic Four, while launching the fan-favorite The Irredeemable Ant-Man and Destroyer MAX. More recently, Kirkman has committed himself fully to creator-owned work, continuing his ongoing titles and also acting as writer on new series Thief of Thieves under his Skybound imprint at Image.

The co-creator of Invincible, **CORY WALKER** was also the series' original artist, drawing issues #1-7 and setting the tone for the title. Since then, the talented artist has performed art duties on numerous titles at both Marvel and DC Comics, including issues of Marvel Team-Up, The Irredeemable Ant-Man, Punisher War Journal, and Shadowpact in addition to acting as sole artist on the critically acclaimed Destroyer MAX, alongside writer and Invincible co-creator Robert Kirkman. Walker has never forgotten his creation however, and has contributed frequent guest spots on Invincible issues, covers and back-ups.

Starting with issue #8, **RYAN OTTLEY** has not only made Invincible his home, but he has made it his own as well. For years, the artist has joined forces with Robert Kirkman in detailing the ongoing adventures of young Mark Grayson. Not only is Ottley a talented storyteller, but he also boasts an unparalleled work ethic. His speed made it possible for him to draw a guest spot on DC Comics' Superman/Batman as well as launch the new ongoing series Haunt, while remaining Invincible's regular artist for over sixty issues and counting.

BILL CRABTREE makes music, comics and love. Mostly love, though -- and let's be honest, if any of us had the choice to make any of those three things at any time on any day... we'd always choose the love. Seriously, Bill can do those things at the drop of a hat if he so chooses. At the local grocery store they call him "love maker" and they barely know Bill Crabtree.

Anyone who looks at the credits of their favorite comic books is likely familiar with the name **RUS WOOTON**. With his work on Invincible, The Walking Dead, The Astounding Wolf-Man, Godland, Fear Agent and more, a case could easily be made for Wooton being the go-to letterer for creator-owned comics. But Wooton's work can also be found in abundance at Marvel Comics, where as a member of Chris Eliopoulos' Virtual Caligraphy group he has lettered countless series including Fantastic Four, newuniversal, Uncanny X-Men and more.

Editor **SEAN MACKIEWICZ** is handsome.

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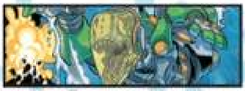

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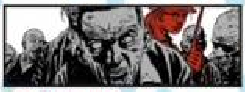

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